

Wali Al Ahad highway project 60% completed

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Expansion works of Wali Al Ahad Highway in Riffa has attained 60 per cent completion.

The BD1,969,265 project expands the highway into three lanes in each direction as well as revamps all its intersections.

This was announced during a visit of Minister of Works, Municipalities Affairs & Urban Planning Essam Khalaf to the project's worksite between Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Highway flyover and the Clock Roundabout to the East.

Roads Projects & Maintenance Director Sayyed Bader Alawi, Roads Planning & Design Director Kadhim Abdul Latif, Acting Communications Director Hafedh Abdulghaffar and a number of engineers from the Ministry accompanied the minister.

In addition to the reconstruction works, the project focuses on constructing brick pavements, implementing a stormwater drainage network, lighting, signage and protecting the existing services.

Explaining the work progress, Roads Construction Chief and Project Engineer Fathi Al Farei told the minister that they are currently implementing stormwater drainage network on both directions, as well as



The Minister with officials during the visit

carrying out civil works, reclamation and laying of asphalt at some portion of the highway.

Construction of side pavements and concrete wall along the central reservation is also ongoing, the minister was informed.

Commenting on the project, the Minister said: "The biggest challenge the Ministry faced was the transfer and protection of services, especially high voltage ground cables."

The highway, the Minister pointed out, witnesses a traffic

volume of around 73,000 vehicles daily. It also contains a number of important facilities and institutions, on both sides, such as the Bahrain Defence Force Hospital, the Military Consumer Association, the Southern Governorate Security Police

Department, the Supreme Council for Women, Wadi Al Sail Mall, Wadi Al Sail School, Wadi Al Sail Housing Project and other important establishments.

The project is being carried out by Eastern Asphalt & Concrete.

Islamic banking regulations praised GOPIO names new president

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Bahrain's Islamic regulatory environment, where the Kingdom was placed first globally in overall regulations and in Shariah governance, was also praised. The Central Bank of Bahrain, recently, released a new Shari'ah Governance module which is significantly impacting the Shari'a compliance and governance standards among Islamic banks in Bahrain, in an effort to set clear benchmarks for the global Islamic banking market. The Shari'a Governance module sets higher standards of transparency, governance and competence, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the management and the Board of Directors towards Shari'a compliance.

Fundamental to the growth of all banks is the power of data. Supporting the development of its financial services industry, Bahrain has also just been announced as the regional

leader in ICT Development for the fourth year running, enabling other sectors to take advantage of the state-of-the-art technology available in the Kingdom.

"With Bahrain's very high level of internet usage, we are capitalising on the development of the ICT sector," said John Kilmartin, Executive Director of ICT at the Bahrain Economic Development Board (EDB). "Amazon Web Services (AWS) recently announced the launch of its first Region in the Middle East based in Bahrain. This is an indicator of the sentiment around investment in ICT here. We are in a unique position to foster the growth of disruptive technologies and promote innovation in traditional industries."

The index measures ICT development based on skills, access and usage, relying on quantitative data sources from UNESCO and ITU. Bahrain is leading the MENA region in



Khalid Hamad

the ICT Development Index, ranking 33 out of a total of 188 countries worldwide, and far ahead of the other players in the region. Furthermore, Bahrain's key strengths rest on an extremely high level of internet penetration, with 98% of the population being active internet users; this compares to an average of only 77.6% in European countries. It has amongst the highest levels of smartphone ownership, supporting a significant level of social media and online banking usage.



John Thomas Kilmartin

The Kingdom is supporting the disruptive power of technology and the growth of new industries by continuing with a policy of regulatory reform. This year saw the establishment of a regulatory sandbox, the introduction of Shari'a-compliant and traditional crowdfunding regulations, and saw the launch of Bahrain Fintech Bay, the largest Fintech hub in the Middle East, creating the right framework for technology to disrupt traditional Islamic finance.

GOPIO names new president

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Sunny Kulathakal was sworn in as the President of Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO).

Kulathakal who is actively involved with Gopio from 2004 served the Organisation as its Middle East Co-Ordinator, Executive Vice-President & Global Ambassador.

This is also the first time, in the history of the 30-year-old New York-based global organisation, an Indian from Middle East region has been elected to handle the post, which all these years were enjoyed by Indians from the US and Europe.

GOPIO, Kulathakal said, has many schemes in the pipeline including starting chapters in all part of the world as well as rehabilitation



of Gulf returnees.

President of the Indian National Congress Rahul Gandhi, Indian politician and former diplomat Shashi Tharoor and entrepreneur Sam Pitroda congratulated Kulathakal.