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Cabinet vows to raise living standards



THE Prime Minister



SHAIKHA Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa chairing the first meeting of the new Cabinet.

Amir appoints Crown Prince as head of new Youth Council

HIS Highness the Amir, Shaikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, issued law decree no 26 for the year 1999, amending the text of clause 3, item (a) of the law decree no 5 for the year 1983 to establish a Supreme Council for Youth and Sports.

In accordance with the decree, clause 3 item (a) of the law decree 5 of 1983 is amended to read as follows:

The Supreme Council for Youth and Sports shall be formed to include the Crown Prince and BDF Commander-in-Chief, Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, as its Chairman.



The Crown Prince

The Prime Minister, Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, yesterday said that ensuring a decent life for citizens remains the cornerstone of the new Government's programme.

The Prime Minister, who was chairing the first meeting of the new Cabinet, said the new programme requires focusing efforts towards upgrading the living standards of the people and providing services in all fields.

The Prime Minister outlined the guidelines of the

Government's work programme, identifying the objectives of the Government's national work during the coming stage, in accordance with the duties contained in the letter of assignment issued by His Highness the Amir, Shaikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, to the Prime Minister to form the new Government.

He emphasised the great responsibilities and hopes on the new Government in pursuance of the progress and development, whose pillars had

been laid down by the Late Amir, HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa.

The Prime Minister affirmed the importance of preserving the prominent status Bahrain has achieved at all levels, mainly in the field of human resources remain the tool for development and achieving objectives. The Prime Minister said the security and stability enjoyed by the country will remain the solid basis for any development efforts. The Prime Minister

said experience has proved the advantage and importance of the teamwork spirit, and wished the Ministers success in carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

The Minister of Cabinet Affairs and Information, Mohammed Al Murawa, said after the meeting that the Prime Minister expressed appreciation to all the Ministers who assumed the responsibility during the previous period with full dedication and sincerity. He welcomed the Ministers

who joined the new Cabinet to participate in taking up the responsibility during the next period of the national work, and continuing the process of development and progress under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir, Shaikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, wishing them success in serving the country.

On behalf of the Ministers, the Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs expressed deep gratitude and appreciation of the valuable trust granted to them by HH the Amir and the

Prime Minister, asserting the determination of all the Ministers to exert efforts and work together towards implementing the work programme of the Government.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs also expressed confidence that all members of the new Cabinet will exert their efforts under the directives of the Prime Minister in serving the country, in light of the challenges the world is facing at the doorsteps of the third millennium. Pictures - Page 2

SLA retreats under attacks

JEZZINE, Lebanon: Israel's Lebanese militia retreated yesterday, under Hezbollah attacks, from nearly all the Jezzine pocket. It has occupied in southern Lebanon for the past 14 years.

The Israeli-paid South Lebanon Army suffered two dead and one wounded as it abandoned outlying positions and withdrew into the town of Jezzine as a prelude to a complete withdrawal from the increasingly untenable salient north of Israel's main occupation zone. Israeli warplanes struck

back repeatedly, hitting both the Bekaa valley northeast of Jezzine and Hezbollah strongholds in the Iqlim Al Toufah ridges and the Krum Al Arz mountain around the enclave. Three Syrian workers were lightly injured.

Israel has emphasised that an SLA withdrawal from Jezzine was purely the decision of SLA leaders, who said casualties had become too high. The move was seen as a possible precursor of a total Israeli withdrawal, promised within a year by new Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak. - Reuters

Saudi support for security boost Iran's right to defence backed

RIVADH: Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz defended Iran's right to boost its military power and denied that a rapprochement with Tehran was directed against Baghdad, in an interview published yesterday.

"Iran has the right to develop its military capabilities to ensure its security without harming or damaging the rights of others," he told the London-based Saudi newspaper *Alsharq Al Awwal*.

"All the countries of the world follow the same path. Why should a question be raised over Iran? Why aren't such questions raised over Israel's unlimited development of arms?" the Crown Prince asked.

He said last month's historic visit to the Saudi Kingdom by Iranian President Mohammed Khatami had allowed the two Gulf states to develop their bilateral relations in quantitative

and qualitative terms." On the islands dispute between Iran and the UAE, whose claim Saudi Arabia backs, Crown Prince Abdullah hoped that the improved ties between Teheran and Riyadh would contribute towards a settlement.

