

Lanka cables are received

HRH the Premier yesterday received a cable of thanks from Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa in reply to his congratulations on his country's National Day. He received a similar cable from his counterpart Ratnasiri Wickremanayake.

Premier hailed

HRH the Premier yesterday received a cable of thanks from Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry chairman Dr Essam Fakhro for patronising the GCC-Chinese Economic Forum.

Crown Prince thanked

HRH the Crown Prince yesterday received a cable of thanks from his Brunei counterpart Haji Al Muhtadee Billah in reply to a cable of congratulations on his country's National Day.

Civic fees slashed

MUNICIPALITIES and Agriculture Minister Dr Juma Al Ka'abi yesterday slashed civic fees for 78 low-income Bahraini families living in rented premises. A total of 15,792 Bahraini households are benefiting from the scheme.

Iran ties 'positive'

THE Parliament chairman yesterday stressed the strong ties bonding Bahrain and Iran. "Our relations are positive and necessary rather than circumstantial," he said as he received Iran Shura Council first deputy speaker Mohammed Hassan Otrabi.

He stressed Bahrain's keenness to promote co-operation, describing mutual respect as a priority for both countries.

He also defended the legitimate right of countries in the region to develop nuclear programmes for peaceful purposes.

Shura Council chairman Ali Saleh Al Saleh yesterday received Iranian Ambassador Hussain Amir Abdullahyan and discussed bilateral relations.

Gulf nuclear group plea - 16

Co-operation talks

PUBLIC Security chief Major-General Dr Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani yesterday received Jordanian Guard Forces deputy director-general Brigadier-General Hussain Mohammed Al Harahsha and discussed co-operation.

Focus on rehabilitation

A GROUP of assistant prosecutors yesterday visited the reformation and rehabilitation directorate and were briefed on services provided for inmates to ensure their social re-integration.

Passenger number soars

PASSENGER movement soared this month as the kingdom hosted F1 events from March 12 to 14. During these days, 185,783 travelled through Bahrain entry points, with 150,618 using King Fahad Causeway, compared to 89,816 in 2009, and 35,165 the airport, compared to 14,724 in 2009. Visas issued through the airport to fans totalled 7,163, compared to 5,466 last year.

Insurance renewals on hold

THE General Directorate of Traffic has suspended insurance renewals for vehicles carrying non-Bahraini number plates and driven by Bahrainis for long durations, director lieutenant-colonel Shaikh Abdulrahman bin Sabah Al Khalifa said yesterday.

Registering a vehicle under a Bahraini's name or taking an assignment from its owner does not give the right to use the vehicle on the kingdom's roads.

This status is to be corrected by replacing the non-Bahraini plates with Bahraini ones, in accordance with the rules that stipulate that GCC or foreign number plates are to be used for tourism or transit purposes, he said.

Cabinet welcomes urban forum plans

THE Cabinet yesterday hailed plans to host the sixth World Urban Forum in Bahrain.

The kingdom expressed its readiness to host it, on the sidelines of the fifth forum in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The UN Human Habitat Programme and participating countries approved the invitation in recognition of Bahrain's support for the programme.

The session, chaired by His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, hailed his Human Habitat Award for promoting Bahrain's image, describing it as a catalyst for individual and collective human development initiatives across the world.

It welcomed Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva's



■ HRH the Premier chairs the Cabinet meeting

two-day visit from Tuesday following an invitation from HRH the Premier and said it would contribute to strengthening relations and co-operation.

Backing all efforts to ensure highest standard of education, HRH the Premier asked the

minister, Dr Majid Al Nuaimi, and Higher Education Council to finalise accreditation of the degrees issued by private universities, stressing the need to spare "our sons and daughters any burdens or consequences".

The meeting discussed putting a cap on bonuses for

government financial and administrative councils and committees following a recommendation by the financial and economic panel.

Plans to revamp the Casino public park in Muharraq and boost capabilities and equipment of the Public Commission

for Protection of Marine Resources, Environment and Wildlife were approved.

