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BUILDING A BRIGHT FUTURE...

MANAMA: Strong growth predictions and significant state investment in infrastructure are boosting investor confidence in Bahrain, says a new report.

The kingdom has stepped in with increased spending on infrastructure projects and low-cost housing developments, the latter in response to a high level of demand.

Along with projects to upgrade the road network

and improve the power and water grid, the government has revealed plans to build up to 5,000 residential units, with tenders to be announced this month, says the Global Arab Network.

A new steel processing plant to be developed in the kingdom is a further fillip, it says.

The Economic Development Board and the Central Bank of Bahrain have predicted that national gross domestic product (GDP) will expand by a healthy four per cent this year, and almost 5pc the next.

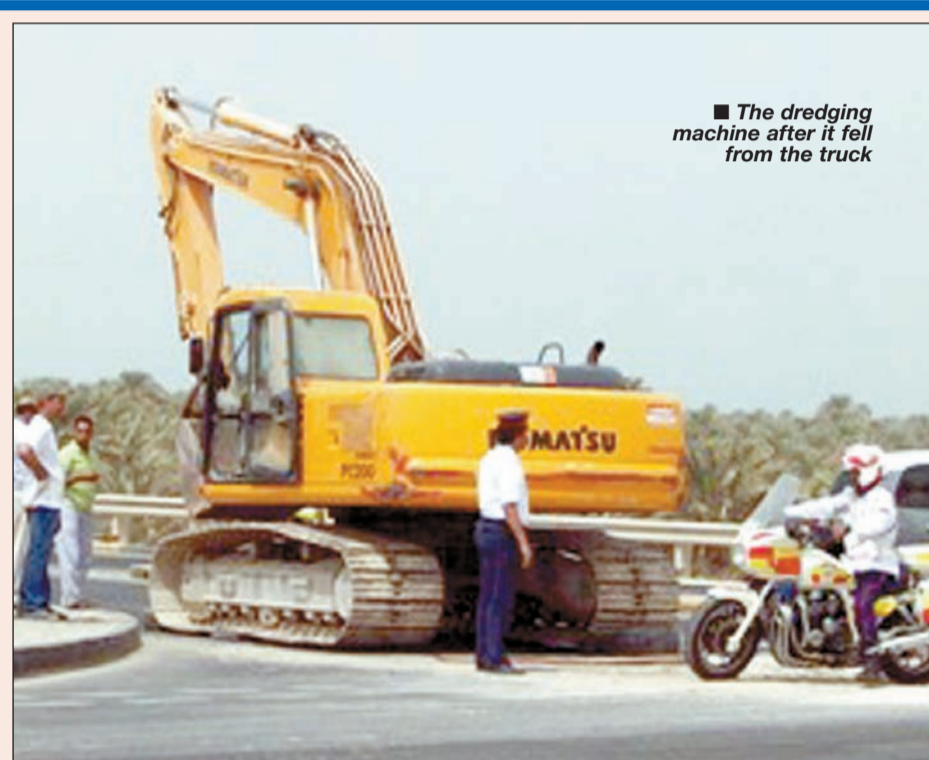
Construction makes up a sizeable portion of the kingdom's GDP, having contributed an average of around 9.5pc over the past three years, the report says.

The sector's output is divided evenly between residential and non-residential developments, with housing representing 51pc, and retail, office space and infrastructure projects making up the remainder.

The global financial crisis saw a slow-down in demand for new property developments. However, a study by Business Monitor International forecast nearly 7pc growth in the sector this year with \$80 billion (BD30bn) worth of infrastructure projects currently underway, says the report.



More than 500 people took part in a walkathon yesterday to raise funds to help sick children and fight breast cancer. The Rotary Pink Walkathon, organised by the Rotary Club of Adliya, raised more than BD2,000 in support of 'The Gift of Life Bahrain' project and Think Pink Bahrain. Above, walkers at the event. Full report - Pages 6-7



The dredging machine after it fell from the truck

Dredging machine falls off truck

MANAMA: A dredging machine fell off a truck on Janabiya bridge yesterday, disrupting traffic for about an hour and a half, reports our sister paper *Akhbar Al Khaleej*. A Bahraini was driving the truck pulling a locomotive that carried the machine, on his way to Hamad Town, when the incident happened at around 10.30am. Part of the machine fell off the truck when he reached Janabiya bridge, forcing him to stop in the middle of the road. He contacted staff of the company in charge of the machine, who immediately notified the General Directorate of Traffic. The machine was brought down and transferred to another truck. Patrols cleared the traffic congestion before another truck removed the fallen parts from the road. No injuries were reported.

Bin Laden 'behind Europe plot'

WASHINGTON: US counterterrorism officials say they believe that senior Al Qaeda leaders, including Osama bin Laden, are involved in the latest terror plot against European cities. The multi-pronged scope of the emerging plan - which was to launch co-ordinated shooting sprees or attacks in Britain, France and Germany - is an Al Qaeda hallmark. However, one US intelligence official added that the details of how the plan was directed or co-ordinated by the group's core leaders is not yet clear.

Aid mission rapped - Page 2

Book on cartoons slammed

JEDDAH: The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has strongly condemned publication of a book on the crisis sparked by a Danish newspaper's publication of cartoons of Prophet Mohammed. "The book *Tyranny of Silence* contains a compilation of denigrating caricatures and cartoons of Prophet Mohammed published by the *Jyllands Posten* (newspaper) in 2005 which ... caused hurt and insult to the sentiments of

The world this morning

2AM LATEST BREAKING NEWS

Muslims around the world," OIC secretary-general Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu said. He expressed his "dismay and disappointment" about Flemming Rose's book, which hit the stores in Denmark on Thursday exactly five years after the cartoons first appeared in the *Jyllands Posten*.

Bloc names Maliki for top post

BAGHDAD: Iraq's main parliamentary bloc chose incumbent Nuri Al Maliki as its candidate for premier yesterday, possibly clearing the way for an end to the country's seven-month political deadlock. The announcement by the National Alliance, which remains short of an absolute majority in the 325-member Council of Representatives, is the first sign of hope in months of a new government since March 7 elections. In Washington, State Department spokesman Philip Crowley said the US was "now encouraged" that Iraqi political leaders are finally beginning to take steps to form a government.

Full report - Page 2

Nato convoys attack horror

ISLAMABAD: A truck driver and his assistant were burned alive in Pakistan yesterday in a second attack by armed men on vehicles carrying fuel for Nato and American forces in Afghanistan. The truck was attacked in the parking lot of a restaurant in southeastern Baluchistan province. Earlier, suspected militants torched 27 tankers carrying oil for troops in Afghanistan in Sindh province.

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