"By clearing the path for our relations in Iran, we can contribute to a settlement of the outstanding problems, notably that of the Emirati islands," he said. The Crown Prince dismissed Iraqi charges that the Saudi-Iran rapprochement was aimed at toppling the Baghdad Government.

"I have never sought to overthrow the Iraqi regime and has never reached an accord with anyone" over such a strategy, he told the paper, stressing that any change of leadership in Baghdad was up to the Iraqi people.

The Crown Prince called on Israel's Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak to prove by deeds

that he is not another Benjamin Netanyahu, a Saudi newspaper published in London reported yesterday.

Arabic-language daily *Alsharq Al Awwal* reflected Arab frustration with departing Prime Minister Netanyahu's hardline policy, which they blame for freezing the Middle East peace process during his three-year term.

To reassure Arabs he is unlike Netanyahu, Barak "has to show his good intentions and be truthful towards promises made and accords signed by his country," Abdullah told the newspaper.

Barak, who defeated Netanyahu in May 17 elections, has promised to move to implement agreements signed with the Palestinians, resume peace talks with Syria and pledged to pull Israeli troops out of southern Lebanon within one year. - Agencies

India rules out ceasefire

NEW DELHI/SLAMABAD: Indian Defence Minister Fernandes yesterday ruled out negotiating any ceasefire with Pakistan unless and until insurgents said to include Pakistani Army regulars were pushed back across the military line of control in the Kargil sector.

In an interview with the Indian news agencies, Fernandes said: "There is no question of negotiating any ceasefire. Our position is very clear. All those who have been pushed into our territory by

the Pakistani side, including Pakistani troops, should go back across the Line of Control."

Asked if Delhi could negotiate a ceasefire or a settlement to end the conflict in Kargil during the proposed visit of Pakistani Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz to New Delhi, Fernandes said: "One can show them (infiltrators) safe passage. This is a matter which can be considered."

India said that it has so far not received about Aziz's visit to Delhi. - Agencies

Algerian militants on trial in Paris

PARIS: Twenty-four alleged members of an Algerian militant network went on trial yesterday on charges linked to a 1995 series of bomb attacks in France that left 12 dead and nearly 200 injured.

Three of the attacks targeted Paris metro stations. The most deadly of these was a July 25 bomb blast at the Saint Michel metro station which killed 10 people and injured 116. The second most serious attack was a car-bombing outside a Jewish school near Lyon in September, in which 14 were injured.

Yesterday's court proceedings opened in a tense atmosphere with several of the defendants refusing to stand up when called by the presiding judge. "We're not getting up because you're not," they told the judge, Janine Drin. - AFP

Deadly substances 'left by Unscm'

NEW YORK: Russia accused the UN Special Commission yesterday of leaving behind some dangerous "chemical substances" in its laboratory in Baghdad and called an urgent Security Council session to discuss the matter.

The Council decided that Richard Butler, chairman of Unscm, would give a written report on the laboratory. Unscm officials said it was known that they had a laboratory with minuscule samples of nerve gas necessary for their work and to calibrate testing equipment. - Reuters

Jordan coronation

AMMAN: The official coronation of Jordan's King Abdullah and his wife, Queen Rania, will take place in a simple ceremony on June 9. "It will be a symbolic ceremony rather than a full-blown traditional coronation. It will consist of a brief motorcade and a reception where the King and Queen will receive a limited number of well-wishers," an official said. The ceremony will be kept as simple as possible. - DPA

Girl dies in fire

A BAHRAINI girl suffocated to death while sleeping early yesterday morning when fire broke out at her home in East Riffa, writes *Hamad Iqbal*. The 16-year-old girl, who was identified only as Amana, died before the civil defence could reach the site. The fire did not cause much damage to the house. Her death was caused by inhalation of smoke. She was the only one at home at the time of the incident. - Reuters

\$181b for Cubans

HAVANA: Cuba demanded yesterday \$181.1 billion in US compensation for the death of 3,478 Cubans and injury of 2,099 in four decades of "war" by Washington against President Fidel Castro's revolutionary Government. The ruling Communist Party's daily newspaper, *Granma*, published a detailed legal demand which it said was presented on Monday to a Havana court. - Reuters

No more Mir...

