

Garden show attracts crowd, praise

AlQaed: iGA is keen on implementing initiatives that increase green areas in Bahrain

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The Information & eGovernment Authority (iGA) Chief Executive Mohamed Ali AlQaed yesterday praised the efforts exerted by the Kingdom to develop its agriculture sector and the continuous organising of the Bahrain International Garden Show 2019.

The show, held under the patronage of HM King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa with the support of HRH Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, the Wife of HM the King and President of the National Initiative for Agricultural Development, was inaugurated by HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Chairman of Isa bin Salman Educational Fund.

The iGA Chief Executive was speaking during the Authority's participation at the Bahrain International Garden Show 2019.

Besides serving as a platform for annual gathering, the show, AlQaed said has become a top destination for visitors and lovers of agriculture from both inside and outside the Kingdom.

The show which began yesterday will continue until Sunday at the Bahrain International Exhibition and Conventions Centre.

This year's exhibition, under the slogan 'Agriculture: A Promising Career Choice', goes in line with the government's effort in the implementation of sustainable agricultural practices.

AlQaed stressed iGA's support to execute a series of projects and systems that contribute to encouraging more green areas and increasing attention on the Kingdom's agricultural sector.

The Chief Executive thanked exhibition organisers and Shaikha Maram bint Isa Al Khalifa, the Secretary-General of the National Initiative for Agricultural Development for making the



HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Chairman of the Isa bin Salman Educational Fund, while launching iGA projects with Authority's Chief Executive Mohamed Ali AlQaed

exhibition a success.

The Authority showcased, at its pavilion, a Soil Mapping project which aims at gathering, analyzing and distributing geographical data related to Bahrain's soil. The project provides current geographical maps and more detailed ones in the future by analysing satellite images and relying on remote sensing techniques & field surveys.

Shaikh Isa launched the authority's 'Soil Mapping Project', along with a report on the 'Monitoring Progress to-

wards the Implementation of Targets & Indicators of the 6th Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Kingdom of Bahrain'.

The authority also showcased the importance of issuing the SDGs report that is considered as the first-of-its-kind in the region. The report comes in line with Bahrain's full commitment to the international agenda and directives of the Sustainable Development 2030 while also linking it to the Government Action Plan.

Alba supports Garden Show

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Aluminium Bahrain (Alba), soon to become the largest smelter in the world, is one of the exhibitors at the acclaimed Bahrain International Garden Show (BIGS) being held at the Bahrain International Convention & Exhibition Centre.

Patronised by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and supported by Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka Bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, Wife of His Majesty the King and president of the consultative council for the National Initiative for Agricultural Development (NIAD), BIGS is one of the much-awaited events in Bahrain's yearly calendar focussing on agricultural services, technologies and sustainable development initiatives in the Kingdom.

Speaking about Alba's participation at BIGS 2019, Alba's Deputy Chief Executive Officer Ali Al Baqali

said: "Alba is pleased to be part of the Bahrain International Garden Show, which plays an important role in creating and spreading awareness about Agriculture and Farming in the Kingdom."

"As a Bahraini company with a global footprint, Alba has adopted best international safety, health and environment practices in all its operations. We remain committed to carry-out substantial projects that will make a difference to the sustainable development initiatives of the Kingdom."

Alba's Deputy Chief Executive Officer Ali Al Baqali, Chief Administration Officer Waleed Tamimi, Director Safety, Health and Environment Mohamed Khalil, Sr. Manager Human Resources Hamad Al Shaibeh along with other Management members represented Alba during the opening ceremony, which was held on 20 February 2019.



Dr Mohamed Mubarak Bin Daina, Chief Executive of Bahrain Supreme Council for Environment with Alba's Deputy Chief Executive Officer Ali Al Baqali and Chief Administration Officer Waleed Tamimi at the Bahrain International Garden Show (BIGS)

Third MEA FinTech forum launched

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Harpreet Kaur

Central Bank of Bahrain Governor Rasheed Al Maraj yesterday called for developing a practical approach to finding the right balance between enabling innovation and protecting the financial system.

Speaking during the third Middle East and Africa FinTech Forum, Al Maraj warned: "We cannot sit idle and not provide the leadership and innovative thinking that this industry needs to grow."

