

## Royal praise for re-election of BJA chairman

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His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, congratulated Isa Al Shaiji on his re-election as Chairman of the Bahrain Journalists Association (BJA).

HM the King and HRH Prince Salman commended the confidence entrusted to Al Shaiji by the association's members, which reflects his long-standing experience, professionalism and contributions to the advancement of Bahraini journalism.

They also congratulated the newly elected board members, wishing them success in achieving the association's goals, upholding its mission in serving its members, advancing Bahraini journalism, and developing the skills and capabilities of journalists.

## 35 migrants die crossing Niger

AFP | Niamey, Niger

At least 35 migrants have died attempting the dangerous crossing of the Niger desert to Libya or Algeria on their way to Europe, a campaigning group said yesterday.

"Based on our own information, 35 to 40 migrants have died between January and August while crossing the desert," Aziz Chehou of the Niger NGO Alarme Phone Sahara told AFP.

Among the tens of thousands of people hoping to reach the North Africa coast for smuggling boats to Europe, many die after being abandoned by smugglers or after their vehicles break down en route.

Thousands of others are stranded in the desert after being turned back by border police in Libya or Algeria.

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# HM King lauds Trump, Putin on historic Alaska summit

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His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa sent congratulatory messages to US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, marking the successful historic summit they held in Alaska.

In the message, HM the King extended his best regards and appreciation to President Trump and President Putin, wishing them continued health and happiness, and the US and Russia further progress and prosperity.

His Majesty congratulated both leaders on the achievements of the summit, which addressed the Ukrainian crisis and paved the way for constructive steps toward ending the conflict and advancing sustainable peace



His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa meets with President Donald Trump during a bilateral session at the Ritz-Carlton in Riyadh on May 21, 2017

in Europe and worldwide.

HM King Hamad also praised their remarks describing the

gathering as a "great, historic

day," noting that the summit's

outcomes represent a pivotal

moment in global peace efforts.

Reaffirming pride in the close

strategic partnership between

Bahrain and the US and Russia, His Majesty underscored the Kingdom's commitment to strengthening bilateral ties for the benefit of both nations and their people.

### Hope

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs described the meeting as a historic step that inspires hope for global peace.

In a statement, the Ministry commended the constructive progress made during the talks on the Ukrainian crisis, noting that such engagement could pave the way for ending the conflict, promoting stability across Europe, and reinforcing international peace and security.

It emphasised the vital role of dialogue and diplomacy in resolving global disputes for the benefit of all humanity.

# Faith Tested

Hajj package prices to soar 20% as new tent rules drive up costs

Pilgrims face 20% hike

Costs tied to tents

67 campaigns apply

Rehab Mohammad  
TDT | Manama

Bahraini pilgrims who hoped for more affordable Hajj packages are instead confronting a steep price shock, as campaigns confirmed that 2026 packages will cost up to 20 percent more. The increase comes after last year's unexpected losses, with organisers citing higher operational expenses, particularly new requirements for tents in Arafat and Mina.

### Rising costs

The reversal from earlier savings hopes to rising costs is striking. Campaign operators, who declined to be named, said expenses linked to new service



Dr Ali ameen Al-Rayyes

The cost of Hajj packages in Bahrain has more than doubled in the past decade, driven by rising service fees and stricter logistical requirements.

standards had forced them to increase prices by BD200 to BD250. The adjustment translates into a 15 to 20 percent rise across most packages.

A source added that the hikes are seen as necessary to prevent



Stricter safeguards raise pilgrimage costs, testing families on sacred journeys

a repeat of last year's financial setbacks.

### Regulatory spotlight

The Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs, and Endowments has already received 67 applica-

tions from Bahraini campaigns seeking approval to operate next season. A meeting between the operators and the Supreme Committee for Hajj and Umrah Affairs is expected in the coming weeks to review preparations.

Dr. Ali Ameen Al-Rayyes, Director of Religious Affairs at the Ministry and Deputy Head of Bahrain's Hajj Mission, confirmed that new regulations will soon take effect. The rules will prevent campaigns from advertising packages or prices until they receive official approval.

### Transparency push

Campaigns may still hold promotional exhibitions, but only if their content exactly matches the ministry-approved profile published online. Al-Rayyes stressed that the changes aim to build trust by ensuring pilgrims receive accurate and reliable information.

The regulations will also prohibit free Hajj offers or competitions that promise packages, closing the door on misleading promotions.

For pilgrims, the season ahead will bring clearer safeguards and stricter oversight, but it will also place a heavier burden on families already budgeting carefully for the spiritual journey of a lifetime.



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