

# Panel approves debt waiver for deceased citizens

● Government says existing laws already protect vulnerable families.

● Widows and minor children can keep their homes debt-free.

● Officials cite existing exemptions and humanitarian safeguards.

TDI | Manama  
Mohammed Darwish

A parliamentary committee has approved a bill that would write off all debts owed to government bodies by a Bahraini citizen upon death, despite warnings from ministries and state agencies that an open-ended waiver would cut income used to pay for public services.

The bill, tabled by MP Mohammed Al Maarfi, says all sums due to government bodies from a deceased citizen would lapse by law. Heirs, or anyone who takes their place in law, would not be pursued for the money, and the



Mohammed Al Maarfi, MP

debts would not form part of the estate.

The Financial and Economic Affairs Committee said the bill deals with a sensitive legal and social matter: debts left behind after death, owed to government bodies, which can add to the strain on families. The waiver would be limited to government claims. It would leave private debts untouched, and would exclude cases tied directly to public money, including criminal fines and compensation awarded in criminal cases.

The note attached to the bill says it seeks a legal and humane answer for families left in hardship after the death of a breadwinner. It says heirs should not be made to bear government debts, nor should such sums be treated as part of the estate.

The Ministry of Electricity and Water Affairs and the Electricity and Water Authority said heirs

- Housing loans are waived if the deceased leaves a widow and minor children, with ownership transferred to the family.

- Families without minor children can nominate a new beneficiary and continue payments based on their income.

- Pension-related instalments linked to government loans and service purchases are cancelled upon death.

- Employer social insurance debts remain payable and can pass to heirs or business successors.

- Low-income families may qualify for waivers of certain government dues on social or humanitarian grounds.

- Municipal fees can be partially or fully waived following a social assessment.

are not personally liable under Sharia for debts left by the deceased. Such debts are paid from the estate, if one exists. If there is no estate, the sums lapse unless heirs choose, of their own accord, to pay them to clear the deceased's name.

The ministry and authority said debts, government or otherwise, do not enter the estate. They

must be paid before the estate is handed to heirs. They also said unpaid sums owed by deceased subscribers are public money, and writing them off would lower state income and weaken services given to the public.

They warned that cancelling electricity, water and municipal fee arrears for all deceased people would sharply cut the authority's income and affect the quality of its services. They said there is already a rule allowing arrears of up to two years to be dropped for deceased low-income citizens registered with the Ministry of Social Development, under Decision No. 30 of 2014, as amended by Decision No. 15 of 2019.

The authority said the bill would also harm its plan to balance its finances, which depends on bringing income and spending into line. It buys electricity and water from the private sector and must pay within 42 days, while the money needed for those payments comes from subscribers.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning said the same approach is already used in housing cases. Under the housing system issued by Decision No. 909 of 2015 and its subsequent amendments, heirs of a deceased citizen who had a housing benefit can be exempted from sums owed for that benefit.

## Parliament Examines Digital Access Standards

Seminar highlights the role of technology in improving access for people with disabilities

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Rehab Mohammad



Bahrain's parliamentary delegation gained insights into international best practices for digital accessibility during a virtual seminar organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU),

which showcased the European Parliament's approach to creating inclusive digital services. The seminar highlighted practical measures adopted by the European Parliament to ensure that websites, mobile applications, internal networks, and digital documents are accessible to all users, including people with disabilities.

Representing Bahrain were MP Hassan Ibrahim Hassan and officials from the General Secretariats of the Shura Council and the Council of Representatives.

A key outcome of the discussions was the emphasis on integrating accessibility requirements into the design and development of digital systems from the outset. Participants also reviewed the role of the European Parliament's Digital Accessibility Competence Center, which works directly with users with disabilities to improve digital services and ensure they meet

accessibility standards.

The seminar underscored the importance of strong legal frameworks in advancing digital inclusion, with presentations covering the Web Accessibility Directive and the European Accessibility Act. These regulations were highlighted as key tools in promoting equal access to digital information and services.

Participants also examined quality assurance measures, compliance reporting mechanisms, and monitoring processes used by the European Parliament to maintain accessibility standards across its digital platforms.

The discussions reinforced the growing importance of digital accessibility as a fundamental element of modern parliamentary work and highlighted opportunities for legislative institutions to strengthen inclusion through technology-driven solutions.

## Ashoora 2026 Preparations Reviewed

Hasan Barakat

Preparations for Ashoora 1448H, corresponding to 2026, are being reviewed as Bahrain's Jaffari Endowments Directorate holds its annual coordination meeting with heads of ma'atams and Hussainiyas across the Kingdom.

The meeting brings together ma'atam and Hussainiya representatives along with officials from relevant government, service, and security authorities to assess arrangements ahead of the annual religious commemorations. Discussions focus on strengthening



coordination between stakeholders to ensure Ashoora events are organised smoothly, safely, and in line with established procedures.

