

# Don't trust a relative

## He cannot meet his mother or wife as sponsor refuses to give back passport

**Ajit John**  
Chief Reporter

For Jahir Hussain (right), trusting a relative has placed him in an unenviable position. Without a passport he is unable to meet an ailing mother, a wife back home and the chance of a new start of life back home in Chennai.

A resident of Bahrain for the past seven years, Jahir was a merchandiser at a company that supplied apparel to local stores. Owned by his uncle the business he claims ran into rough weather a year and a half ago. His uncle, he claims, requested the 10 members of the staff to take a loan from a local multinational bank to tide over the rough times. They were told to go over to the bank and sign the papers, which they did. His uncle would pay for the monthly installment. The total loan amounted BD90,000.

His uncle took the loan in addition to the credit card. The payments were paid as per schedule for a year. An amount of BD2,800 was taken against his name. Same amount was taken against his brother's name. Four months ago his uncle, family and four accomplices left the country without leaving a forwarding addresses. Enquiries were made and people claimed to have seen him in the Saudi Arabia, UAE and India.

Jahir's relatives in India confirmed that his uncle had not come home to Chennai. The local sponsor, a famous



entertainer, convinced the bank that the four who had absconded were not connected to him and that the amount against their name should be written off. An amount of BD40,000 was written off. Jahir came forward to present his case and the bank refused to entertain it. The bank placed a travel ban on him.

His sponsor, Jahir alleges, threatened him that the money due to the bank ought to be paid to him if he wanted his passport back. Despite this pressure, he managed to collect the money and pay off the bank that promptly cleared his name. Jahir's mother pawned her

jewellery to help collect the money.

Hearing this his sponsor decided that the passport would not be given under any circumstances. Jahir approached the Indian embassy which tried to use its influence but to no avail. His sponsor was adamant that unless BD2,600 was paid to him the passport would not be given. Various government authorities were approached to help solve the impasse but the local sponsor's influence ensured that all such attempts were stymied.

The Indian Embassy provided him with an out pass but he was unable to leave the country. He was finally advised to employ the services of a lawyer. Rashid Al Jar was given the power of attorney and they have now decided to sort out the issue to the satisfaction of all concerned.

## 'Blogfather' blocked

### Mahmood's Den no more accessible

By Sandeep Singh Grewal and Mark Summers

One of Bahrain's most widely-read blogs has been blocked – allegedly by the Ministry of Information due to comments made on the site by author Mahmood Al Yousif.

Mahmood's Den – a hugely popular blog which attracts over four million hits a month and covers topics as diverse as its author's love of gardening to his opinions on the Kingdom's political scene is no longer accessible within Bahrain.

The straight-talking Al Yousif has won widespread praise in recent weeks for an anti-sectarianism initiative which started on his blog.

The "Just Bahraini" campaign has mushroomed into a high-profile project which has won the backing from many Bahrainis and resulted in an order being placed for 100,000 pin badges to publicise the anti-prejudice cause.

However, it appears that by recent criticisms of the political process in Bahrain on his site Al Yousif has attracted the ire of authorities.

Bahrain has been hailed in recent months for having the most computer-savvy population in the Gulf region, and yesterday local blogs were ablaze with the news of the blocking of Mahmood's Den.

If the blocking of this particular web address was an effort to silence Yousif or his local blogging contemporaries it has not been successful, with Bahrain-based blogs covering the latest developments in the controversy and Al Yousif himself posting what he says is a banning order issued by the Ministry of Information.

The shut-down of Al Yousif's site is the latest website to be apparently blocked by the ministry – taking the total to 17 websites.

Al Yousif already has the backing of Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF), an international group dedicated to freedom of expression, and the stand-off between the man who has been hailed as "The Godfather of Bahraini blogging" and those who sanctioned the blocking of a site which provides its many global visitors with an insight into Bahrain is likely to gain international exposure.



Al Yousif ... unbowed

Al Yousif has charged that the blocking of his blog is contrary to both Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to which Bahrain is a signatory and articles of the Bahrain constitution which provide for free speech.

Speaking to the *Tribune*, Al Yousif was unbowed, saying: "There are 55 million blogs in the world and there are blogger's codes of ethics that I strictly follow and have mentioned in my blog. This is a platform where there is constructive criticism and everyone should learn from it rather than stopping us do our work."

He vowed to continue to post his opinions on blog, adding: "People are intelligent and they know how to unblock the sites."

At the time of going to the press Mahmood's Den was still inaccessible in Bahrain and some local bloggers had begun a campaign for its reinstatement.

## Three jailed for running brothel

**Nada Al Abbas**  
Crime Reporter

The lower court yesterday sentenced three Asians on charges of running a brothel. As per the information provided to the public prosecutor, one of the accused was a government employee who ran this business after finishing his work at office. His accomplice in the flesh trade were two women – one of whom was a housemaid

who was not paid by her sponsor for three months and another housemaid who was a runaway. She claimed the sponsor's wife beat her.

