

BAHRAIN

A monthly newsletter issued by the Bahrain Freedom Movement

Fully-Fledged Democracy; the Saudi way

The Consultative Council Ends The Hope of Democrats

The Saudi "Consultative Council" has at long last had the names of its members published. King Fahad took the painful step of accepting that things are no longer as they were, and some sort of a forum had to be formed. For more than sixty years since the inception of the Saudi Kingdom, the ruling family has been resisting the acknowledgement that the political system needs to be overhauled. Many promises were made in the past, but it was only the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait that forced the Riyadh's government to take some action. Eighteen months ago, King Fahad announced his intention to form the Council, acknowledging the need for some improvement in the system. There have been nominal pressures from the outside world having fought a ruthless war to oust the Iraqis out of Kuwait. Many questions were then asked about the nature of the political system in the Gulf region, and whether these systems were worth the efforts being made to safeguard them.

Among the perplexing phenomena in this respect was the lack of any form of any public body to ensure adequate accountability of the system. The ruling tribes, some of whom have been in power for over two centuries, have resisted all the pressures to allow any form of democratic practices. Democracy, according to their propaganda machines, was alien to the values and traditions of the region, and that the old style of leadership was the best alternative to the people. In maintaining the status quo, these governments had to resort to the most ruthless practices to prevent any public outcry against the continuing dictatorship.

The West kept a low profile on the issue of political rights in the Gulf region, especially in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. But after a lot of activities in the last two years, things had to change and the Saudi monarch acted to prevent an international outcry by announcing his intention to create a consultative council with appointed members. That was in March 1992. Since then few developments took place apart from the appointment last September of the president of the council, Mohammed bin Ibrahim bin Jbair and Dr. Omar Abdullah Naseef as his deputy last July. The seriousness of King Fahad was undermined by the fact that it has taken him more than eighteen months to appoint the sixty members of the Council. When King Fahad announced last month the names of the selected apostles for the new institution, it became clear he wanted no real opposition to his totalitarian rule. The whole exercise has made him the

undisputed, unchallenged and unaccountable monarch. All powers relating to the Council remained in his hands, including the appointment, dismissal and salaries of the deputies.

Perhaps the only significance of the latest Saudi gesture is the new charter regulating the functions of the Council of Ministers. Each minister is offered the job for four years renewable only by the King himself. The four years term of office of the Cabinet is similar to that of the Consultative Council. The role of the Saudi-styled parliament is to "express its opinion on the general policies of the state referred to it by the cabinet". It is charged with discussing the general economic and economic development plan and express its opinion. Its duties also include discussing foreign agreements and international contracts and concessions and studying the annual reports of the various ministries. Its viewpoints are submitted to the cabinet which has to study them. If it agrees with the Consultative Council's opinion then the collective agreement will be endorsed by the King, otherwise he will express his opinion which is binding. It is clear the role of the Council is symbolic. None of its members is elected, every member is appointed by the King himself and the Council can only consider matters put to it by the Council of Ministers.

Members of the Council have been chosen with great care. None of the known figures are included in the new list. Most of the members are professionals, university lecturers, journalists, businessmen and religious scholars. It is intended to have a balance between the various trends and religious affiliation. It is also meant to control the corrupt practices in the country. Members of the Council of Ministers are not allowed to take up any other governmental job unless King Fahad agrees to that. The nine chapters comprising eighty three articles make up the first "constitution" in a country which has, hitherto, opposed the idea of a written constitution on the thesis that Quran is the constitution of the country. The King does not want to be bound by any constitutional constraint. The whole written chapters governing the various bodies created in the Kingdom are tools in the hand of the King who is above any written covenant.

Despite the propaganda campaign unleashed by the Saudi media after the announcement of the Council's members, observers doubt whether the King's offer is anywhere near to what the Saudi people especially the intellectual elite like to see in their country. It was expected that

the appointment of the Council members would take longer but events in recent months have forced the Saudi monarch to proceed forward with his plans. Three months ago, advocates of openness and human rights were swiftly rounded up and threatened with severe repercussions. Few of their supporters are still in jail. The sentiment against the government is rising especially in the light of the various regional developments. These include last year's Kuwaiti elections and this year's Yemeni ones. The Saudi educated class which is expanding in numbers and quality, is incensed by the lack of will to acknowledge the need to overhaul the political system in the Arabian peninsula. It is unlikely that an appointed consultative council with no power of its own and no popular support is likely to satisfy the conditions for peace and tranquillity in this oil-rich state.

