

# HM King to open 'place of worship'

Catholics to celebrate official inauguration today of Our Lady of Arabia Cathedral in Awali in solemn ceremony

● Largest Catholic church in Gulf region

● Consecration will take place tomorrow at 10am

TDT | Manama

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa will officially inaugurate the largest Catholic church in the Gulf region – the Our Lady of Arabia Cathedral – at 11am today, a day before it will be consecrated in front of a small congregation.

Located in Awali, the ark-shaped structure will be able to accommodate 2,300 worshippers and is intended to serve as a reference point for the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia, which includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and, formally, Saudi Arabia.

Present in the solemn inauguration ceremony are His Eminence Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, and His Excellency Archbishop Eugene M. Nugent, Apostolic Nuncio to Kuwait and Apostolic Nuncio in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The entire community of northern Arabia is currently headed by Cardinal Tagle following the death in April last year of Bishop Camillo Ballin, Apostolic Vicar for Northern Arabia, who was the driving force behind the project.

Unfortunately, due to existing coronavirus (COVID-19) restric-



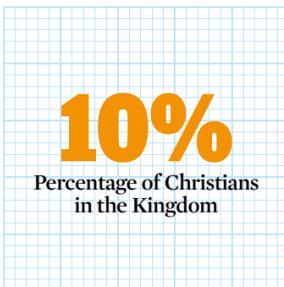
HM the King



The new cathedral ... a symbol of Bahrain's commitment to fostering peace, unity and coexistence



The Our Lady of Arabia Cathedral was built on 9,000 square metres plot of land that was given as donation eight years ago, in February 2013, by HM King Hamad to the local Catholic community.



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It is part of a complex of around 95,000 square feet in Awali, a small municipality in the centre of the country, which has a population of 1.7 million people.

Aside from the cathedral, the palm tree-lined complex features a multi-purpose building,

a courtyard, and a two-story parking area.

The cathedral's altar, baptistry, pews and other furnishings are crafted in Italy.

The cathedral is topped with an octagonal dome, a deeply symbolic geometric detail that can be seen in a number of churches around the world such as the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy, and Germany's Aachen Cathedral.

HM the King personally pre-

sented a detailed three-foot-long model of the cathedral to Pope Francis in 2014.

In 2011, the Vatican officially proclaimed Our Lady of Arabia as the Catholic patron saint of the vicariates of Kuwait and Arabia.

Later that year, the Holy See reorganised the Vicariate of Kuwait, giving it the new name of the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia, and including the territories of Qatar, Bahrain and

Saudi Arabia.

The inauguration of the cathedral follows HM King Hamad's official invitation to the pope to visit Bahrain.

Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa, HM King's Adviser for Diplomatic Affairs, personally delivered the invitation when he met Pope Francis and Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin on Nov. 25.

only a small number of people will be allowed to attend the inaugural ceremony and consecration.

Vatican statistics estimate that Christians make up ten per cent of the Kingdom's population, including around 80,000 Catholics, most of whom are migrant workers from India and the Philippines.

## Royal donation

The Our Lady of Arabia Cathedral was built on 9,000



The attendees in a press meet, Fr. Saji Thomas, OFM Cap., Fr. Xavier Marian D'Souza, OFM Cap, Rodrigo C Acosta, Jesus C Palingcod, Michael Bueno Carney, Jickson Jose, Binoy Abraham and Renjith John

## HM King with grandchildren



His Highness Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa published a picture on his personal account of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and his grandchildren, His Highness' children, His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, and His Highness Shaikh Salman bin Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Her Highness Shaikha Munira bint Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, His Highness Shaikh Abdullah bin Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, and His Highness Shaikh Faisal bin Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

## LMRA reviews cooperation with IOM

The Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA)'s Advisor for Planning and Development Duaij Khalifa Albinali met with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)'s Senior Regional Advisor for Middle East and North Africa Othman Belbeisi. This came following LMRA's participation in the 112th Session of IOM Council. The two parties discussed ways to further strengthen and develop the relation between the LMRA and IOM. Several joint initiatives have been reviewed in the session, with the aim boosting the efforts taken to combat trafficking in persons, as well as IOM's role in bolstering the Regional Centre of Excellence for Capacity Building in the Field of Trafficking in Persons. The centre, which was recently, launched by LMRA, in collaboration with the UN agencies that are concerned with combating trafficking and expatriate employees' affairs.



## Energy sector growth target

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His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, His Majesty the King's Representative for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs, has affirmed Bahrain's keenness to step up efforts to develop the energy sector.

This comes especially as the energy sector receives the attention of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the government headed by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

## Bahrain a 'pioneer in fighting corruption'

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Bahrain has been pioneering in promoting international cooperation to combat corruption.

This was the gist of a speech delivered yesterday by Interior Minister, General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, as Bahrain celebrates the International Anti-Corruption Day today.

The Kingdom joins the international community in marking the occasion which has been observed annually, on 9 December, since the passage of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption on 31 October 2003 to raise public awareness for anti-corruption.

Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah affirmed Bahrain's rejection and relentless fight against the crime that is hindering sustainable development and going against the future of communities and economies globally.

"The Day represents an international dedication to achieving economic recovery through integrity standards; thus, the Kingdom of Bahrain has been pioneering in promoting international cooperation to combat corruption," the minister said.

"It renews its commitment



General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah to fight corruption to meet national strategies and international conventions, especially the United Nations Convention against Corruption."

He spoke about the reform project of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa which has created a foundation that reflects Bahrain's dedication to moving ahead with its efforts to reinforce awareness and integrity, in addition to promoting more open and transparent practices within a comprehensive system to be protected from corruption.

Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah emphasised the dedication of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, to protect public money with integrity, trustworthy and responsibility.