MOSCOW: The Mir's current crew will leave the Russian space station in August, and the orbiter will circle the Earth unmaned until early next year, when it is expected to burn up in the atmosphere. A panel of top Russian space officials decided yesterday that the best option would be for the three-man crew to leave in August, said Vyacheslav Mikhailchenko, a spokesman for the Russian Space Agency. - AP



DOOMED: The Mir in orbit. - Reuters

At a glance	
PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04.58
Dohr	11.41
Asr	14.39
Maghreb	17.10
Esha	18.28
WEATHER	
TODAY	Forecast: Fine
Temperatures	Max: 42 C
	Min: 27 C
YESTERDAY	
Temperatures	Max: 40 C
	Min: 29 C
CURRENCIES	
Rates in dollars at 17:30 yesterday	
Country	Self Cash Draft
Bangladesh (10)	0.0804 0.0791
India (10)	0.0893 0.0891
Pakistan (10)	0.0720 0.0734
Philippines (10)	0.1028 0.0999
Sri Lanka (10)	0.0602 0.0530
US	0.6095 0.6065
	0.3778 0.3775
GOLD	
Selling price in dollars yesterday	
10 gm	36,700
1 ounce	1,06,000

Government vows to serve people

The Prime Minister, Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, received a number of cables of congratulations from brotherly and friendly countries and Governments, wishing the new Government success to fulfil the ambitions of the people of Bahrain. The Prime Minister sent cables in reply, expressing thanks and appreciation and wishing relations between Bahrain and their countries further progress.



The Prime Minister, Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, has been invited to pay a visit to Iran. The invitation was enclosed in a written message from the Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hassan Habibi. The message was delivered by the Iranian Ambassador to Bahrain, Mohammed Firuz Niya, during a meeting with the Premier.



The Crown Prince and Commander-in-Chief of the BDF, Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa received a number of BDF officers who have been promoted to the rank of Colonel by His Highness the Amir and Supreme Commander of the BDF, Shaikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. During the audience, the Crown Prince wished the officers success in serving the nation under the wise leadership of HH the Amir and Supreme Commander of the BDF. Present were the BDF Chief of Staff, Major General Shaikh Abdullah bin Salman Al Khalifa, and the Assistant Chief of Staff for Supplies, Staff Brigadier Ahmed Bu Alalay.



The Chief Executive of Bahrain Radio and Television Corporation, Khalil Al Thawadi, met the Director General of Gulf Vision, Dr Abdulwahab Baghdadi and the Administrative Director, Khalid Ouda. They discussed the preparations for holding the final ceremony of the 6th Gulf Festival for Television Production, in Bahrain at the end of this month, and reviewed means of strengthening co-operation between the Radio and TV Corporation and Gulf Vision.

The Ambassador of Bahrain, Abdulrahman Bu Ali, presented his credentials to the Syrian President, Hafiz Al Assad. Present at the ceremony were the accredited members of Bahrain's Embassy, Mohammed Yousef Salmeem and Ibrahim Ahmad Mubarak Al Umari, and from the Syrian side, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Farouq Al Sharaa, and the Minister of President Affairs, Waheeb Fadel, and the Secretary General of the Presidential Palace, Zuhair Ghazal Ameen.



The Prime Minister, Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, chairing the first meeting of the Cabinet.



Ministers taking part in the first meeting of the Cabinet.



The Prime Minister



Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs



Minister of Foreign Affairs

Ambassador says Yemen is safe and stable

Habib Toumi
Assistant Editor

"OUR country is stable, safe and secure and there is no need to overblow a situation that has caused some concern for fleeting days, but is now under control," said the Yemeni Ambassador to Bahrain, Mustafa Ahmed No'man.

The Yemeni diplomat told the *Tribune* that he is always amazed why people have a tendency to squeeze sensational facts on Yemen. "We do have problems, but then this is not peculiar to us. All countries in the world are facing difficulties. In crime figures, what Yemen comprises in one year was witnessed by Columbine High School in one day," he went on.

"The Government is vigilant." Last Thursday, the Yemeni Interior Minister said that the authorities have arrested a group of saboteurs who were planning to attack foreign targets. Officials said that the suspects were linked to an Islamic militant who faces execution for the death of four Western tourists in Yemen.

The report came two days after the Aden-Abyan Islamic Army threatened to kill foreigners in Yemen if its leader Abu Al Hassan Al Mehdar was executed. Yemen dismissed the warning as an empty threat.

Ambassador Mustafa, who will leave the country at the end of the month after spending three years, said that he was very pleased with the level of diplomatic relations between Yemen and Bahrain. "Our bilateral relations are historical. Ties between our countries are distinguished and very positive. They never experienced any problems," he said.