It is too soon to judge the outcome of the latest political exercise, but it is evident that the Saudi regime has done all it could to prop up the experiment. King Fahad has gone out of his way to set free around forty political prisoners in the eastern district, some of whom were accused of carrying out bomb attacks on oil installations, although those accusations were never substantiated. Some political exiles were allowed a safe return last month and the atmosphere appears to be returning to a degree of normality. The Consultative Council is thus a step towards a political solution intended to break the deadlock in the political stalemate engulfing the country for the last decade. It is expected that calls for a more progressive and liberal code of political openness to be adopted will continue for the foreseeable future especially in light of the continued detention of some political activists in central Arabia. Unless a popular debate is allowed to flourish and a wider political participation is called for the recent development will not become more than a propaganda exercise which will soon lose its shine.

The future does not look very bright for the Gulf region. Whatever the Saudis do in their country is meant to be followed by other states in the region. Bahrain's government is therefore the most optimistic about her relations with the government of Saudi Arabia since her style of "democracy" is similar to that of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, it will be difficult to imagine the people of the region accepting the pre-prepared formulae imposed on the people by the regimes. It is no more the age of mandates and unlimited divine rule to be enjoyed by tyrants who attach no value to human value.

AOHR : Bahrain Violated Human Rights

The Cairo-based Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHR) published its annual report on human rights in the Arab World. Bahrain, under the Al-Khalifa, maintained its position as a major abuser of human rights. AOHR reported that calls for political reform have intensified and demands were made for the return of the dissolved 1975 parliament. After long wait, the official response was the formation of an appointed consultative council and limited "pardons" by the Amir (ruler) granted for some exiles and political prisoners. In the mean time restrictions on individual and collective freedom continued to be in place.

AOHR detailed the current constitutional and legal frameworks. Articles 43 to 83 together with Article 108 of the constitution are still suspended. At the same time, laws that were issued in contradiction with the constitution continued to be in place. Amongst the laws are the State Security Law of 1974, Gatherings and Processions Law of 1973, General Penal Code of 1976 and its modifications in 1982, Supreme Court of Appeal Law of 1976, Trails Bases Law, Bar Law of 1987, Nationality Law of 1989, Press Law of 1979, Clubs and Association Law of 1989 and many other laws violating human rights and the constitution of the country.

Bahrain refused to sign the international conventions on human rights. The State Security Law empowers the interior ministry to detain political suspects for three years without trial. According to Article 195 of the Penal Code, the Supreme Court of Appeal is the only court before which state security cases can be heard. AOHR was alarmed by the extent of violations

to basic human rights in Bahrain.

Several people were arrested or barred from writing for sometime after delivering a talk, participating in a seminar or writing in newspapers about democracy and political reforms. Amongst them are Dr. Abdul Latif Al-Mamood, Ahmed Al-Shamlan, Ibrahim Bashmi, and other. Many Shia preachers were harassed after participating in religious gatherings or processions.

In 1992 the Amir issued two "pardons" for the return of 57 and 64 exiles. These were allowed to return under restriction and humiliating conditions. More than 400 are still in exile. Many who attempted to return were turned away. AOHR reminded the Bahrain government that preventing national from returning to their home and deporting others contravene Article 17, C of the constitution and international conventions.

Discrimination in Bahrain is wide-spread. Many thousands of people are still without citizenship despite the fact that them and their fathers were born in Bahrain. Locally known as Al-Ajjam, this community suffer from deprivation of all civil rights and are prevented from travel and further education abroad. Many were forced to change their names and deny their origins to escape harassments.

On 20 December 1992, the Amir appointed a Consultative Council of 30 members. The appointed council has no mandate for debating government policies or questioning ministers. Its role is limited to un-binding consultations to the cabinet on issues passed to them by the cabinet itself. This appointed council was not

received warmly, since it takes Bahrain one step backward to what it was in 1973. In response a petition signed by hundreds of personalities was submitted to the Amir demanding the return of elected parliamentary life and re-activation of the Constitution. Article 65 of the Constitution clearly specifies that under no circumstances the country may remain without a parliament for more than 2 months. Article 108 firmly states that article of the Constitution may be suspended only during martial law. When these Articles were suspended, the country was not under martial law. AOHR concluded that the formation of an appointed council fall short of meeting the minimum level of acceptable political reform.

