

HRH the Prime Minister thanked by Chinese Premier

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His Royal Highness the Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa received a cable of thanks yesterday from the People's Republic of China State Council Premier Li Keqiang, in reply to his cable of condolences and support to the efforts exerted by Beijing authorities to combat the coronavirus (COVID-19).

Premier Li extended his deepest thanks and gratitude to HRH the Prime Minister for his noble feelings towards the Chinese people in combating the pandemic, hailing Bahrain's stance in support of his country.

He lauded the strong relations binding Bahrain and China, stressing keenness on strengthening bilateral relations in all fields.

He highlighted his govern-



HRH the Prime Minister

ment and people's fight against the pandemic, adding that his country has achieved positive

results which would contribute to supporting the international efforts to combat COVID-19.

Premier Li commended the strenuous efforts being exerted by the authorities in Bahrain to combat COVID-19, reiterating his country's readiness to cooperate with the Kingdom for the protection of the regional and international security and health.

Meanwhile, China's Culture

Minister Luo Shugang has expressed his thanks and appreciation to Bahrain and to the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA) for their sympathy and support to his country in its response to the COVID-19 spread.

The minister highlighted, in a letter to BACA president Shaikha Maibint Mohammed Al Khalifa, the appreciation of the Chinese government and people of the

efforts and measures taken by Bahrain to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and their belief that Bahrain and China will triumph over the virus through mutual support and assistance.

The minister affirmed his keenness on coordination and support on the cultural policy between the two countries and his aspiration to speed up the resumption of joint cultural activities and events.

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Bahrain has been listed as the 63rd freest economy in the world out of 180 countries, according to the results of the Index of Economic Freedom 2020.

This was reported as part of a memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Finance and National Economy, and reviewed yesterday during the weekly Cabinet meeting, held remotely for the first time and chaired by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister.

It was also reported that the Kingdom ranked 41st globally out of 132 countries in the Global Talent Competitiveness Index 2020, and 38th globally out of 137 countries in the Global Entrepreneurship Index.

The memorandum included the Kingdom's economic report for the year of 2019, which in-

dicated GDP growth at constant prices of 1.8 per cent. It also noted that the oil sector recorded 2.2 per cent growth and the non-oil sector recorded 1.7 per cent growth. GDP recorded 2.4 per cent growth at current prices, with the oil sector decreasing by 3.9 per cent, while the non-oil sector achieved a growth of 3.6 per cent compared to last year.

The report further indicated that the hotel and restaurants sector recorded the highest non-oil sector growth compared to that of last year, with a growth

rate of 6.8 per cent. This was followed by social and personal services at 2.9 per cent, and the construction sector at 2.6 per cent.

Additionally, the report highlighted an increase in the number of employees in the private sector, reaching 96,333 employees, an increase of 2.8 per cent. Average monthly salaries for Bahrainis in the private sec-

Bahrain 63rd out of 180 freest economies worldwide

HRH the Crown Prince chairs first cabinet meeting held remotely



HRH the Crown Prince during the remote Cabinet meeting

96,333

is the number of employees in the private sector, which is an increase of 2.8 per cent.

tor increased by 2.4 per cent to BD740, with employment in the private sector expecting to increase.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet commended HM the King's directives aimed at aiding families affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19). It noted that this noble gesture reflects HM the King's continued commitment to supporting families in need across the Kingdom.

In celebration of the International Day of Conscience observed by the United Nations annually on April 5, the Cabinet

commended this initiative proposed by HRH the Prime Minister. It emphasised the Kingdom's commitment to fostering a culture of peace and conscience by providing quality education and implementing public awareness activities that promote sustainable development.

The Cabinet underscored that the health of citizens within the Kingdom and abroad remains a key priority. It also commended the tireless efforts of the Kingdom's medical workforce, who have provided exceptional care, resulting in strong recovery rates.

Furthermore, the Cabinet reviewed efforts made by the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Tourism and the Ministry of Health to ensure sufficient food and medicine supplies, and strongly condemned a recent terrorist attack by Houthi militias targeting civilians and neighbourhoods in Riyadh and Jizan, Saudi Arabia.

Other major developments in the Cabinet meeting

- The Cabinet approved a Draft Law amending five existing laws. The Draft Law aims to apply gradual penalties to those who neglect their professional duties, before being suspended from practising the profession and revoking licenses.
- The Cabinet approved the Kingdom's joining the Customs Cooperation Agreement and to take the necessary constitutional and legal measures needed to formally enable this. The agreement aims to further strengthen joint cooperation among Arab customs departments and activate coordination across economic and commercial fields.
- The Cabinet agreed to grant the relevant authorities in the Kingdom of Spain the right to legal jurisdiction over the data of its subscribers held in cloud computing centres in Bahrain.
- The Cabinet reviewed a periodical report outlining the efforts of the Ministry of Education in qualifying and training educational staff, and the development of programmes to improve the performance of educational institutions.
- The Cabinet approved the renewal of the membership of the Capital Secretariat in the Arab Towns Organisation and Organisation of Islamic Capitals and Cities.
- The Cabinet was briefed on the progress of work in projects implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, including: the social centre project in Budaiya, the elderly club in Jidhafs, the comprehensive disability complex in A'ali, the Social Care Complex in Hamad Town, the Social Services Complex in Isa Town, and the Project to build a comprehensive social centre in the Capital Governorate.
- The Cabinet also approved the following proposals submitted by the Council of Representatives: to further develop the citizenship curriculum implemented across the Kingdom's schools, to establish places of worship within the Damistan housing project, to establish a public high school for girls in Damistan.

HRH the Prime Minister's advisor receives German Ambassador



HRH the Prime Minister's advisor HH Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa received yesterday German Ambassador to Bahrain Kai Boeckmann. HH Shaikh Salman conveyed the gratitude of HRH Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa to the government of Germany for their care and attention, and for providing facilities throughout his stay for medical treatment. HH Shaikh Salman thanked the German ambassador for his efforts and cooperation and expressed his aspiration to consolidate relations between the two countries and peoples and to take their cooperation to higher levels.

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