He was addressing officials from the Central Banks of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Oman, Jordan, Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, in addition to senior representatives from the banking, finance, telecom and tech industries in the MENA region.

Held under the patronage of CBB, the forum focused on financial industry's key issues such as financial inclusion across the Middle East and Africa, open banking, artificial intelligence, and the impact of fast-developing technology on banking and societies.

Hosted by Bank ABC and Arab Financial Services (AFS), the Forum moderated by Aaron Heslehurst, host of BBC World News programme Talking Business, started with an address from Sophia, the world's most famous robot, who spoke of the potential for FinTech and AI to contribute to the development



Sophia at the fintech forum

of humanity.

Sael Al Waary, Chairman of Arab Financial Services (AFS) and Deputy Group CEO of Bank ABC, told *Tribune*, "FinTech can be summarised in four key areas which are innovation, integration, inclusion, and imagination."

"Moreover, there are several of these areas had seen significant developments like the way Central Bank of Bahrain, has introduced significant regulatory changes in the last year that mandate adoption of open banking by the Kingdom's financial institutions."

"Traditional banks would continue to lose market share to challenger banks and mobile wallet products, pointing to the

newcomers' more innovative approach to customer experience as the main driving factor."

"AI would take an ever more prominent role in how banks service their customers and also in how they operate internally. Today's innovation is tomorrow's tradition," he added.

Outside the main conference hall, an exhibition hosted a range of stalls that showcased innovative financial technology products, giving visitors the opportunity to see the latest in wearable payment tech, mobile applications, and other developments.

The most exciting part of the exhibition was the public debut of 'Fatema', who is the region's first ever emotionally intelligent 'digital employee'. Built by New Zealand-based Soul Machines for Bank ABC, 'Fatema' appears as an on-screen employee and uses cutting-edge digital neurology and artificial intelligence to emotionally engage with customers. She is capable of engaging in natural conversation with customers, measuring emotions and expressing emotions of her own in return.

Visitors to the exhibition were able to speak with her and ask her questions on specific Bank ABC products and services. In future when she is more widely available online, however, she will be able to respond to a wider range of queries about Bank ABC and its services.

Court rejects appeal of drug peddlers

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Two Asian women, convicted in a drug-peddling and prostitution case, have had their appeal rejected by the High Appeals Court.

Police arrested the pair after raiding their flat in Juffair fol-

lowing a tip-off received.

Several types of drugs, digital scales as well as currencies were seized during the raid.

During interrogation, the suspects told prosecutors that they were selling drugs to a Thai woman in Bahrain and

was consuming too.

The High Criminal Court earlier gave the first woman a three-year jail term and a fine of BD3000. The second woman received a lighter sentence for a jail term of 6 months and a fine of BD100.

Court employee arrested for accepting bribe

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A court official and his sister were arrested while accepting a bribe of BD50,000 for facilitating a convict's release.

Confirming the arrest, Interior Ministry, in a statement, said, "A Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments employee and his lawyer sister were arrested red-handed."

Anti-corruption and Economic & Electronic Security Director General confirmed that the arrest followed a tip-off received.

"The department subsequently carried out an investigation which led to the arrest of the duo while accepting an advance," the official said.

The case will be referred to the Public Prosecution, after completing legal procedures.

According to a source at the ministry, the employee was recently promoted to the post of an acting supervisor at the Civilian Court.

An official at the Criminal



Representative picture

Court, who reportedly approached the official for assistance, is suspected to have tipped off the Anti-corruption Directorate.

The suspect, the source said, was seen entering the official's office and stayed there for a long time before returning.

On the next day, the day of the arrest, the suspect's car was seen parked in the ministry's parking lots.

Other sources in the ministry confirmed that the amount of the bribe is believed to be BD50,000.

They also confirmed that the

official in the Criminal Court, who the suspect had a long meeting a day prior to the arrest, has been summoned to give his testimony.

As for the sister, who works as a lawyer, several lawyers said that she is an unknown name in the field. Lawyers also expressed their surprise about the incident affirming that releasing a detained convict in a fraud case is "impossible".

Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments Ministry didn't comment on the matter until the time this report was written.