The meeting also approved a draft law to ratify a civil aviation services agreement with Oman and a draft agreement with Greece to encourage and protect investments.



■ HRH the Premier receives dignitaries, officials and citizens

Respect for law 'is vital'

BAHRAIN is a state of law and institutions have been reinforced by the royal reforms, HRH the Premier said yesterday.

Law and regulations have been set to be respected by all, including the government which enacted them, he said, stressing zero tolerance with those who disrespect them.

Receiving senior officials, scholars, journalists and citizens in the presence of Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs chairman Shaikh Abdulla bin Khalid Al Khalifa and the Shura Council chairman, HRH the Premier called on citizens to work hard for the advancement of Bahrain as an indication of their loyalty to it and allegiance to its wise

leadership. He said the government will spare no effort to ensure a decent life for all and upgrade its services.

HRH the Premier expressed delight with the progress of development projects and confirmed his government's intention to launch more projects and pave the way for investment, hailing the key role played by businessmen and families. He vowed to support the GCC co-operation march to bring about further unity among the Gulf people who are bound by common fate, history and kinship.

He also discussed Bahrain's ties with regional and international countries and how to translate them into joint co-operation.



■ HRH the Crown Prince and Economic Development Board chairman yesterday received Ithmaar Bank board chairman Prince Amr Mohammed Al Faisal and stressed the need to adopt policies that would fortify the region against economic crisis. He asserted that the kingdom's well-studied policies and precautionary procedures have contributed to the stability of its economic and financial sectors.

BD2,000 basic pay for judges?

JUDGES could soon be getting a minimum monthly salary of BD2,000, if MPs have their way.

The salary, designed to guarantee a good standard of living and reduce the risk of corruption, was recommended by parliament's legislative and legal affairs committee yesterday.

During discussions on the judiciary authority law, panel chairman

Khalil Al Marzooq also called for the Supreme Judiciary Council to be independent of the Justice and Islamic Affairs Ministry.

He suggested the budgets of both should be kept separate as minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ali Khalifa prepares a new ranking and employment structure.

"He will have to come up with a complete study on tables deter-

mining wages, allowances, bonuses, promotions and the division of individual courts.

"Complete guidelines on selection and employment of judges should also be drawn up to ensure fairness.

"The starting salary for any judge should not be less than BD2,000 and this is one of the major amendments we have made to the law." Changes to the bill will now be put to vote.

Bahrain 'model of openness'



■ HRH the Crown Prince with businessmen

OPENNESS and stability have made Bahrain a civilised country that is a beacon of co-existence between all sects, religions, races and civilisations, His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander, said yesterday.

In such an open and stable kingdom, the satisfaction of all tastes is ensured in total respect of public decency, Arab and Islamic feelings, HRH the Crown Prince said as he received traders and businessmen.

"We must ensure freedom for those who have chosen to live in Bahrain," he said, stressing the need to protect diversity. This is

what has made Bahrain the country and Bahrain the people a model of responsible freedom and security and safety for citizens, visitors, expatriates and investors. He described tolerant Islam as the main source of legislation and the basis of all laws in Bahrain, stressing the importance of taking into account the rights and interests of all parties.

His Majesty King Hamad's reform project was credited for achieving economic stability and ensuring tangible dividends for Bahrainis.

"The project has turned national development into a cherished goal we all aspire to achieve," he said.



■ Oil and Gas Affairs Minister and National Oil and Gas Authority chairman Dr Abdulhussain Mirza yesterday received Abdulla Mohammed Al Khan who presented his book Muharraq: A Sea Rose.

Focus on reform

THE royal reform project was yesterday credited with anchoring good governance in Bahrain.

"Bahrain has progressed in all areas of good governance ever since the project was launched," parliament chairman Khalifa Al Dhahrani told an Interparliamentary Union meeting in Bangkok.

He described the National Action Charter and the amended Constitution as the fruit of the reform project and cited Bahrain's strides in controlling public money with the establishment of National Audit Court.