

Business hours

Southern councillors approve fixed late-night trading times to protect neighbourhood peace

● Southern Council caps shop hours at 5am-midnight

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Councillors in Southern Governorate have agreed fixed opening hours for shops and workshops across the area, after an extraordinary session that brought together municipal, labour, police, health and trade representatives.

Meeting yesterday, the Southern Municipal Council unanimously agreed to regulate trading times for commercial outlets within the governorate.

The decision covers commercial and service premises in, and near, residential neighbourhoods and is framed as a way to organise trading hours and protect residents' peace and quiet.

In its report, the technical committee said: "Our aim is to preserve calm in residential areas, ease traffic on local streets and raise standards of public cleanliness, while reducing security and social problems linked to late-night trading."

Under the move, restaurants, cafes, boutiques and other shops in or near housing areas will be allowed to open from 5am until midnight. Garages, workshops, scrap yards and all other service outlets in residential districts will be limited to working hours from 7am to 7pm.

Debate then shifted to enforcement and the way licences are granted.

Criticism

Second Constituency repre-



The law makes clear that closing commercial outlets is the council's responsibility, while the municipality carries out enforcement

HAMAD AL ZAABI, COUNCIL MEMBER

sentative Mubarak Faraj criticised the decision to licence a shop selling electronic cigarettes at a petrol station in the Southern Governorate after it applied to operate round the clock.

He said the technical committee, which he chaired at the time, had already studied and rejected the request on the grounds that there was no need for a 24-hour outlet.

"Licensing a 24-hour vape shop at a petrol station is unnecessary and carries serious risks," Faraj said.

Council chairman Abdullah AbdulLatif told the meeting that a number of outlets properly licensed to trade around the clock complain about the fees that come with those permits, while some non-compliant shops open 24 hours a day without paying anything.

Checks

He called for closer checks on such breaches and for clear display of permits at premises that are allowed to trade through the night, so that inspectors can more easily spot shops which are breaking the rules.

The Councillor said follow-up work on these cases was once handled by the municipality alone, then moved to the Interior Ministry and is now shared between both sides.

Council member Hamad Al Zaabi drew attention to a sharia-based legal opinion, written into the law, which states that decisions to close commercial outlets fall to the municipal council, while the municipality carries out those decisions.

"The law makes clear that closing commercial outlets is the council's responsibility,

while the municipality carries out enforcement," Al Zaabi said, adding that the municipality is able to tell whether a shop trading 24 hours a day is in breach or not.

Support

Al Zaabi urged colleagues to support the technical committee's proposal for small and medium-sized shops to trade for 18 hours a day, from 5am until midnight, and to convert that proposal into a formal decision to be sent to the relevant authorities for action.

He noted that the same system is already in force in the Northern Governorate and called for it to be applied in the Southern Governorate as well, in co-operation with the Interior Ministry and other concerned bodies.

The Councillor also said the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) should carry out inspections and check the validity of work permits, pointing to its link with the municipality on issues such as residency breaches, and he praised staff in the municipal inspection section and officers from the Interior Ministry.



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Lawmaker seeks 'urgent' Malkiya land takeover for northern housing project

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Expropriating land south of Malkiya Housing to build a new estate has been proposed in an effort to ease long-standing housing pressure on families in the Northern Governorate.

The move comes in a proposal tabled by MP Hanan Fardan, who is calling for the state to take over the plot and use it for a new, integrated housing scheme serving residents of Malkiya and nearby areas.

The project is intended to absorb the large backlog of housing applications that local families have been living with for many years.

Position

MP Fardan said the site's position gives the authorities a valuable chance to launch a project capable of bringing a clear change to the housing file in the Northern Governorate.

She added that the

estate is planned to support family and social stability by allowing households to stay within their usual surroundings instead of being moved away from their communities.

According to the MP, the proposal also aims to ensure fairness in how housing schemes are spread across districts, so that projects match the real needs of each area.

Urban growth

She said it would back national plans for balanced urban growth that aim to improve quality of life.

