

MPs to debate transit and tourism policy

Airport services, visas and Gulf Air strategy under review

● Lawmakers seek clarity on facilities for transit passengers at Bahrain International Airport

● Short-stay visa procedures and electronic processing to be examined

● Gulf Air's role in boosting stopover traffic and regional competitiveness in focus

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Parliament will hold a general debate next Tuesday on policy affecting transit passengers and tourists, as MPs press for clearer answers on airport services, short-stay visas and the role of Gulf Air in promoting Bahrain as a stopover destination.



Ahmed Qarata, Second Deputy Speaker

The request was submitted by MP Mamdouh Al Saleh and backed by nine MPs. It calls for clarification on the facilities available to travellers passing through Bahrain International Airport, the readiness of infrastructure to handle higher volumes and plans to increase visitor numbers in line with Bahrain Economic Vision 2030.

MPs want the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications to detail services offered to transit passengers and assess how well the current set-up supports growth. The Ministry of Tourism is also expected to outline its strategy to strengthen the sector and attract more visitors.

Visa procedures will form part of the debate. Lawmakers have asked the General Directorate of Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs to explain the options available for transit passengers wishing to enter Bahrain

for short stays and whether electronic processes can be expanded to ease entry.

The memorandum also calls for a regional comparison of tourism and transit facilities to gauge Bahrain's competitiveness.

MPs argue that improving services for transit passengers and tourists would boost aviation and tourism revenues and support efforts to expand non-oil income. They point to investment in tourism infrastructure, support for small and medium-sized enterprises and measures to attract foreign investment.

Gulf Air is another focus of the discussion. Lawmakers are seeking details on services provided to transit passengers, connectivity arrangements and how the airline measures up to international standards. The memorandum also refers to strengthening the airline's route network and partnerships to expand transit traffic.

The sponsors of the request include Mamdouh Al Saleh, Ahmed Qarata, Jalal Kadhem, Hassan Ebrahim, Dr Hisham Al Ashiri, Abdunabi Salman, Dr Mahdi Al Shuwaikh, Mohsen Al Asbool, Mahmoud Al Fardan and Dr Ali Al Nuaimi.

Unlicensed medical practice penalties set at up to five years and BD5,000 fine

Aims to reform enforcement against unlicensed clinics

● Clinic closures and confiscation of equipment would become discretionary rather than automatic

● Applies to anyone practising without a licence, using false credentials, or misleading the public

● Maximum penalties proposed are five years in prison and a BD5,000 fine

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Clinic closures for unlicensed medical practice would no longer be automatic under a draft law submitted to Parliament, which also proposes penalties of up to five years in prison and a BD5,000 fine.

The bill amends the way two sanctions are applied: shutting down a clinic and confiscating its contents, including equip-



ment, tools and signage. Rather than being mandatory in every case, both measures would become discretionary, to be decided by the court or the relevant administrative authority based on the circumstances. The draft also allows for a clinic to be closed by administrative order pending the outcome of a criminal case.

The amended provision would apply to anyone practising medicine or operating a clinic without a licence, obtaining a licence or registration through false information or unlawful means, falsely using the title of doctor, or advertising in a way that misleads the public into believing they are

licensed.

The Legislation and Legal Opinion Commission said the proposed amendment seeks to align penalties with those set out in Decree-Law No. 2 of 1987 concerning non-doctors and non-pharmacists practising allied medical professions. The revised penalty would be imprisonment for up to five years and a fine of up to BD5,000, or either of the two.

According to the Commission, the draft was referred to it on 2 February 2026 after the Cabinet approved it at its meeting on 26 January 2026 and authorised the procedures required to submit it to the legislative authority.

Aali Lights: Heritage festival to illuminate historic village

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Plans for a new national festival, 'Aali Lights', have been submitted to the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities, aiming to make the historic village a hub for heritage events and evening light installations.

The proposal comes from Aqeel Al Aali, head of the Aali Charity Society, who envisions a large community festival inspired by 'Muharraq Nights' and 'Hawa Al Manama'.

Aali, part of the Dilmun Burial Mounds UNESCO World Heritage site, features 11,774 mounds across 21 locations, including 17 royal mounds built like two-storey ziggurat-style structures. The village is also known for traditional pottery, still practiced by local workshops.

Under the plan, Aali would serve as a starting point for visitors exploring the mounds and nearby sites, supported by the upcoming Dilmun civilisation museum.

"Aali has exceptional cultural wealth that deserves to be presented in a modern and engaging way," Al Aali said. "The village preserves living traditions while its archaeological sites are globally distinctive."



Abdulnabi Salman, Parliament's First Deputy Speaker

He suggested late November or early December 2026, before Muharraq Nights, as ideal timing, adding the festival would give young entrepreneurs a platform to showcase products and ideas.



Aqeel Al Aali

The proposal has support from Abdulnabi Salman, First Deputy Speaker of Parliament, who said the festival would highlight Aali's global importance and benefit local residents. Municipal councillor Abdulla Ashour also welcomed the idea, calling it a "long-awaited platform" for the village's culture, crafts and community spirit.