

# On a mission: World traveller arrives in Bahrain

**Gary Arndt has visited 54 countries since March 2007**

Nina Lauri

TRAVEL

Bahrain is the current destination for American world traveller Gary Arndt, whose global journey features a particular interest in small countries.

Arndt believes that through travelling and exposure to different cultures, a link is created, changing preconceived notions on both far away places and the events taking place in them. The more people can see of other places and meet other people, misperceptions can be minimised and communication on equal terms can begin.

"I sold my house and my business and set out on my travels. I headed West. That was as far as my planned itinerary went," Arndt said as the *Bahrain Tribune* took him on a trip to Qa'alat Al Bahrain (Bahrain Fort) yesterday.

"That is another point I have made. I try to visit all the UNESCO World Heritage Sites I can on my travels." So far, he has managed 55 sites through the 54 countries visited since he headed West from his home in Wisconsin, USA, in March 2007.

"Most people who set out on an around-the-world trip go east-ward, so I've met many fellow travellers going the opposite direction to me. I wanted to start out in the Pacific as I knew it would be the hardest to visit in terms of distances between the countries and as well as in expenses. There you have to fly everywhere."

A degree-holder in economics, mathematics and international relations, Arndt also got a degree in geology later in life, a field he describes as "the most interdisciplinary of the sciences."



TOURING THE GLOBE: Gary Arndt is on a dream trip around the world.

Arndt is particularly interested in small countries, constitutional monarchies and former colonies. "It is interesting to see how former colonies turn out in the twentieth, twenty-first centuries is greatly affected by the way their former colonial powers ran things."

Arndt has already covered most of the Gulf countries and is next heading for Kuwait and Egypt. "It's a while since I did any diving and I really would like to dive in the Red Sea," he said. Arndt then plans to across the Sinai into Jordan, Israel, Cyprus, and maybe Malta. "I take it a bit as it comes, all depends on availability of flights and the time frame I

have in mind, but my next major destination is Rome."

From there he begins his European tour which is loosely outlined with Amsterdam, London, Scotland and Iceland as the main points of passage. "Iceland because I know there are flights from there to Halifax. From there I'll start travelling by road through mainland Canada and into the US and back home."

"I've not been home or seen my family for two years now and it is time I paid them a visit. Then I'll set out again. I want to make a loop around South America and visit all of the

Caribbean nations. I have yet to visit China and India too, but those I'll keep for special trips. It took me five months to see Australia only. Size-wise both China and India are comparable and, imagine, there is so much more to see in both!"

At the end of his journeys, Arndt will write books. He keeps an interesting travel blog at <http://www.everything-everywhere.com> with thoughts and observations from places he has visited. He is interested in making comparative and relative studies of poverty levels as well as how small monarchies are adjusting to the 21st century.

## Unemployment scheme currently benefiting 2,245

Jalila S. Saeed

EMPLOYMENT

Women outnumber men when it comes to claiming benefits from the unemployment insurance scheme run by the Ministry of Labour.

Minister of Labour Dr. Majeed bin Mohsen Al Alawi, said: "The number of those eligible for the unemployment insurance scheme in January were 2,245, including 507 males and 1,738 females."

The number of unemployed people has reached a total of 5,078. He added that the unemployment rate for the month of January 2009 has dropped to 3.5%, lower than the rate recorded in December which stood at 3.7%. "This reflects the stability of the labour market in Bahrain, despite the economic crisis affecting the world," the minister stressed.

The total number of the national workforce is estimated to be around 145,000 workers.

The Minister of Labour said that in the one year since they started disbursing the unemployment allowance, the achievements have been clear. The allowances are an integral part of the social protection

### Ministry establishes national job vacancy database

system set up by the Kingdom to provide financial support to unemployed and help them get back on their feet.

"We were successful in specifying the actual numbers of unemployed people" the minister said, adding that his ministry has also embarked on preparing and publishing monthly statistical reports containing the number of people eligible for assistance and those who are not eligible.

Starting this month, the monthly statistical report was developed to include important and detailed data regarding job vacancies which the ministry was able to provide through co-operation with employers. With a total of 8,277 vacant posts currently listed in the min-

istry's database, they are equipped to meet the needs of a wide array of job seekers. The average monthly salary for the listed jobs is BD 308, and goes up to BD 480 for college graduates. For those who do not have high school qualifications, the salaries average around BD 238.

Since its inception in December 2007, up until January 2009, the total number of people who registered for the unemployment insurance scheme and subsequently found employment reached 6,423. Of this sum, 3,242 were men and 3,181 were women.

The number of those who have received the unemployment allowance for six months, which is the maximum period, reached 2,833 citizens, of which 226 were men and 2,607 were women.

According to the scheme, one per cent of earnings from employees, employers and the government are contributed to the programme, which is managed by the Ministry of Labour and the General Organisation for Social Insurance (GOSI). Both the private and public sectors, with the exception of those in the armed forces and public security, are included.

