

Saudi visitors hail Farmers' market

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Visitors, including travellers especially from Saudi Arabia, this year to the Bahraini Farmers' Market exceeded 19,000 this week, said organising committee members.

Organising committee officials said they are now allocating special parking slots for vehicles coming from Gulf Cooperation Council nations to facilitate their access to the market.

Officials said regional visitors, especially Saudi Arabian families, had expressed pleasure in visiting the market. "Many told us they intend to visit the market next year."

The Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture, in partnership with the National Initiative for the Development of the Agricultural Sector, is organising the market.

Munir Al-Abd Rab Al-Rasoul, a Saudi Arabian visitor, described the Farmers' market as an opportunity to experience Bahraini culture and produces.



In pictures, the Farmer's market

The market, he said, stands out, thanks to the brilliant organisation and diversity of products.

Mohammed Al Ibrahim, another traveller, said he ea-

gerly awaits every year for the market to open annually. "I prefer coloured peppers and bought them in large quantities."

"What makes the market at-

tractive is the diversity of the agricultural products that satisfy different segments of visitors," said Al Ibrahim, adding that the market has become a top destination for visitors to Bahrain.

Kamil Al-Dar, another Saudi visitor, said the market gave him joy and pleasure and motivates him to visit again.

This year, the market has

the presence of 20 productive families, five nurseries, four agricultural companies and four apiaries, besides having special children's corners and dedicated space for family visitors.

Shura reviews today draft response to Royal speech

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The Shura Council will today discuss a draft response to the Royal speech by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa during the opening of the first session of the sixth legislative term.

Shura members will review a report prepared by the committee responsible for preparing the draft response to the Royal speech. Jamal Muhammad Fakhroo, the First Vice-President of the Shura Council, heads the committee.

The Council had presented the Royal speech to the committee to study and prepare a draft response. After approval today, the Council will present



the response to HM King.

Fakhroo had stressed the committee's keenness to address all themes of the Royal speech and to respond to them according to the vision of the committee and the Council's members.

Committee members include Dr Jihad Muhammad Al-Fadhel, the second deputy chair-

man of the Council, Dr Ibtisam Muhammad Salih Al-Dallal, Ijlal Issa Ahmed Bubshait, Sheikh Ahmed bin Muhammad bin Ali Al Khalifa, Dr Ahmed Salem Al-Areedh, Dr Bassam Ismail Al-Ban Muhammad, Juma Muhammad Al-Kaabi, Jawad Habib Al-Khayyat, Jawad Abdullah Abbas, and Hamad Mubarak Al-Nuaimi.



The Ministry of Works yesterday announced that it is currently carrying out levelling works of roads in Block 1038 in the Sadad area. The road, ministry said, will be paved with asphalt after the construction of the sewage network, which is in the final design stage. Implementation is approved according to the priority determined by the project's technical readiness, the region's rate of reconstruction, and the availability of financial funds.

Minimum wage system must for private sector, says GFBTU Secretary General

Ashen Tharaka
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Rising expenses and low income are among the long-standing concerns haunting expatriate workers.

Many expatriates here, reportedly, also claim to receive salaries lower than BD200, which they say makes it impossible for them to live in a world that is growing super expensive with each passing day.

Yes, the ground realities are hard to digest.

But there is a way out, says the Secretary-General Abdulqader Al-Shehabi of the General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions (GFBTU).

For this, he calls for setting up a minimum wage system in the private sector and a Supreme Council for Wages to review the wages periodically and boost workers' purchasing power.

According to Al Shehabi, the root cause of the issue lies in the lack of a minimum wage system.

He points out that it was, in fact, GFBTU that demanded minimum wages for workers, nationals and migrants alike first, and still treats this as an objective. "We were also the first, or



Every worker, national or immigrant, complains about low wage that fails to match industrial standards. This also tells us again that the minimum wage system is necessary and prerequisite for improving living standards

ABDULQADER AL-SHEHABI



Pics by Ashen Tharaka

maybe the only social partner, to demand establishing a Supreme Council for Wages, with workers' representation, to periodically examine the economic and social situation and review the wages, taking into account inflation and price hikes.

"We have organised many

activities and programmes for them joining hands with the International Labour Organisation and others, including Frederish Ebert Organisation of Germany. "One that requires special mention is the Fairway programme, meant for legal assistance to migrant workers hav-

ing employment-related issues. The programme, designed and supported by ILO, was executed by us.

We advise migrant workers to organise themselves in trade unions to secure their rights at work.

We are ready to help them in

this regard.

Minimum wage for all workers

When asked if it is necessary to establish a minimum wage for all workers, he said, "Absolutely necessary." "We believe in this and continue to urge to set a minimum wage system for all workers in Bahrain.

"We also claim to review wages from time to time to adjust for market changes, as high prices absorb the bulk of wages and weaken the purchasing power of the consumers.

He stressed that without a minimum wage system and regular review of wages to reflect market changes, this problem would persist. Tribune also brought to his notice the reports saying that around 71% of expatriates in the private sector earn less than BD200 a month.

Common nightmare

In his response, he pointed out that low wage is the common nightmare of all workers.

"Every worker, national or immigrant, complains about low wage that fails to match industrial standards."

"This also tells us again that the minimum wage system is



The General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions, founded in January 2004, is a labour union organisation concerned with defending the rights and benefits of workers, without distinction of any kind, such as nationality, origin, race or colour.

necessary and prerequisite for improving living standards."

What is the solution?

In this regard, he had also called on the authorities to execute the Arab Labour Convention No 15 issued by Arab Labour Organisation (ALO) in 1983 concerning wages which Bahrain ratified in 1984.

"This law could be a smart start to improve the wage system in the private sector combined with the minimum wage system," he said, adding that the move will help face inflation and other economic problems.