"I can safely describe them as exemplary thanks to the political wisdom of the leaders in both countries. Many Yemenis came to Bahrain in the 1940s, and they were so well received that they settled here," he explained.

The Ambassador deplored that the economic relations are not so positive as the political ones. "Trade between our countries is not as good as we wish. There are agreements, but their implementation is proving difficult, which is very frustrating."

A 'Made in Bahrain' exhibition was held in Yemen in 1997, and the two countries have agreed on establishing a new bank and other deals. Unfortunately, they never materialised.

"I have spent the last two months trying to push for closer economic co-operation, and I hope we can translate some of the agreements into concrete actions for the benefit of our peoples."

Bahrain currently sells aluminium to Yemen, and the Arabian Peninsula republic has financial dealings with banks in Bahrain.

The Yemeni diplomat says that there is room for closer trade co-operation. "We can bring all kinds of agricultural products to Bahrain, but the market is already flooded with produce from other countries. The competition from the Far East is too strong." He attributed the low trade exchange figures to logistics. "Transportation is not regular and there is no sea freight," he explained.

Ambassador Mustafa believes that the best way to boost trade relations between Arab states is to "push for a common Arab market that will serve the interests of everyone."

The Yemeni Ambassador denied there were serious strains in his country's relations with Saudi Arabia. "Our ties with Saudi Arabia have always been special. They are geographical, historical, and social. People living at either side of the frontier are close, and quite often, are part of the same family," he said.

"Unfortunately, every now and then, there are irresponsible and exaggerated reports on the border disputes. The situation has been ridiculously blown out of proportions. It is not as terrible as it has been portrayed in the media," said Ambassador Mustafa.

Technical committees have been set up by both countries to tackle the dispute. The recommendations will be eventually submitted to the leaders who will make the final decisions.

The Yemeni diplomat said he was optimistic about the outcome. "There are good intentions from both sides, and we should all expect satisfying results."

According to the Yemeni Ambassador, relations with Kuwait are now "back to normal, following the historic visit of the Yemeni Foreign Minister who met His Highness the Amir, Shaikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah."

"I can confirm that ties have returned to their pre-Gulf War level. President Saleh received a letter from the Amir of Kuwait, affirming that a new chapter is beginning and that the past is over."

Yemen earlier this month reopened its embassy in Kuwait for the first time since 1990. Kuwait had closed the Yemeni embassy during the Gulf crisis after Yemen appeared to side with Iraq during its occupation of Kuwait. Yemen said then it was in favour of an Arab solution.

Before the Gulf War, Kuwait had been a financial backer of Yemen. Scores of Yemenis worked in Kuwait, sending much of their earnings back home. "We are grateful to Kuwait because it gave economic, cultural and educational assistance to Yemen since 1962," said the Ambassador.

Referring to his country's bid to join the Gulf Co-operation Council, the Ambassador said that Yemen is part of the organisation. "Our geographical loca-

tion and our ties with the other countries of Arabia mean that we are part of the GCC, whether we are full members or not," he explained.

Ambassador Mustafa described his country's relations with the US as "very good." "I am surprised that so much talk and ink has been used with reference to this issue. Indeed I am surprised that people are surprised," he went on. "Relations between countries can and should be healthy and advantageous for the people. It is in the interest of the US to be in the region, and it is in the interest of Yemen to have close working relations with the US. There is military co-operation and the use of the port facilities is very normal. It is like a petrol station where ships fill their tanks," he elaborated.

The established diplomatic ties with the then Imamate in

According to the political system, no-one can present his candidacy unless he has the backing of 10 per cent of the members of the Assembly.

Reacting to a suggestion that for decades, Yemen has been associated with three prominent features, the tribe, the firearm and qat, Ambassador Mustafa said that "it is oversimplifying matters, but it is basically true."

"The issue of weapons and firearms is very important, but, thank God, the Government is working very hard to find the adequate answers," he said.

"The origin is very simple. Following the 1962 revolution, the country had no real army and no administrative organisation. Since the revolution wanted to protect itself, it distributed weapons to the people. Unfortunately, internal conflicts led to reducing the authority of the Central Government. The

and cultural tradition in Yemen. Yemenis have used qat as a means to enhance their work habits, but more importantly it has become the magnet around which the members of the community gather to discuss their issues, and sometimes conflicts.

More than 85% of the adults in Yemen use it, and an increasing number of young Yemenis use it too. Chewing qat in Yemen is part of the daily routine.