Ibrahim Al-Khalifa versus Henderson

Last month it was announced that Ibrahim Al-Khalifa was appointed as under-secretary for the interior ministry. His fate hanged in the balance after the retirement, last December, of the British Director General of Public Security, Jim Bill. Then, Ibrahim was deputy to Jim Bill. When Henderson was announced as acting for the Director General (in addition to his other position as intelligence chief) Ibrahim found himself ousted and had to disappear for some months. Later, a settlement was reached. Ibrahim was appointed as under-secretary (largely ceremonial) and Henderson's way was cleared from competition. It is worth noting that the intelligence service has always been headed by a British since its formation in 1957.

Premier Quarrels With The Hilton Hotel

Bahrain's prime minister wants the Hilton (international) of Bahrain. The reason being that the land over which the Hilton stands belongs to Al Khalifa (so he claims). The problem stems from an interpretation of a clause in the agreement between the owners of Hilton in Bahrain and the prime minister's lawyers. According to informed sources, the clause states that originally the land agreement was for 25 years; at the end of the 25th year, the agreement becomes subject to renewal. As it stands, one would tend to side with the prime minister because he has the right not to renew. However, the law was written to mean that the lessee or Hilton is the one who decides; and it is assumed that both Hilton and Khalifa have interest in renewing the contract.

Currently, Hilton is totally interested in renewing the soon-to-end contract. Following the second expiry (or should the lessee decided to discontinue), the land, and more importantly the structure, become part of Khalifa's substantial empire. To a common Bahraini, the overall agreement seems unacceptable if only because the whole building would be lost. Incidentally, Hilton constructed the first building in today's diplomatic area, the new city centre of Bahrain.

There are several such cases involving members of Al Khalifa. As of the date, Hilton is 80% owned by Ebrahim Ishaq (in his early fifties but recently married to a young local following the

death of his first wife). Ishaq is a prominent figure in Bahrain businesses; in hotel, airline and real estate. Hilton is a five-star concern, an honour provided to four other hotels only. The prime minister continues to receive monthly rent for the land from Hilton. In order to solve the case, the two sides agreed to allow their respective lawyers present their arguments before a court.

The outcome is not clear; still, the regime (but not necessarily the prime minister) may lose from either decision. If the court votes for the prime minister, then the outcome would affect the business community. This will be interpreted as a fiasco but done through legal channels. The regime is aware that business leaders have many complaints of the authorities' bad performance in many fields. The new case will only add salt to the injury. Still, this unique litigation would set a standard for future cases if only there are various other such matters. For example, the structure of the newly built Samiramis hotel in the stylish Exhibition Road has a similar clause. Worse yet, the Samiramis agreement is for 15 years only but then renewable. As if this is not enough, the land owner is this time is Sheik Mohammed, younger brother of the Amir and the prime minister. Sheik Mohammed does not give a damn to the court system in Bahrain or the Amir.

In the case Khalifa fails to win court verdict, the regime may regard the matter as a blow. This is not acceptable to Al Khalifa who consider themselves above laws, even those put by them. It must be mentioned that this court case involving Khalifa is unique as it is not the practice of Al Khalifa to settle their disputes in courts; often they resolve problems by force. However, the current case involves a very rich person with strong market connections. Ishaq's family is quite famous among the Bahrain sunni population. Many merchants are siding with Ishaq. The prime minister himself does not like the case be the talk of the town, hence agreed to settle it in the court. In fact, Khalifa totally distances himself from such matters; the job is reserved for the lawyers. Still, Khalifa owns 20% of Hilton. But he likes total ownership.

Tortured for Their Slogans

Mahdi and Jaafer Sahwan are two brothers who are frequently arrested and tortured. In the past ten years, they spent many years in jail. Last month on 10 and 11 August, they were arrested and tortured severely. The charge is their participation in a religious procession on 9 August by chanting slogans against Iraqi president (Saddam), denouncing Israeli aggression on Lebanon and criticising Saudi royal family. Furthermore, they were threatened of handing over to Saudi Arabia for "punishment". Their passports were confiscated.

Qatar: The Fly in the Ointment of the GCC

Qatar is walking tall. It is not afraid to sign up two Iraqi football players to one of its national clubs, despite loud protest from Kuwait. Indeed it is improving its relations with Iraq in various other fields. Last year, in a bloody dispute, the tiny emirate confronted the Saudis over the Al Khaffous border post. It also exhibited Stinger Surface-to-Air Missiles in a military parade. Moreover Doha refused to reveal the supplier of this advanced shoulder-held American-made weapon.

