

# The Bond That Built a Bridge

Bahrain Landmarks Light Up Red, White and Blue as US Marks 250 Years

● **Ambassador Hallett hails a deepening alliance forged in shared defence, diplomacy and history**

**Ashen Tharaka**  
TDT | Manama

Iconic landmarks across Bahrain were illuminated in the colours of the American flag on Friday evening as the United States Embassy hosted a celebration marking the 250th anniversary of American independence.

US Ambassador Stephanie Hallett said the lighting joined a global moment, noting that the Pyramids of Giza, Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro and the Eiffel Tower in Paris were also bathed in red, white and blue in tribute to the occasion.

Allies on every front

Ambassador Hallett pointed to a series of high-level engagements in recent weeks as proof



“  
US and Bahraini forces stood shoulder to shoulder in the defence of the kingdom—something we are very proud of.”  
AMBASSADOR STEPHANIE HALLETT

“  
The bond between our peoples began 130 years ago, and perhaps that is what we are marking most of all today.”  
SHAIKH ABDULLAH BIN ALI BIN KHALIFA AL KHALIFA



Zayani for their leadership of the bilateral relationship.

people-to-people ties  
Reflecting on the relationship's foundations, Ambassador Hallett traced it back to the first American missionaries who arrived in Bahrain during the era of Issa Al Kabir, bringing medical and educational services that became part of the fabric of Bahraini society.

Shaikh Abdullah bin Ali bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Director General of Bilateral Relations at the Bahrain Foreign Ministry, attended the celebration and praised the depth of a relationship spanning politics, defence, security and the economy. He offered Bahrain's congratulations to Ambassador Hallett on the milestone event.

The Ambassador invites Bahrainis to join Americans in celebrating the values of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—ideals she said must continually be defended, not merely declared.



of the partnership's strength: a visit by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the arrival of US Central Command chief Admiral Brad Cooper, a joint session at the UN Security Council addressing Iranian aggression in the region, and a trip to Washington by His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

She extended particular thanks to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, HRH Crown Prince Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa and Foreign Minister Dr Abdullatif Al

## Paperwork slashed as Bahrain upgrades 93 services

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Applying for government services in Bahrain is becoming faster and easier after authorities revamped 93 services across 18 government entities in less than six months, slashing paperwork, reducing waiting times and simplifying procedures.

The upgrades, rolled out between January 15 and July 2, form part of Bahrain's wider drive to modernise public services, accelerate digital transformation and improve customer experience for citizens and residents.

### Fully digitised

Under the initiative, all 93 services were fully digitised, achieving a 100 per cent electronic transformation rate and eliminating the need for paper-based applications.

Authorities said processing times for the upgraded services were reduced by at least 25 per cent, while application procedures were streamlined to a maximum of four steps.

The reforms also cut the number of supporting documents required by at least half and reduced by 50 per cent the

number of pages users must navigate to complete transactions online.

Several major public services benefited from the changes.

The General Organization for Social Insurance shortened the time needed to issue pension continuation certificates for retirees and eligible beneficiaries, while the Electricity and Water Authority accelerated the review process for new water connection requests.

Meanwhile, the Labour Market Regulatory Authority simplified procedures for obtaining recruitment agency licences, making applications quicker and more efficient.

In another key digital upgrade, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning introduced Electronic Key 2.0, enabling users to obtain official government letters online for connecting newly allocated housing units to electricity and water services.

Authorities said the changes reflect Bahrain's continued efforts to modernise government operations, improve efficiency and deliver faster, simpler and more accessible services through digital innovation.

## Foreign Minister leads Bahrain's diplomatic push in New York

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Bahrain intensified its diplomatic engagement at the United Nations this week, rallying international support for regional security, strengthening strategic partnerships and advancing cooperation with countries across the globe.

On the sidelines of United Nations Security Council sessions in New York, Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani held a series of high-level meetings focused on regional stability, international cooperation and multilateral diplomacy.

In talks with Mike Waltz at the US Permanent Mission, Dr Al Zayani welcomed Washington's strong support for Bahrain following recent Iranian attacks targeting civilian infrastructure and residential areas in the Kingdom.

The minister thanked Waltz for his condemnation of the strikes and his recent visit to Bahrain, describing discussions between the two sides as an important step in further strengthening the strategic partnership between Manama and Washington.

Both sides also reviewed efforts to advance US-Iran negotiations aimed at achieving a comprehensive peace agree-



Foreign Minister Al Zayani and Ambassador Waltz



Foreign Minister meets Therese Kayikwamba Wagner



Foreign Minister meets Rebeca Grynspan Mayufis

ment, safeguarding freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and preserving regional stability and global economic interests.

Dr Al Zayani also met with Rebeca Grynspan Mayufis, where discussions focused on bilateral relations between Bahrain and Costa Rica and oppor-

tunities to expand cooperation across a range of sectors.

Grynspan outlined her vision for the role of UN Secretary-General as part of her campaign for the organisation's top post, while the Bahraini minister conveyed his best wishes for her candidacy and stressed the importance of the position in promoting international peace, security and sustainable development.

In a separate meeting, Dr Al Zayani held talks with Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner following the Democratic Republic of the Congo's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the current session.

The two ministers discussed ways to strengthen bilateral relations and enhance cooperation during the period of concurrent membership on the council, while also exchanging views on regional developments and efforts to restore maritime security and freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

The meetings underscored Bahrain's growing diplomatic role at the United Nations and its continued efforts to build international partnerships in support of regional peace, stability and global cooperation.

## New push for smoother custody and visitation procedures

**Rehab Mohammad**  
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Children involved in custody and visitation cases could benefit from a more supportive and child-friendly process as Bahrain's Public Prosecution and Ministry of Social Development work to strengthen the implementation of family court rulings.

Officials from both sides met at the Abdullah bin Yusuf Fakhro Social Centre to review procedures governing court-ordered child visitation and custody ar-



rangements and explore ways to improve coordination between the two entities.

The visit was led by Noora Jamal Al Maalla, Head of the Family and Child Prosecution, alongside a delegation from the Public Prosecution, and was attended by social welfare and family guidance officials from the ministry.

During the visit, officials reviewed the mechanisms used to implement Sharia court rulings relating to visitation rights and custody, including arrangements

for handing over and receiving children in a manner designed to minimise stress and ensure smooth implementation.

The delegation toured the centre's facilities and was briefed on procedures followed for supervised and unsupervised visits, both within the centre and externally.

Specialists explained how children are prepared psychologically and socially before visits take place, with support continuing throughout the process and observations docu-

mented afterwards to safeguard their welfare. Officials said the measures help create a safe and stable environment that prioritises the child's emotional and social well-being during family disputes.

Al Maalla praised the efforts of social specialists working at the centre and stressed that continued cooperation between relevant authorities was essential to improving the implementation of court rulings while ensuring the best interests of children remain the overriding priority.