

## CAPTAINS CORNER

## A Bahrain-India engine of growth



CAPT. MAHMOOD AL MAHMOOD

The news that Export Bahrain, the initiative to promote the Kingdom's SMEs to reach the wider global market, has crossed the \$100 million milestone, speaks highly of the determination of the leaders and government agencies. The world market is a tough and difficult market and quality is not always enough to clinch a deal.

In the case of Bahrain's SMEs, the government has sought to help the companies to diversify and make them more competitive and ready for a larger market. This effectively overcomes the hurdle of a small market which used to be the bugbear of most businesses in Bahrain.

Now, a former diplomat has called for consolidating Bahrain's improving commercial performance by carving out a new economic space consisting of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Dr. Mohan Kumar, former Indian Ambassador to Bahrain, made the innovative suggestion at a webinar to commemorate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Bahrain and India.

**India represents one of the largest markets in the world and for Bahrain, the country is an ally, a geopolitical neighbour who has been historically close to us culturally and economically.**



India represents one of the largest markets in the world and for Bahrain, the country is an ally, a geopolitical neighbour who has been historically close to us culturally and economically. Is it not strange then that there is still not an effective FTA between Bahrain and India?

It is true that for Indian companies to be interested in setting up base in Bahrain, there needs to be a greater incentive than just the Bahrain market. Just about seventeen years ago, we signed a fruitful FTA with America and the benefits were enormous because Bahrain projected itself as a 'Gateway to American Markets' despite the oceans in between.

With Dr. Mohan Kumar's suggestion, it will be easier because we can leverage our special relationship with Saudi Arabia and attract businesses to take advantage of one of the most prosperous regional markets through Bahrain. In addition, Indian businesses are already familiar with Bahrain's 'business-friendly' ways. After all, Indian entrepreneurs lead the number of commercial registrations in the Kingdom.

With Export Bahrain's recent success and future plans, we can harness our industrial and economic engine to the Indian giant.

(Captain Mahmood Al Mahmood is the Editor-in-Chief of The Daily Tribune and the President of the Arab-African Unity Organisation for Relief, Human Rights and Counterterrorism)

## Kulsha: setting new online shopping standards

Sixteen-year-old Bahraini Isa Haji is a forward-thinking young entrepreneur who is looking to change the way people go shopping. TDT talks with the young British School of Bahrain student, who spearheads one of the Kingdom's most innovative companies

● **Kulsha is among the first in the GCC to offer customers to make purchases online by paying with Bitcoin and other major cryptocurrencies**

● **Expansion of services to include virtual augmented reality experience that allows the shopper to view what is in a store from the comfort of their home**

TDT | Manama

An innovative Bahraini teenager is hoping to change the way people shop by introducing pioneering digital methods that are among the first in the GCC.

Sixteen-year-old Isa Haji, a high school student at British School of Bahrain, founded last year his online company Kulsha (kulsha.com), which is an e-directory, booking and delivery service for businesses—particularly Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)—that are looking to grow and transition to the digital market.

Kulsha has a pair of original offerings that set them apart from other similar on-

Normal' won't be back again for a long time. Technology during this time has gone way forward. Something that would usually take five years has happened in three years. Technology is the way to go and I believe Artificial Intelligence is going to play a big part in it

ISA HAJI



line platforms. The first is a payment facility that allows customers to make purchases with Bitcoin and other major cryptocurrencies; while the second, which is to be launched in the next couple of months, is a virtual augmented reality experience that allows the shopper to view what is in a store from the comfort of their home.

Isa is hoping that these will help pave the way for an all-new shopping experience in years to come.

"We want to digitalise and transform the way SMEs do business, because we know that digital e-commerce is the way forward," Isa tells TDT.

"We offer the traditional payment methods such as cash-on-delivery, as well as credit and debit cards, but we have also introduced Bitcoin and major cryptocurrencies as an allowed way to pay, and we are one of the first in the GCC to do this.

"I believe the future of fi-

nance is decentralised. This is the way forward. It is something new and people are starting to get a hang of it."

Isa also hopes that their plans to integrate a virtual augmented reality experience will help Kulsha further stand out in the market.

"I want to change how people look at e-commerce," explains Isa, who picks up his knowledge and ideas from reading books about computer science and math.

"You have the traditional way where you can go onto a website or an app and buy a book, but I'm looking to provide a virtual augmented reality experience where a customer can virtually be inside a shop and find the things they need.