The peninsula, which is shaped like a thumb poking out of Saudi Arabia, is involved in a long-running dispute with Bahrain over Hawar and Fasht-e-Deeble islands, and never hesitated to use military means to express its anger with the Bahraini government. The Qatari ruling family, Al Thani, have recently filed a complaint at the International Court of Justice in the Hague, without coordinating with the Bahraini authorities, as the norms require. They outmanoeuvred the Al Khalifa whom they accuse of dragging their feet!!

Finally, and also contrary to an understanding amongst the six GCC states, Qatar received the Jordanian Crown Prince Hasan and vowed to improve relations with Amman. Diplomatic circles say that Kuwait is dismayed. Long Live Qatar!!

Bahrain: A Minister With Experience

The Bahraini prime minister has appointed his son, Ali, as a minister for transport. Some people have accused Sheikh Khalifa of nepotism. How dare they? Sheikh Ali was appointed on his own merits. He is a very experienced young man, when it comes to transport. Indeed, he used to be called "Sheikh 40 Civics". The story, known to all Bahrainis of his generations



Banners calling for the restoration of the constitution are often to be seen in Bahrain

is as follows:

In the mid 1970's, Gulf Polytechnic - now part of the University of Bahrain, and used to be called the Gulf technical college - was an area for rich kids to hang about waiting for female students to come out of college. One insider revealed that Ali was a prominent visitor, who spent his afternoons outside the gates in Isa Town.

This was a great cause of shame to his father who had to divert the son's "energy" elsewhere. The elsewhere was what is known amongst expatriates as "Pepsi Cola Flats", where young expatriate females live (and work). Sheikh Ali acquainted himself with one of them and bought her a Honda Civic Hatchback. Her friends were jealous, (of the car of course), so his excellency, being generous as he is bought another 39 Honda Civics. Suddenly Bahrainis began to notice metallic silver Honda Civics roaming the streets of the Islands, driven by Pepsi girls. To their credit they were excellent drivers, albeit a little fast. In fact Sheikh Ali deserves all the credit for their good driving manners. Now, if this is not good experience in transportation, I don't know what is!!!

Interrogation Goes on

Following recent religious procession (allowed by an article in the Constitution), the management committee of Sanabis Religious Gathering Premises, known as Ma'tam, were summoned for interrogation by the State Security Investigation Department. On 17 August, Mr. Saeed Habib, Mohsen Mirza Al-Arabi, Hasan Ahmed Abdulla, Sayyid Nasser Hashim Al-Alawi and Abdul Shaheed Abdulla Al-Suroor, were intimidated for allowing criticism of government and Saudi Arabia to take place during the procession. Following the latest mode of investigation, all were threatened that they would be handed over to the Saudis for "appropriate punishment".

These arrests followed a procession of more than a thousand people in the streets of Sanabis town, following the death of a grand religious scholar in Iraq, Ayatollah Sabzwari. Many people were arrested including: Jaafer Sahwan, Mahdi Sahwan, Mohammed Salman, Fadhel Ibrahim Hssan. The latter was carrying a video camera which was confiscated and destroyed on the spot by police.

Deportation is Their Latest Weapon

They are singitories to several international conventions. Their government is a member of the United Nations. They also attend international conferences on various matters including Human Rights. Only last June, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, Ghazi Al Qusaibi, addressed the Geneva UN convention on Human Rights and detailed his government's adherence to the various protocols. However, none of these utterances become of value except when their significance matters. People sometimes become surprised when talking of human rights abuses in an oil-rich state. To the outside world, people in this troubled region live in an oasis of peace, prosperity and tranquility. The reality is definitely different from all those assumptions.

Bahrain, for example, is a country which is unique in its treatment of its own citizens. Although there are numerous reports from international organisations on the human rights violations, what is not reported to these organisations is in abundance. One of the most important developments over the last few years is the banning of the citizens from returning to their

own country. Anyone who has spent more than a year, say, will find it extremely difficult, and sometimes, impossible to gain entry into the country. Since the end of the second Gulf war, many exiles ventured to go back but were unashamedly turned back. The Amir preempted the people's desire to return by indicating his willingness to let few exiles into the country provided they have asked for a pardon. Some did that whilst others refrained from doing so as a matter of principle. A portion of those who had applied for the Amir's gratitude were granted leave to enter. Those who went back without prior permission were turned back after interrogation, and often, torture.