The annual gathering traditionally reviews preparations related to Hussaini processions and associated events, as well as

broader service and organisational requirements for the season. It also provides a platform for participants to present feedback, remarks, and proposals aimed at improving services during the observance period.

As part of this year's arrangements, the meeting is expected to include the distribution of new permits for Hussaini food stations, alongside annual logistical support such as supplies and equipment provided to ma'atams and Hussainiyas.

Officials will also address regulatory compliance and operational guidelines for the season, ensuring all activities are conducted within approved frameworks to maintain public safety and order.

The meeting comes after a series of recent coordination sessions held across Bahrain in preparation for

Ashoora.

Last week, Interior Minister General Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa met with heads of ma'atams and Hussainiyas, stressing the importance of preserving Bahrain's traditional character in marking Ashoora. He described the occasion as an important part of the Kingdom's religious and cultural heritage passed down through generations, while emphasising the need to safeguard it from external influences.

Following that meeting, the General Authority for Hussaini Processions confirmed that processions would proceed as in previous years, in line with existing security and legal regulations, ensuring the smooth conduct of rituals while maintaining public safety.

## Police patrols handled 1,606 April reports



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Police patrols linked to Bahrain's operations room dealt with 1,606 reports in April, with response calls making up the largest share, Interior Ministry figures show.

Response cases accounted for 67 pc of the total. Traffic cases made up 28 pc, while security reports stood at 5 pc.

The Coast Guard Command received 78 reports tied to sea incidents, rescue work and help at sea.

These included 48 reports on accidents, rescues and broken-down vessels, three marine accident reports and 27 calls for aid.

The National Ambulance dealt with 4,762 reports dur-

ing the month.

Of these, 3,440 were medical cases. A further 332 involved road crashes, while 676 were transfers from private hospitals and health centres to emergency wards.

There were also 31 fire-related reports and 283 other accident reports.

Reports filed through the MyGov app reached 1,541.

Security directorates received the largest share, with 799 reports. The Anti-Economic Crimes Directorate received 287, the Cybercrime Directorate 413, and the Anti-Corruption Crimes Directorate 12.

The Child Protection Unit in Cyberspace received 28 reports, while two were sent to the Search and Follow-up Directorate at Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs.

## Volunteerism and Media Key to National Development



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At the opening of the Bahrain Media and Volunteerism Forum, the Speaker of the Shura Council, Ali bin Saleh Al Saleh, commended the efforts of Bahrain's security institutions, highlighting their role in protecting the country's stability and development.

Al Saleh praised the work of the Bahrain Defence Force, the National Guard, and the Ministry of Interior, stating that their efforts were vital in confronting attacks he attributed to Iran, and in safeguarding citizens, residents, and national achievements under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the support of Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

He strongly condemned at-

tacks targeting Bahrain, other Gulf Cooperation Council states, and Jordan, reaffirming Bahrain's commitment to peace, good neighbourly relations, and dialogue based on mutual respect.

The remarks were delivered during the opening of the Bahrain Media and Volunteerism Forum, organised by the Bahrain Society for Voluntary Work from June 13 to 15 under the theme "Towards Conscious Media and Sustainable Giving."

During the event, Al Saleh also signed a loyalty and support document for the King and honoured frontline personnel in recognition of their efforts in responding to security challenges.

He additionally visited an exhibition featuring archival photographs by artist Ibrahim Bodu, praising its historical value and documentation of Bahrain's leadership journey.

## Court Grants Expat Divorce After 10-Year Marriage

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Court of Cassation upheld the divorce of a 40-year-old expatriate man from his European wife after a decade of marriage, citing "the impossibility of marital life" and applying the civil law of the husband's home country.

The ruling also granted custody of the couple's two children to the mother and ordered the father to pay monthly child support of 1,000 dinars.

The case stemmed from a civil marriage that lasted over 10 years but broke down after prolonged disputes and a physical separation of more than five years. The husband filed for divorce under Article 232 of his national law, submitting certified translations, documents, and WhatsApp messages to support his claim that reconciliation was impossible.

The wife countered with claims seeking custody, child support, housing allowances, and a 50-50 division of shared

assets. However, the courts initially ruled that she had not provided sufficient legal documentation or certified translations to support her financial claims.

The Court of Cassation confirmed that Bahraini courts have jurisdiction over expatriate personal status cases and may apply the husband's national law at the time of filing. It also noted that the applicable foreign law permits divorce after prolonged separation when the marital relationship is irreparably broken.

While earlier rulings dismissed the wife's financial claims due to lack of evidence and documentation, the Court of Appeals later awarded her custody, child support, and housing support after determining that she was the primary caregiver and acting in the children's best interests.

However, the court rejected her request to divide financial assets due to insufficient proof of joint holdings or financial records.