The Yemeni diplomat is adamant about the phenomenon. "Qat is a social pestilence that kills family ties. It is a real waste of time, money and energy. Imagine a man who leaves his family at 8 in the morning to go to work until 2. Then he goes to the majlis where he sits qat with his friends until about 8 pm. He then goes home, too tired to sit with his children, and goes to bed to wake up at the same time the following day," he said.

"It is also a waste of money. Hundreds of millions of Yemenis are spent on qat and is causing many economic problems. It is destroying agriculture since the most fertile lands are reserved to qat which consumes a lot of water, urgently needed by the State and the people," he said.

According to Ambassador Mustafa, it is virtually impossible to eliminate qat from the social scene in Yemen. "About 70 per cent of the people live in rural area and the production of qat is their primary source of income. It is not easy to replace it. The State also benefits from the taxes levied on qat," he said.

Answering claims that Yemen has not been seen in 1972, the Governments of the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen declared they approved of Yemen's union, but relations were strained. In 1979, tensions led to fighting that was resolved after Arab mediation. In 1988, the two countries agreed on an understanding that reduced tensions, and in November 1989, the leaders of both countries agreed on a draft union Constitution. The Republic of Yemen was declared on May 22, 1990. Ali Abdullah Saleh became President and Ali Salim Al Bilh became Vice President. The Constitution was ratified by the populace in May 1991.

Ambassador Mustafa said that the reunification of North Yemen and South Yemen was "very beneficial", and has accomplished many achievements. "It has enabled the people to move freely within their country. A son no longer needs a special permit that takes a long time to obtain to be able to cross into the 'other' territory to see his father," he said.

"Another achievement is that the reunited Yemeni land has become a vast area for investments. Now instead of seeing military convoys, people see agricultural tractors. The area is now larger and there are now more chances for investments," he said.

The fourth achievement according to the Ambassador is the multi-party political system. "It is a healthy system for a country that has been quite often through social frustrations and economic hardships," he said.

The 43-year-old Ambassador said that he would be leaving Bahrain next month to take up a new position in Canada. "I will recall with fondness my three years in Bahrain. It is a remarkable country that my family and I will miss," he said.

Ambassador Mustafa, who holds a degree in engineering from Cairo, has two daughters, Rukaya and Fatma, and two sons, Ahmed and Abdullaziz.



Ambassador Mustafa Ahmed No'man

firearm culture was born," he explained, doubting that the deep-rooted belief that 'firearms are the adornment of men' is valid today.

Estimates say that there are about 60 million firearms in Yemen, with an average of 4 pieces for every individual. Many people say that firearms in Yemen are the jewellery of women and the milk of babies.

Answering claims that the tribe is often stronger than the State, the Ambassador said that the situation has seriously changed. He knows that only the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in December 1967, but relations were often strained. In October 1969, South Yemen broke off relations with the US, but were restored in April 1990, only three weeks before the announcement of unification.

Relations between Yemen and the US were strained following the US disapproval of the Yemeni Security Council attitude on the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The US drastically reduced its presence in Yemen, cancelling all military co-operation and non-humanitarian assistance. The US supported the unified Yemen during the 1994 civil war.

Drawing a picture of the political, social and economic situation of his country, Ambassador Mustafa said that Yemen was faring well and that the future promises to be brighter.

"Politically, there will be presidential elections in October, although, so far, no one has presented candidacy," he said.

The President of Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh, was elected by Parliament on October 1, 1994 for a five-year term. Following amendments to the Constitution, henceforth the President will be elected by popular vote.

The Government of Yemen is composed of three branches: the executive branch, the legislative branch, a unicameral assembly in which 301 deputies serve four-year terms, and a judicial system based on Islamic law. Political parties in Yemen include the General People's Congress, the Yemeni Socialist Party, the Gathering for Reform, the Baath Party, the Nasserite Unionists, and the Al Haq Party.

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Qat, or Catha edulis, is a plant that originated in Ethiopia and spread to neighbouring African countries and South Arabia. The seedless plant which best grows at 3,000 to 6,000 feet above sea level and reaches a height of 20 feet (5-8ft in Yemen), has become an important part for the social life in Yemen.

The fact that its leaves can be harvested throughout the year and have a stimulant-euphoric effect make qat a very popular plant.

The principal features of the qat experience are increases in the level of alertness, in the ability to concentrate, and in confidence, friendliness, contentment and flow of ideas.

Qat which is chewed like tobacco is used in company, but may be used by individuals. The habit has a deep-rooted social