Here are some of the cases. Sayyed Abdulla Al Ghuraifi was handed back to the Bahraini authorities twice in the last five years. The first was by the government of Dubai in 1988, and the second in October last year. In both cases, he was interrogated and then deported. He insisted he wanted to stay and that they had anything against him, he was ready to face trial. That was never to be done. Many students from the Theology college in Qom tried to gain access to

the country over the last three years but were all deported either to where they had come from or to one of the Gulf states. These countries are favoured by the Bahraini government because they are closed to the outside world, and anyone settling on their soil will have no choice but to keep silent.

Last year, a prominent figure, Dr. Abdul Hadi Khalaf who had lived in Sweden for many years boarded an aircraft to Bahrain via London. He enjoyed a brief stay at the airport in the hospitality of the special branch and was sent back to London from where he returned to Sweden. On 27.12.1992 Hashem Jum'a Ibrahim was deported to Dubai one day after his return from Bulgaria. Three days later, Mahdi Abdulla Ubaidat and his wife were deported to Kuwait after returning from Moscow. On 15.4.1993 three people who had returned from Syria were also deported. They were Abdulla Mohammed Ali Al Rashed, Abdul Jalil Saleh Al Ne'aimi and Hameed Ibrahim Al Halwachi.

Lastly, Sheikh Mohammed Yousef Mez'el was deported to Kuwait on 25.8.1993 after returning from London. His wife and four children were deported to Kuwait three weeks before him.

Electricity and Water : A Matter of Mismanagement

In July 1993, newspapers carried headlines that the country faces a severe electricity problem. In August, the newspapers headlines warned that water consumption has reached critical level. As to the reason, it was alleged that it had to do with consumption nearing the total available capacity. It was said that electricity utilization reached some 905 MW only 20 MW lower than the total supply capacity. Water consumption reached 67 millions of gallons a day. The latter is estimated to rise to 85-90 millions. The authorities demanded that people had no choice but to change habits if only to avoid some arbitrary blackouts and water shortages. Amongst the suggestions are to limit toilet flush water to 7.5 litre (currently 9-15 litres), and to lower the average personal water consumption from 140 gallons to 90 gallons by the year 2005. Officials at the electricity and water departments attributed the surge in consumption to extraordinary summer heat in July. The justification was expected; the blame was to be fixed on others.

Authorities kept asserting that plans at work forecast an annual 5% increase in use. However, July 1993 saw a 13% rise in electricity. Still, the regime did not fail to take credit for surge in utility alleging that the rise in business was partly responsible, hence the return of confi-

dence in the ailing economy. But the regime failed to mention that the abnormality here is the no addition to the electric power and water. The maximum 925 MW had been the case for quite sometime now. The sudden surge likewise raises doubts about the planning procedure in the Electricity Department. Needless to say, members of Al Khalifa family are exempted from paying utility charges. The rulers and their vast expanding families are among the biggest consumers (or abusers) of electric power and other utilities. Some argue that the so much talk of the consumption this summer may signal a plan to raise the charges later on. The huge media coverage on the electricity and water may have been due to a plot to partly justify some up-coming actions by the state. Revenue from the sale of electric power and water is substantial as per the state budget; any extra income from this relatively stable source is welcome by the government.

The main problem with water is the significant use of the ground water which is taking place against the well being of the soil, partly causing the soil to be salty thus adversely affecting the agriculture business. Worse yet, there is a limit for the use of ground water. The next alternative is the distillation water, in turn very expensive. Bahrain can hardly afford

aquifers. Thus far, the Dammam aquifer has been doing a good job for Bahrain. The Saudis may be willing to provide Bahrain with more water, but that will be at the expense of Bahrain's dignity (provided that there is still dignity left under the Al Khalifa); worse yet, the Saudis are known for providing things to Bahrain until after they get more in return. Case in point is the Saudis' accord to provide Bahrain with higher share of Abu Safa oil field, just off the coast of Bahrain. The Saudi decision earlier this year came only after Bahrain begged the Saudi leadership tens of times. In reality, Abu Safa should be all for Bahrain but Saudi Arabia, the richest nation in oil, is stingy and powerful enough.

The regime is quite aware of the situation at hand. But little is being done to remedy this serious problem. The authorities are only waiting for blessing from other countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the U.A.E.; other than that, officials do not fail to demand that people consume the minimum of water. Bahrain applies charges for water consumption, unlike some other neighbours. The locals know that the biggest abusers of the precious water supply are members of the Al Khalifa, the self-declared rulers of the country. The majority of the Al Khalifa have huge mansions or palaces with swimming pools, gardens and the like.

