

Saudi Shoura Council will invite three ministers

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The Shoura Council will be inviting three ministers during the next six months to speak directly to it on matters of public interest, according to Shoura President Shaikh Saleh bin Humaid.

The invitations are part of new procedures aimed at improving communication between government officials and the Council.

Bin Humaid, who made the announcement during the Shoura session recently, said that the three ministers are Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal, Minister Ghazi Al Gosaibi and Finance Minister Ibrahim Al Assaf.

“The ministers will be invited depending on their availability and their schedules,” he explained.

Al Gosaibi’s meeting with the council is expected to be very stormy since the majority of council members are private businessmen.

According to reports, many local businessmen are against Saudisation since recruiting foreign workers is much cheaper.

Bin Humaid said that the council would discuss with the minister all aspects of Saudisation and employment as well as the recruitment of foreign nationals.

As for the finance minister, he said that one area of discussion would be the riyal’s peg to the dollar. The foreign minister will inform the Council of what has happened during his recent trips abroad.

The Shoura experiment as a political institution in Saudi Arabia goes back to more than eight decades beginning with the first phase of consolidation of the Kingdom by King Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud.

It was not a priority then in a State facing the challenge of unification.

The experiment remained on the sidelines of political and social life until 1993 when it experienced a major qualitative change. The Council was restructured and assumed its current form.

Over the years, the Council has moved from a purely advisory role to the position of a partner in decision-making as King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, Custodian of Two Holy Mosques, said in his speech during the inauguration of the third year of the fourth session of the Council.

Today it enjoys a direct channel of communication with the citizenry, receiving their complaints and holding discussions with ministers and proposing regulations, while making objections to regulations and treaties.

The Shoura has been playing an important role in promoting honesty and fighting corruption.

The committee that was set up to deal with the matter of corruption has come up with recommendations such as the need for total transparency in the functioning of government departments, giving the media information about the corruption existing in both government departments and the private sector, updating various government routines, ensuring a free and fair judiciary, public participation in reporting corrupt practices and finally, amending any regulation that obstructs the fight against corruption.

The committee also recommended steps to convince responsible officials in both the private and public sectors that the detection and reporting of corrupt practices was something to be commended and encouraged. The committee also stressed the need for setting up units to perform periodic internal audits in government departments. Its recommendations also included listening to public opinion by installing complaint and suggestion boxes in public places, simplifying administrative procedures in government departments and publishing specifications for government works and projects.