



Interview

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The press-freedom is the corner-stone of the favourable social and business environment. What is your policy regarding media freedom and information transparency assuring?

Our policy is geared towards the enhancement of freedom of expression through the preservation of our national unity, culture and ethics. At the top of our priorities lies the improvement of available mediums of press coverage within the Kingdom of Bahrain and their influence on the quality of life. This policy is inscribed in all of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa's public addresses where openness and transparency are underlined.

What is the general picture of Bahraini media market? What are its key assets and advantages for foreign investors?

Bahrain has a very healthy political, social and business environment which provides the best set of variables to ensure that freedom of expression is thriving. Unfortunately the growth of the local media market is yet at a primitive stage and has not developed parallel to the socio-political progression in the country.

As for Bahrain's key assets, I truly believe that our key asset is our people. The available local caliber in Bahrain far surpasses that of any other country in the region that mainly depend on foreign expertise. This of course holds a range of advantages and opportunities for foreign investors in terms of hands on knowledge of the trade and of the unique variables that differentiate the region from its global counterparts.

What strategies are implemented to foster the foreign media coverage of Bahrain and how are you satisfied with the foreign medias' view of the country so far?

Bahrain has taken many steps to realize more international coverage of its issues of concern. We have yet to fulfill our ambitious aspirations but the country is opening up more and more as we speak. The level of press freedom available today has never before been experienced within our region.

The repercussion of this open-house position has yet to be portrayed properly in the international media's coverage of local affairs.

What can be the impacts of a modernized Bahraini press and TV on the GCC Countries? In the international scene?

Bahrain's size does not do it justice in terms of the measure of its impact in countries within the region. If you go through the history of Bahrain you will note that Bahrain has a track record of having accomplished many first time events on a regional basis. That is why I perceive that any major change to Bahrain's media environment, be it press or TV, will have a domino effect into other parts of the Middle East.

As you know, the gulf region is at the focal point of international investment and the climate of reform and development only adds to the importance of an emerging proactive media culture that is geared towards more openness and transparency with responsible balanced exposure of everyday events.

Bahrain has the second highest level of internet penetration in the region after UAE. Actually a special government body for e-commerce is being set up to encourage Bahraini business to use the Internet opportunities to full advantage. How successfully these goals are being achieved so far and what else has to be done in terms of e-projects development?

Bahrain is certainly developing its prospects for maximization of internet business potential. You just have to click Bahrain on any Business driven site or search mechanism and you will see many links pop-up. There are those that deal with employment, tenders, governmental services, investments or even national regulations related to business start-up and access to sources of information.

The current level of achievement is a product of the collaboration of efforts between the government and the private sector. We do look forward to more of this cooperation that will better benefit our economy at large.