Sa'ad to Khalifa: Let us be Frank

Kuwait's prime minister Sheikh Saad paid a state visit to Bahrain in late July. In normal situations, there is nothing special about visits in today's "global village." Also, given that the Gulf states are "one nation," so goes the saying, then there is no place for making Sheikh Saad's visit something unique. The case is not so when it comes to the rulers of Bahrain. Observers of Bahrain's affairs were a bit puzzled of Saad's arrival. On the ground, Saad was given a kind of treatment reserved for visitors such as King Fahad. Analysts differed on the implications of the visit. Here is why.

First, the media talked about the matter several days in advance. On the arrival date, the daily newspapers hailed the imminent visit commencement as an achievement for Bahrain and "the Gulf" but failed to indicate why. Incidentally, people were busy those days following the latest news of the Israeli aggression on Lebanon and not of the big motorcade of Saad.

Second, the media made it no secret that Kuwait's infamous premier was invited to Bahrain by Sheikh Khalifa, Saad's counterpart in Bahrain (but not completely). Normally, the host country would not insist on mentioning that the visit was made by a request.

In all cases in Bahrain's media, it was mentioned that the prime minister (personally) invited his Kuwaiti counterpart. This may explain why the local media kept reporting the visit's details. Sheikh Khalifa wanted to drive the point home that he and only he was the one who arranged for the visit. A more respectable way would have been of saying that Sheikh Saad was invited for a state visit by the government of Bahrain (the practice in the past was to mention that the government and people of Bahrain demanded the visit, but currently the

term people has no place in the dictionary of the "ruling family"). Thus, Bahrain's premier wanted to take credit for effecting the coming of Kuwait's prime minister. Still, one may ask why in the world did Kuwait's premier visit Bahrain? Several justifications are provided.

One, the visit had to do with some mistakes done by Bahrain's ruling family in the past. The story goes that, the Al Khalifa family through its prime minister, sent time and again messages to Iraq's dictator Saddam. The messages were primarily good wishes in nature having to do with events such as the new Islamic calendar and the like. Still, in one occasion Khalifa made no secret to the Financial Times of his desire to see Iraq return to the "international community" and that what matters is the Iraqi people. Kuwait felt offended by Sheikh Khalifa's behaviour not least because Bahrain is (or was) a key financial recipient of Kuwait. At the time, Kuwait reacted where it hurts the most; it deported some Bahrainis who were working in Kuwait. Unemployment heads Bahrain's economic troubles. By the invitation, Khalifa wanted to apologize to Saad and promise not to commit fresh stupidity. Kuwait, ruled by a family deeply rooted in tribal traditions (calling for vengeance, no forgiving, etc) could not tolerate any dealing with Iraq.

Two, the visit had to do with money. Thus, Bahrain wanted to win commitments from the top man that Kuwait would resume its financial support for the budget (and) investments in banks, hotels. A good percentage of Bahrain's fashionable diplomatic area is owned by Kuwait's Investment Authority, a parallel to KIO but in the Arab world. Still, Kuwait has been well known in Bahrain for constructing schools, medical clinics and other charitable activities.

The regime in Bahrain is anxious to see the golden days back. To Bahrain's authorities, Kuwait has money and is willing to spend. A case in point is Kuwait's massive expenditures before, during and after the Gulf war against Iraq.

Three, some attribute the visit to the economy but not necessarily monetary support. At the stake is the now officially acknowledged 15% unemployment rate. Bahrain authorities believe that Kuwait is in a position to help ease the growing problem. For one, Kuwait needs foreign labour after the forced departure of the Palestinians and the so-called Bedoun (stateless) people.

Four, the visit could signal start of a new plot by Bahrain's prime minister. It is a fact that Kuwait's premier is likewise the crown prince. Sheikh Khalifa remains tense and could not see Hamad as the on-going crown prince for Bahrain. Khalifa has every desire to be the next head of state. He strongly believes that the prime minister and crown prince both should be one person. His strongest example is that of Sheikh Saad. The question is that does Khalifa have fresh bad intentions? Unconfirmed news reports talk of a serious desire by the Amir, Sheikh Isa, to pass on the throne to his son Hamad (the would be second Amir as Isa remains the only head ever). There were similar talks in early 1980s; the case then led to attempts by Khalifa to bring about a forced political change; when the matter failed, Khalifa fled the country for few months and accused Iran of trying to overthrow the regime through some 73 revolutionaries.

It is against this backdrop that the visit of Kuwait's tough, over-weighted and dark colour premier is said to be extraordinary.