

Crucial Votes on Economic and Governance Bills

● Around 106,000 employees expected to benefit

● Informal Workers in Support Package

● Revamp Oversight Procedures

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

MPs to Consider One-Month Wage Relief Scheme

Parliament is set to debate a government proposal on Tuesday to use surplus funds from the unemployment insurance account to cover April wages for insured Bahraini workers, as authorities move to cushion businesses affected by the ongoing regional crisis.

The draft amendment would allow payments from the fund for one month, capped at each worker's insured wage and subject to existing legal conditions. Officials described the measure as a temporary step aimed at maintaining job stability, supporting employers and preventing layoffs.

Parliament's Services Committee has backed the proposal,



Given the scale of economic pressure, we believe support should extend beyond one month if conditions persist

MAMDOUH AL SALEH, CHAIRMAN OF PARLIAMENT'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

noting it aligns with broader efforts to ease financial pressure on private-sector firms, provided no workers are dismissed.

Around 106,000 Bahraini workers are expected to benefit, with estimates placing the April wage bill between BD80 million and BD100 million. The unemployment fund reportedly holds about BD600 million in assets.

While business groups welcomed the move, they cautioned that economic strain could extend beyond April. Lawmakers have also suggested expanding support for up to three months,



MP Hisham Al Ashiri



We welcome the initiative, but the economic impact is likely to last longer than a single month.

CHAMBER OFFICIAL

though officials said further measures remain under review.

Fishermen and Drivers Face Income Strain

Members of Parliament have



MP Mohsen Al Asboul



We will ensure the law is implemented to safeguard public funds and protect Bahraini workers.

LABOUR MINISTRY OFFICIAL

submitted an urgent proposal to expand April wage support to include fishermen, taxi drivers and other daily earners facing income loss.

The proposal, put forward by MPs Mohsen Al Asboul, Hish-



Mahmood Fardan, Chairman of Parliament's Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee

am Al Ashiri, Jaleela Al Sayed, Mahmood Fardan and Mohammed Al Alaiwi, calls for broader access to government assistance through the unemployment fund.

Lawmakers say many workers who rely on daily or irregular income remain unprotected, even as private sector salaries are covered under existing support measures.

Fishermen have been affected by seasonal fishing restrictions in April and May, while driving instructors, taxi drivers and bus operators report declining demand and fewer customers.

MPs described these groups

as among the most vulnerable, noting that their earnings depend on daily activity rather than fixed wages.

Set to Ease Rules for Questioning Ministers

Under the proposed amendments, a motion to question a minister would be considered valid if supported by a simple majority of MPs, replacing the current two-thirds threshold.

The draft also introduces a mechanism allowing such matters to be discussed in a closed session upon request by the government, the Speaker, or at least 10 MPs.

The request would itself be voted in secret. If two-thirds of members reject it, the debate would proceed in public.

According to the government's memorandum, the changes intend to modernise parliamentary procedures while balancing oversight and efficient governance. It stated that the reforms are consistent with constitutional provisions governing parliamentary work.

A new paragraph added to Article 146 would regulate closed-door sittings in cases of ministerial questioning, aligning with Article 79 of the Constitution, which permits confidential sessions under specific conditions.

Big Policy Moves in Bahrain

Three Major Decisions Shape Economic and Social Agenda

Rehab Mohammad
TDT | Manama

Shura Sends Disability Jobs Bill Back for Further Review

The Shura Council referred a draft law back to committee for further review, postponing proposed amendments that would increase job quotas for people with disabilities in the private sector and introduce mandatory hiring priorities in selected government posts.

The bill, already approved by Parliament, sought to amend Articles 11 and 12 of Law No. 74 of 2006, raising the private sector employment quota for people with disabilities from 2 per cent to 4 per cent for companies employing 50 or more workers. It also proposed making it mandatory for the government to specify posts where qualified applicants with disabilities would receive hiring priority.

The decision followed a divided debate in the chamber, with lawmakers split between those arguing the current legal framework is sufficient and others insisting stronger measures are needed to address gaps in employment opportunities.

Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Ghanim Al Buainain said the proposed amendment conflicted with the Civil Service Law, particularly the shift from an optional ministerial power to a binding obligation in government hiring procedures.



Bahrain has moved beyond care to empowerment and full social inclusion

DR JAMEELA AL SALMAN, HEAD OF SHURA COUNCIL'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Social Development Minister Osama Al Alawi supported the committee's position, stating that the existing law already provides flexibility to enhance employment rates through activation and cooperation with the private sector.

He also noted that Bahrain's latest figures show 15,644 persons with disabilities, including groups not currently eligible for work.

Supporters of the bill argued that many qualified individuals remain unemployed despite their readiness to work. They questioned labour market interpretations and cited long-standing job applications from qualified candidates with disabilities.

The Services Committee had recommended against approv-

ing the bill, citing concerns over implementation rather than legal gaps. It also pointed to compliance issues in the private sector, noting that a large majority of eligible firms have not met the existing 2 per cent quota.

Labour Ministry data presented during discussions showed varying annual employment figures for people with disabilities, alongside a limited number of registered jobseekers, raising further questions over the proposed quota increase.

Starting Pay for Graduates in Private Sector to BD500

Starting salaries for Bahraini jobseekers entering private companies have been increased to BD500 for university graduates, under updated labour market schemes introduced in November 2023, the Labour Ministry confirmed in a written reply to MP Jaleela Alawi.

Under the revised structure, diploma holders will receive BD430, while those with secondary education or below will start at BD350. The ministry clarified that private sector wages are not uniformly fixed but vary depending on sector, job type, qualifications, experience and market demand.

It noted that the average monthly wage for Bahrainis in the private sector reached BD892 in the third quarter of 2025, based on Social Insurance Organisation data covering

around 105,000 workers.

The ministry linked the salary adjustments to national employment and career development programmes implemented through Tamkeen, aimed at supporting 50,000 Bahrainis annually through job entry, career progression and private sector development initiatives.

Bahrain Moves to Finalise Tax Deal with Jersey

The Shura Council approved a draft law ratifying an agreement between Bahrain and Jersey aimed at eliminating double taxation on income and curbing tax evasion and avoidance.

The Council also agreed to fast-track the legislation under urgent procedures, referring it to the Speaker of Parliament for onward submission to the Prime Minister and His Majesty the King for final approval.

The agreement, attached to Decree No. 66 of 2025, provides a legal framework to ensure that income is not taxed in both jurisdictions while strengthening cooperation in tax transparency and information exchange.

Abdullah Al Nuaimi, rapporteur of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security Committee, said the deal would enhance trade, investment, and financial cooperation between the two sides. He noted that Bahrain currently maintains 49 double taxation agreements globally.

BD1 Million Fines Approved for Financial Crime



Dr Jehad Al Fadhil, Second Deputy Chair of the Shura Council



Khalid Al Maskati, Financial and Economic Affairs Committee Head

Bahrain has moved to strengthen its financial crime framework, with the Shura Council yesterday approving tougher penalties for violations linked to unlicensed financial activity and misuse of protected banking and insurance terms.

Under the approved decree-law, jail terms and fines of up to BD1 million will be imposed on individuals or entities found in breach of amendments to the Central Bank of Bahrain and Financial Institutions Law.

The changes, introduced through Decree-Law No. 37 of 2025, amend Article 161 of Law No. 64 of 2006 and target violations of Articles 40 and 41.

These provisions prohibit providing regulated financial services without a licence and restrict the use

of terms such as "bank" or other designations implying authorised financial operations.

Offenders may face imprisonment, a fine not exceeding BD1 million, or both, unless a harsher penalty applies under other legislation.

The Shura Council's Financial and Economic Affairs Committee said the reforms aim to reinforce Bahrain's defences against evolving financial crimes, including money laundering and terrorist financing, while ensuring alignment with international standards set by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

The committee warned that delaying the strengthening of such regulations could expose the Kingdom's financial sector to reputational and regulatory risks.