



■ The Premier chairs the Cabinet in the presence of the Crown Prince

Pearling hub plan backed

A PROPOSAL to launch the National Plan for Natural Pearls was endorsed by the Cabinet yesterday.

It aims to make Bahrain an international centre for pearl testing, natural pearl hunting and production.

The session also approved draft ministerial edicts on determining protected areas where oyster collection and marine dredging are permitted.

A draft edict regulating pearl hunting and production and another on regulating inland sea cruises were also approved.

His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa chaired the session, attended by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister.

The Premier gave directives to increase Bahrain's benefits from GCC agreements and requested the Industry, Commerce and Tourism Ministry to co-operate with relevant sides to provide the necessary support to national companies and banks to help them open branches in other GCC states.

The Premier praised implementation of the second edition of the Unified Framework of Priority Government Programmes.

The Crown Prince said that 15 initiatives out of 32 had been implemented and the remaining ones are being implemented according to schedule.

The Cabinet also approved a draft edict submitted by the Transportation and Telecommunication Minister on amending the regulation on fees imposed by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority on licences and other services.

It also discussed proposals submitted by parliament and approved draft government replies prepared by the Ministerial Committee for Legal Affairs.

Travel agents object to new deposit rule

By SHAHLAA AHMED

TRAVEL agencies claim they could be forced to shut down operations if authorities continue to ask for a BD10,000 bank deposit to renew their licence.

Around 40 agency owners gathered yesterday at the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) in Sanabis to come up with suggestions to replace the new rule that was implemented by the Transportation and Telecommunication Ministry in August.

The rule stipulates that travel agents must have the deposit guaranteed before applying for

or renewing a licence, while the ministry's Civil Aviation Affairs has the right to withdraw the money if a violation was made by the agency.

However, businessmen described the rule as "vague" and demanded structured regulations that would clearly list the types of violations and their fines.

BCCI Tourism Sector Committee chairman Sufyan Khaled Almoayyed and vice-chairman Abdulhakeem Al Aradi headed yesterday's heated discussion, which saw businessman Ibrahim Al Muhanna calling upon travel

agencies to close their outlets to force the ministry to withdraw the rule.

"If the ministry does not cancel this decision, I will close my agency and do the work on the streets like fruit and vegetable vendors," said Mr Al Muhanna.

"I am sure authorities would be forced to cancel the decision if we pressured them by co-operating and closing our agencies."

His suggestion was backed by several committee members and was included on a list of points to be referred to the ministry.

Other suggestions included replacing the rule with intensified inspections on agencies, and issuing undated cheques to the ministry to be used as compensation to passengers if a violation takes place.

Golden Travel owner Ali Abdulhussain Merza said he was alerted of a BD500 fine if he did not make the deposit.

He claimed the ministry also told him he could be jailed if he was late to register the deposit.

"I went to pay BD75, which is a fee every agency has to pay every two years, when I was told that I would also be charged BD500 if I did not register for the BD10,000 deposit.

Jailed

"They said further delays could get me jailed too.

"I was really worried about that and I had to begin procedures required for the deposit even though I am against the decision."

House of Travel chairman Ebrahim Amin, who has been in the field for more than 25 years, demanded imposing similar regulations on airlines.

"Why did they not enforce this decision on air carriers as well – they also sell tickets," he said at the meeting.

"Also, the minister must understand that we don't have enough information about the new rule.

"Why is it exactly enforced and what type of violations will they be charging us for?"

"I have been working in the field for more than 25 years and I never had any complaints against me. Why do I have to pay BD10,000?"

"However, if there is a violation that I did, it is the job of courts to get the matter resolved or penalise the agent and not the ministry."

However, some travel agents supported the regulation – adding that it would help "clean the market" by curbing illegal agencies that were not registered with the ministry.

Majority of travel agency owners who attended yesterday's meeting agreed to send a letter to

His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa in an attempt to resolve the issue.

The meeting was also attended by a number of members from the Association of Bahrain Tour and Travel Agents (ABTTA).

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DIVIDEND DISTRIBUTION ANNOUNCEMENT

The Board of Directors of Nass Corporation BSC is pleased to advise its shareholders of the arrangement for distribution of dividends to all registered shareholders as of the Record Date, which is 27th March 2017.

The dividend cheques can be collected effective 06th April 2017, from the office of Nass Corporation's share registrar, **Karvy Computershare W.L.L.**

Share Registrar Address

Karvy Computershare W.L.L.

7th Floor, Al Zamil Tower,
Building 31, Road 383, Block 305
P.O.Box 514, Manama
Kingdom of Bahrain
Tel: 973-17-215080, Fax: 973-17-212055
Email: bahrain.helpdesk@karvy.com

Shareholders are requested to produce original share certificates/latest statement of account issued by Bahrain Bourse to the Registrar for collection of dividend cheques. Shareholders residing outside Kingdom of Bahrain may send their request to the Registrar if they prefer to receive dividend cheques by mail.

Board of Directors
Nass Corporation BSC