

Agriculture Minister visits ‘Mara’ee 2025’ exhibition



H.E. Wael bin Nasser Al Mubarak tours the venue
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His Excellency Wael bin Nasser Al Mubarak, Minister of Municipalities and Agriculture Affairs, visited the Bahrain International Exhibition “Mara’ee 2025”, held under the patronage of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

The visit included a tour of the exhibition’s various pavilions, during which the minister met with farmers, breeders, and representatives of participating companies and institutions, and reviewed the latest agricultural and animal projects and initiatives on display.

The minister also visited the Bahrain Mangrove Exhibition, highlighting national efforts to quadruple the number of mangrove trees by 2035, along-

side reviewing the national afforestation plan, aiming to increase the number of trees in the Kingdom from 1.8 million to 3.6 million by 2035.

Winners

During the visit, the minister honoured the winners of the photography competition featuring mangrove sites in Bahrain.

The competition received broad participation with 286 entries reflecting the natural beauty and ecological value of the mangrove environments.

The submissions were evaluated by a judging panel consisting of specialists from the Gulf University, the Ministry of Municipalities and Agriculture Affairs, and professional photographers, with the five best entries selected.

Rabab Isa Folath won first

Lawmakers brace for Sunday debate

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Plans to make Bahrain’s labour market authorities set a national ceiling on work permits for foreign workers face a hurdle in the Shura Council.

The council’s Services Committee has urged members to reject a draft amendment to the Labour Market Regulation Law when it comes up for debate on Sunday.

Under the proposal — already approved by Parliament — Article 4 of Law No. 19 of 2006 would be revised so that the national labour market plan must set a maximum number of work permits the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) can issue within a given period.

Current wording only states that the plan may include such a ceiling.

Recommendation

Committee members, supported by the LMRA, the Ministry of Labour and the government’s legal advisers, have recommended that the Shura Council should not agree in principle to the amendment.

While the draft retains the overall structure of Article 4, it tightens one key sentence.

The revised plan, prepared



Shura Council session in progress

by the Labour Ministry in coordination with the LMRA and approved by the Cabinet every four years, would be obligated to include an upper limit on total work permits — whether across all sectors or defined by occupation or economic activity.

Draft

In its review, the Shura Council’s Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee confirmed that the draft is constitutionally and legally sound.

In its report, the Services Committee says the current law was written in a way that allows the LMRA to respond to economic shifts and emergency events without having to wait for amendments to pass through the legislature.

The national plan runs for four years.

If a compulsory ceiling is set at the start of each period and left in place until the end, the



The committee report also warns that a hard national ceiling might restrict Bahraini employers who wish to expand their projects.

committee argues, the labour market may be left with numbers that no longer match actual demand if new needs arise in key sectors halfway through.

The committee also questions how far the proposed wording would reduce the volume of permits in practice.

It says public bodies asked to

set a ceiling for a four-year plan are likely to choose a high figure that covers as many future scenarios as possible, which would leave the legal change as a formality while the limit itself remains broad enough to absorb both expected and unexpected demand.

Abroad

Another point raised is that work permits are not all used to bring in new workers from abroad.

A large share relates to foreign workers already living in Bahrain who move from one employer to another as demand shifts.

A single compulsory ceiling on total permits, the report notes, could limit this movement, reduce room for adjustment in the market and place extra pressure on businesses, without directly shrinking the foreign workforce.

Progress

On the question of job opportunities for citizens, the Services Committee argues that progress depends on training, qualifications and wage support rather than simply cutting numbers of permits.

It says the employment of Bahrainis rests on preparing people for the skills employers seek in an open market and on continuous training and incentives delivered through government programmes, rather than on a numerical cap alone.

BD200m state transfer cuts jobless fund assets by a fifth

Shura panel affirms account remains sound

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Millions shifted from Bahrain’s unemployment insurance fund to the state in 2023 have cut its net assets by about a fifth, but a Shura Council committee says the account remains sound and wants councillors to approve its audited 2023 statements on Sunday.

In a report to the chamber, the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee says total assets in the Unemployment Insurance Account stood at BD614.9 million at the end of 2023, with liabilities of BD151.8m and net assets of about BD463.2m.

The rise in liabilities is mainly linked to the BD200m transfer authorised by Parliament to support programmes aimed at moving Bahrainis into work, of which BD67.67m had been paid by 31 December 2023 and BD133.3m remained due.

The committee notes that core insurance activity continued to generate a surplus, with contributions outstripping benefits by roughly BD54.4m in 2023, compared with about



Khalid Al Maskati, Head of Shura’s Financial and Economic Affairs Committee



Core insurance activity continued to generate a surplus, with contributions outstripping benefits by roughly BD54.4m in 2023, compared with about BD51.3m in 2022.

Contributions from the public and private sectors reached BD89m, up 8.3 per cent on the previous year, while payments

to unemployed Bahrainis and first-time jobseekers rose by 11.8pc to around BD34.6m.

About 81pc of contributions came from private-sector employers and workers, with the public sector providing the remaining 19pc.

Investment returns strengthened over the year. Net investment income rose from BD434,000 in 2022 to BD22.7m in 2023, driven by higher gains on financial instruments and interest income.

As a result, operating results reached BD75.5m before accounting for the BD200m transfer to the state.

Fall

Once that transfer is recognised, the net change in assets for 2023 becomes a negative BD124.5m, which explains the fall in the fund’s overall position.

Cash movements also shifted.

Net cash from operating activities fell from BD68m in 2022 to BD3.9m in 2023, while net cash from investing activities moved from a negative BD118.3m to a positive BD15.7m.

Despite the change in pattern, cash and cash equivalents at year-end climbed to BD35m, more than double the BD15.4m recorded a year earlier.

BD382,000 investment scheme fraud

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A young man is on trial accused of running an unlicensed crypto investment scheme that pulled in about BD382,000 from at least 19 victims after he promised monthly returns of 10 per cent, the High Criminal Court has heard.

Prosecutors say he collected and received the money through a private online investment platform he claimed to own and manage, without a licence from the Central Bank of Bahrain or any other competent authority.

He is also accused of taking victims’ cash through fraudulent means, including interference with an information technology system.

According to case papers, the defendant met victims, introduced himself as an experienced investor, and opened accounts for them on the platform, providing usernames and passwords.

He then asked them to transfer funds through a financial application to bank accounts held in other names, saying the sums were being deposited into the platform.

1.4 tonnes of illegal drugs and substances incinerated

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About 1.4 tonnes of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, with a street value put at more than BD7 million, have been burned in Bahrain after final court orders for their confiscation.

The quantities were seized in cases concluded between mid-2023 and the end of 2024 and were ordered destroyed under Law No. 15 of 2007 on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, once the judgments became final and binding.

A committee formed by a decision of the Minister of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Waqf, and including representatives from the Public Prosecution, the Interior Ministry and the Justice Ministry visited the secure store where the items were kept.

Lieutenant Colonel Fawaz Al Doseri attended on behalf of the Interior Ministry, alongside Mohammed Makki for the Justice Ministry.

The committee carried out a legal check of the seized materials, confirming the case details, seals and recorded weights.

Bahrain-Vatican ties



His Holiness Pope Leo XIV received the credentials of His Excellency Essam Abdulaziz Al Jassim as Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the State of the Vatican, resident in Paris, during a ceremony in Vatican City. The Ambassador conveyed to His Holiness the greetings of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister. He noted Bahrain’s commitment to strengthening relations and cooperation with the Vatican.