MP Fardan described the proposal as part of parliamentary responsibility towards housing matters and a continuation of efforts to support the sector with practical steps that respond to citizens' needs.

The lawmaker stressed that decent housing is a basic pillar of social stability and said a project of this type would represent a responsible response to residents' demands and hopes.



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MP HANAN FARDAN

ICRF Bahrain set to host 17th Annual 'Faber-Castell Spectra' Art Carnival

Pradeep Puravankara
TDT | Manama

The highly anticipated 17th edition of the annual art carnival for students in Bahrain, 'Faber-Castell Spectra 2025,' organized by the Indian Community Relief Fund (ICRF Bahrain), is scheduled for Friday, December 5, at the Indian School, Isa Town Campus.

Registration for this prestigious event is currently progressing for students across the Kingdom. Entering its seventeenth successful year, Spectra aims to promote young artistic talent and build cultural links through art.

The event draws diverse participation from schools following Indian, Bahraini, and other international curriculums, focusing on elevating students' artistic skills in a creative environment.

Title sponsor

Faber-Castell has been the Title Sponsor since 2009, with Malabar Gold serving as the Presenter this year.

In preparation for the December 5th event, the ICRF



Key representatives from ICRF and the title sponsor attend a press meet for the event

ICRF Now 'Indian Community Welfare Association': Continues Operations with Official Permissions

Pradeep Puravankara
TDT | Manama

The Indian Community Relief Fund (ICRF), which has been operating in Bahrain since 1999, is currently functioning under the name Indian Community Welfare Association with official permissions, stated the Chairman Adv. V.K. Thomas.

He announced that the or-

ganization, which operates under the Ministry of Social Development, prioritizes the welfare of Indian expatriates in Bahrain.

The association continues to carry out various non-profit welfare activities.

ICWFA officials acknowledged the support received from the Government of Bahrain, the Indian Embassy, the Ministry of Labour, the Min-

istry of Interior, and the Labor Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) for these activities during the press conference.

The officials also confirmed that ICWA distributes Rs 1,00,000 (BD450,000) in Bahrain to the families of Indian expatriates who pass away in Bahrain and have a monthly income of less than 120 Dinars.

Moving forward with strong support from volunteers, ICWA

provides extensive services in collaboration with the government across areas such as medical aid, legal assistance, mental health support, emergency services, assistance with the repatriation of mortal remains, and free food distribution.

Those in need of such services should contact General Secretary Aneesh Sreedharan at the number 3940 1394.

Faber-Castell will provide free drawing materials to all participants.

Winners will receive trophies, certificates, and medals, and all participants will receive certificates. The top artworks from the December

5th competition will be featured in the ICRF 2026 Wall & Desk Calendars, set for release later in December 2025, and distributed widely across the community.

ICRF Bahrain, a non-profit organization established in 1999,

has spent 25 years working for the welfare of Indian workers in Bahrain, providing extensive support in areas including medical and legal aid, with cooperation from various Bahraini authorities.

Press briefing

The details regarding the 'Faber-Castell Spectra 2025' art carnival were briefed to the media during a press conference held at the Regency Inter-continental.

The press meet was attended by key representatives from ICRF and the title sponsor, including ICRF Chairman Adv. V K Thomas, General Secretary Aneesh Sreedharan, Vice Chairman Pankaj Nallur and Prakash Mohan, Treasurer Uday Shanbhagh, Advisor Aruldas Thomas, Spectra Convener Muralikrishnan, Joint Secretary Javad Pasha, and Faber-Castell Country Manager Mr. Abdul Shukoor Muhammed.

For more details on the event scheduled for December 5th, contact: Spectra Convener: Muralikrishnan - 34117864; Joint Convener: Nithin - 39612819; Email: icrfbahrain@gmail.com.

Spectra Committee recently met with approximately 40 school coordinators from about 25 Bahraini schools to ensure successful execution.

Students participating will be grouped into four age categories: 5-8, 8-11, 11-14, and

14-18 years. Participation in these younger categories is restricted to school nominations, while an online link is available for participants aged 18 and above.

Drawing materials