During interrogation, the women admitted entertaining eight or nine men everyday and charge BD3 to BD4 from each customer. The man used to bring customers and remain present at the reception of the brothel. The judge sentenced the man to two years in jail and the two women to six months in jail for practising prostitution and one month for illegal stay.

## Man caught hiding hashish in mouth

His cheekiness caught up with him. The public prosecutor detained a GCC national for seven days after a search revealed the presence of hashish on his person. The arrest took place on the King Fahd causeway.

The contraband was hidden in his mouth. The accused requested the prosecutor to release him since he was in the Kingdom with his wife and children.

## Bahrain team to observe US polls

### Move to determine implications of electronic voting

By Fadhel Hasan

Twenty representatives from various political societies in the country will depart tonight for the US to observe congressional elections which take place on November 7. The invitation for the 10-day study mission came from the National Democratic Institute which aims to have members of political societies exposed to US elections which precede the November 26 legislative and local elections in Bahrain.

Hafedh Abdulghaffar (pictured), who is the Bahrain Journalists Association representative in the study mission, told *Bahrain Tribune* that there were three main objectives to be achieved. "During the visit, participants would study the US electoral system, particularly the role of political party pollwatchers, or candidate's representatives, on election day."

"They would also examine electronic voting as implemented in the US to help determine the implications of electronic voting in Bahrain. They



would also take part in various seminars and workshops on election-related issues," he said.

The forthcoming elections in the Kingdom have generated a great deal of interest and the media is providing space to various candidates to voice their opinion on various issues. In addition to the conventional media, the internet has been alive with discussion on the fate of the various candidates. This visit by these representatives it is hoped will be an eye opener as to the functioning of a mature democracy.

## AMA holds graduation ceremony

**Ayla Marisse G Ginete**  
Contributor

After weeks of growing apprehension, 278 students from AMA International University, Class of 2006 were conferred their degrees in the Second Commencement Exercises held in the Gulf Hotel last night.

The 278 graduates obtained their degrees in Masters in Business Administration and Computer Science and Bachelor's degrees in Engineering Informatics, Business Informatics, Computer Science and International Studies.

The graduation ceremony was attended by a number of VIPs including HE Dr. Majid Al



HAPPY MOMENTS: Some of the students at the ceremony.

Noaimi, Minister of Education, Amable R. Aguiluz V, President of the AMA International University Bahrain and founder

of the AMA Education System Philippines, and Republic of the Philippines Special Envoy to the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Maryam Ali Jaafar Ahmed Al Haddad achieved the top marks for the 2006 graduating class in BS Engineering Informatics, Summa Cum Laude with a GPA of 1.078 (98%).

The total number of graduates is a distinct difference from last year's graduation ceremony with only 60 graduates from the four courses put together.

A total of 5 students graduated from the Masters of Business Administration, 21 graduates from the Bachelor of Arts in International Studies, 169 graduates from Business

Informatics, 32 graduates for Computer Science and 30 graduates for engineering Informatics.

The Class of 2006 is only too happy that their graduation ceremony has finally pulled through after weeks of speculation.

International studies graduates of 2006 are most happy on the occasion.

"This is the moment we have all been waiting for, and after weeks of debate, apprehension and speculation, it has come to be. This is the best time of our lives and we could not have dreamt of a better time and place for this milestone," said Maryam Al Anwar.

## Car driver robbed, investigation on

The public prosecutor yesterday ordered to continue the investigation into a case of stealing. An Asian driver had filed a complaint against an unknown assailant after he was robbed when he came out of his car. He was beaten and pushed to the ground. His wallet containing his CPR and BD50 was taken from him.

## Drunk driver held for jumping signal

The public prosecutor yesterday detained a Bahraini for seven days and transferred his case to the court following his arrest for driving under the influence of alcohol. He was apprehended by the police when he jumped a yellow signal.

## Woman hears sounds in house

A Bahraini woman in her 50s had filed a complaint after hearing sounds in her house. The police have placed her house under surveillance. According to the complaint lodged at the police station, the woman claimed that towards the end of every month she would hear voices in her house. She thought perhaps this could be attributed to people coming to steal her salary.

Nada Al Abbas



AWARD: Syed Tanveer Hussain Shah (3rd from left) won the best poet award in "Pothohari Nite" organised by the Pakistan Club. He was presented a shield by club chairman Mohammad Sajid Shaikh.

## Employee jailed for stealing

The higher court yesterday sentenced a Bahraini to a year's imprisonment with a stay of execution for three years and fined him BD35,503 for stealing.

According to the information, the accused, an employee working in a government office, stole BD35,503 during the year 2004-05.

This money was collected from people, and he was supposed to provide a receipt. It is alleged he hid the receipts and dipped his hand into the tiller.

His co-workers became suspicious after they noticed the discrepancy. They contacted the police who arrested him and conducted the investigations.

Nada Al Abbas