"We've started integrating some parts of it and we have a couple of vendors who are onboard. We're going to start doing it in the next two months and putting it onto our website and apps. From

their phone, people can walk around in the shop and view the products."

Isa is hoping to expand Kulsha's reach to the rest of the GCC in the coming years, starting with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait by 2022.

He also aims for Kulsha to do their part in protecting the environment, as he plans to adopt "greener" practices in operating their services, such as using electric vehicles as their modes of transportation for deliveries.

Isa came up with the idea to start Kulsha in early 2020, when COVID-19 hit globally. He believes that it may take a while for things to go back to the way they were pre-pandemic, but it is also an ideal time to move forward.

"Normal' won't be back again for a long time," he says. "Technology during this time has gone way forward. Something that would usually take five years has happened in three years. Technology is the way to go and I believe

Artificial Intelligence is going to play a big part in it."

Isa started Kulsha as a home-based business but was able to expand to the corporate level with the support of his parents, and without any seed money from outside investors.

Kulsha today has its office located at Bahrain Financial Harbour, is tied up with over 650 vendors from across the Kingdom, and employs a team of over 50 delivery riders and 10 office staff who take care of accounts, sales, operations and marketing.

Isa spearheads Kulsha's most important operations, which is taking care of all the technological requirements such as website maintenance and app development while his mother Mrs. Sara Fiaz manages the company as its managing director and CEO.



**kulsha.com is an e-directory, booking and delivery service for businesses that are looking to grow and transition to the digital market**

## Check facts before firing allegations: Interior Ministry tells British MPs

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's Interior Ministry yesterday rejected accusations levelled against the rights system here by British MPs through the Qatari Al Jazeera channel as false, urging them to investigate the matter first before raising allegations.

Responding to claims made by four British MPs regarding inmate Fawaz Abdulnabi, the Interior Ministry said that the court of appeal is to hear his appeal on Monday. The ministry also clarified that Habib, 35, is serving a 15-year jail term in Bahrain in a terrorism case.

"It would have been better if the British MPs

investigated the accuracy of their information by communicating with the official authorities here before making these mistakes," the Interior Ministry said.

The ministry further pointed out that the Reform and Rehabilitation centre or any other states institution are yet to receive any complaints regarding the trial.

"It is clear that the four British MPs are ignorant of the rights situation in the Kingdom and the legal procedures followed by the Correction and Rehabilitation centre in Jau," the ministry said.

The ministry said that work is ongoing 24/7 to

protect the health of the inmates, with the prison reporting zero infections by continuing to ensure all preventive measures, including vaccines against the pandemic.

The ministry said the facility is open to institutions working in the rights field in the Kingdom, who are carrying out announced and unannounced visits to ensure the rights of the inmates.

"The raising of the issue through Qatari incitement channels confirms its links to the incitement campaign followed to harm Bahrain and its people," said the ministry, adding that their true intention is known to all.

## More than 95,000 fined for not wearing face masks



TDT | Manama

Police have fined 95,787 people for not wearing face masks in public places until Wednesday since the outbreak had begun.

Cops said they had also booked another 11,567 for not adhering to social distancing measures during this period.

Police directorates in the Kingdom released these fig-



ures, as they urged citizens and residents to adhere strictly to COVID-19 preventive measures.

Police also announced carrying out 13,397 awareness campaigns to help the public fight the pandemic effectively.

## Janabiya street to get a facelift: ministry

● **Plans three lanes in each direction**

TDT | Manama

Works Ministry announced launching a tender for the Janabiya Street expansion project, which includes expanding the street into three lanes in both directions on



a four-kilometre stretch.

The project calls for constructing safety barriers, rainwater drainages, service roads, parking lots, and re-establishing essential infrastructure, said the Ministry of Works, Municipalities and Urban Planning.

The ministry also points out that the project will reduce travel time, enhance road capacity and create a safe environment for street users.

The ministry said it has also developed the street leading to Salman

city with eight lanes on a 1.2-kilometre stretch. The project, the ministry said, is vital as it connects Salman city with the intersections of Budaiya and Janabiya streets.

"The Janabiya Street expansion project is one of the key projects in the Northern Governorate for its significance in reducing the traffic congestion on other streets," said Ahmed Al-Kooheji, the head of Northern Municipality.