## Application deadline for CPISP extended

Bonny Mascarenhas

EDUCATION

The Crown Prince's International Scholarship Programme (CPISP) has announced that application deadlines for its 2010 scholarships have been extended to Feb. 22, 2009.

The deadline was moved from February 10 in order to accommodate students from government schools who would be unable to submit complete documents before that day.

"The CPISP requires applicants to attach their school transcripts in English for Grade 10 and the first semester of Grade 11. But the Ministry of Education had yet to release the 11th grade results hence their students would have been unable to meet the deadline," a spokesperson for the program told the Tribune.

The extension is applicable for all Bahraini students graduating from secondary school in 2010 (from both government and private schools); and who have a

cumulative Grade Point Average of 97% for Grades 10 and 11 (first semester).

Application forms can be downloaded from the Program's web site on [www.cpisb.bh](http://www.cpisb.bh), and must be submitted with all accompanying documents to the CPISP Office at the Court of the Crown Prince in Riffa no later than Feb. 22, 2009, before 1:30 pm.

CPISP officials said applicants must also take the Qualifying English Language Test, which will be given at the Khawla School in Gudaibiya on Saturday, Feb. 28, 2009, at 7:30 am., and must bring their CPR cards and a copy of their passport with them. The test is part of the application process, and failure to take it on the given date will result in students being removed from consideration.

The scholarship program awards 10 scholarships annually to five girls and five boys to study at top international universities, based on their academic merit and test scores.

## LMRA sets up online help desk

Bonny Mascarenhas

LABOUR RELATIONS

The Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) has launched an online help desk to solve technical problems faced by users accessing the authority's website.

The move will help streamline the site and make it more user-friendly, said a LMRA spokesperson.

"People who face some difficulties while accessing LMRA.bh should note down the type of error they get on our site and inform us through the new facility," Waheed Al Belushi, acting head of public relations, said in an interview yesterday.

Users need to register their problem on a form accessible via the 'eServices Helpdesk' link on the author-

ity's home page. The required fields need to be filled in on the page, and allows users to attach any other file which can help the LMRA better understand the problem, Al Belushi said.

Upon completion of the form, an electronic ticket number will be provided to the user. "This number, along with the user's CPR number, will allow the person to follow up on the progress of the complaint," Al Belushi said.

The eServices Helpdesk is part of the LMRA's plan to encourage people to use online services. The authority recently announced that of the over 5,000 visa applications being received weekly, 91 per cent were transacted online. This has surpassed the authority's target, which was set at 60 per cent.

## BIC and UNEP launch 'Project in a Box'



HELPING THE ENVIRONMENT: (Left) Dr. Habib El-Habr and Martin Whitaker hand out projects. (Right) Students pose for a photograph.

Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) had the pleasure of seeing over 40 students from a selection of top schools in the Kingdom visit the award-winning facility to find out more about the 'Project in a Box' initiative between the circuit and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Having recently seen the UNEP and BIC sign a memorandum of understanding to develop various environmental initiatives, these include sustaining indigenous plants, shrubs and trees to make BIC more environmentally friendly as well as attempting to offset its carbon footprint.

School children and representatives from the Ibn Khuldun National School, Riffa Views International School, The International School of Choueifat and Al-Hekma International School were all present to find out more about the aims of the project.

Martin Whitaker, Chief Executive Officer of Bahrain International Circuit, said: "The goal of the project is to carry out various initiatives that will be beneficial not only for the circuit but for the entire King-

dom. We also hope that with this project we will be able to spread awareness nationally and regionally as well, as we join forces with the UNEP to tackle important global issues. By getting the local schools on board we are educating and informing our community and leaders of tomorrow of how we can look after the environment we live in. This includes focusing on environmental issues such as waste management, recycling and reducing our carbon footprint."

He added: "As the first circuit in the world to partner up with the UNEP we hope to see many more establishments follow suit to enhance the BIC and motorsport industry's commitment towards the environment and community."

Meanwhile, Dr. Habib El-Habr, Director and Regional Representative for West Asia, said: "It is a great opportunity to have been able to launch the school box project on the premises of Bahrain International Circuit; this will allow children to link BIC's activities with the protection of the environment."

He added: "This event is part of our

awareness campaign with schools and youths."

Each school was presented with an educational pack, the 'Project in a Box' which includes a class project and information about the BIC initiative to calculate and offset its carbon footprint. Seeds are also included in the pack so the school children can join in the pledge to contribute to the Seven Billion Tree UN campaign. In addition, each school will receive a DVD of Ozzie Ozone to inform the children about the effects of pollution as well as literature courtesy of the UNEP.

In addition, the children were treated to a presentation from Bahrain University students who had been constructing solar and hydro cars for their Mechanical Engineering projects. To better illustrate a real world application of science to the environment, the students were informed of how these would be more efficient than petrol-fuelled cars. To finish the presentation, a TUNZA youth representative for West Asia explained different initiatives and actions which the children can take to protect the environment.

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