

# Heritage Festival begins

His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa attends opening ceremony

## Manama

The 26th annual Heritage Festival was opened yesterday by His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa on behalf of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

The festival, organised by the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities and based on a theme of 'Memory of Muharraq', was held at the Heritage Village near Arad Fort.

In his inaugural address, HH Shaikh Isa told the participants of the festival that the event, which is actively supported by HM the King, "reflects a commitment to showcasing authentic Bahraini culture and preserving it for future generations."

HH Shaikh Isa welcomed the commemoration of the city of Muharraq's rich heritage at this year's festival, which coincides with the celebration of Muharraq as the Capital of Islamic Culture 2018, highlighting the vital cultural contribution Muharraq has made throughout Bahrain's history.

His Highness then toured the festival, accompanied by Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa, President of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities, and was briefed on the festival's programmes and events, which focus on the important aspects of Muharraq's history in a number of areas including literature, art, sport and

architecture.

Shaikh Isa was also briefed on the Bahrain National Museum's collection of Bahraini Women's Fashion and toured the local Market and cafes. Later, HH Shaikh Isa observed folk dances and games and was told about the different workshops being held throughout the festival.

His Highness praised the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities for their successful organisation of the festival and wished the authority continued success in their work to highlight the cultural impact of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

For her part, Shaikha Mai Bint Mohammed Al Khalifa extended her thanks to His Majesty King Hamad for his role in enhancing the Kingdom of Bahrain's heritage and for his ongoing patronage of the Annual Heritage Festival.

She expressed her appreciation to His Highness Shaikh Isa for opening the 26th Annual Heritage Festival on behalf of His Majesty the King.

This year's Heritage Festival programme, Shaikha Mai said, highlights some of the many historic achievements and cultural features of Bahrain. "Bahrain's heritage, extending from the civilisation of Delmon until today, represents a great source of pride to the Kingdom's citizens," added Shaikha Mai.

The 26th Annual Heritage Festival will continue until 5 May.



Highlights of the event

# Weapons stolen from UAE facility in Somalia, sold on open market

At least 600 weapons were stolen in the past week from a former United Arab Emirates-run training center in Somalia's capital Mogadishu and are for sale in the city, weapons dealers said yesterday.

The weapons, including new Kalashnikov assault rifles and Chinese versions of them, were stolen by Somali National Army soldiers who had been trained by the UAE at its facility, three Somali men who purchased weapons from the soldiers told Reuters.

The Gulf nation has trained hundreds of Somali troops since 2014 as part of an effort

boosted by an African Union military mission to defeat an Islamist insurgency and secure the country for the Somali government, which is backed by Western nations, Turkey and the United Nations.

The UAE ended the programme on April 15, shortly after security forces at Mogadishu's airport seized millions of dollars and temporarily held a UAE plane.

On Sunday night a ship docked at Mogadishu's port was loaded with equipment from the UAE's training center, including several dozen shipping containers of weapons, dozens of armored

vehicles fixed with anti-aircraft guns and hundreds of cars, a port staff member told Reuters.

On Monday, gunfire broke out at the former training center where some of the

troops were still camped out, and UAE-trained troops who were still there fled with as many weapons as they could, before a rival group took over the facility.

UAE officials did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The dealers showed Reuters five weapons they said they bought from the soldiers. They all bore the marking "SO XDS", indicating that they belonged to the Somali army.

An arms expert said this was consistent with the previous arrangement between the two countries.

"The weapons belonged to

the SNA, which distributed them to the UAE training center. So they are marked SO XDS," he said.

"About 600 to 700 AK-47 and (other) guns were looted from the former UAE training camps," weapons dealer Jama Ali told Reuters, speaking from a home in Mogadishu where he and two other men presented the weapons.

Ali said they purchased the weapons for \$700, a significant discount on the current price of \$1,350 in Mogadishu for a new Kalashnikov. The dealers then began last night reselling the weapons at \$1,000 each, he said. (Reuters)



A Somali dealer holds weapons looted from a former UAE military training camp during a Reuters interview in Mogadishu