

## Shoura approves laws to boost Saudi Arabia's judiciary

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The 150-member consultative Shoura Council yesterday approved the new Judiciary Law (which has 85 articles) and the Court of Grievances Law (which has 26 articles). The new laws are expected to streamline judicial procedures in the country.

Ahmed ibn Abdul Aziz Al-Yahya, assistant secretary-general of the Shoura, said the new laws would be passed for approval to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah, who is also the country's prime minister. The Shoura passed the laws after discussing them in detail during the past five sessions after a vote, the Saudi Press Agency said, quoting Yahya. It had also considered the views of the Committee for Islamic and Judicial Affairs and Human Rights.

Informed sources close to the Shoura said the new law would bring about a qualitative change in the Kingdom's judiciary. The new law will increase stages of judicial procedures in the Kingdom to two including the stage of appeal, one source said.

The new Judiciary Law calls for the establishment of appeal courts, criminal courts and specialized courts. In a previous statement, Justice Minister Dr. Abdullah Al-Asheikh disclosed his ministry's plan to establish a series of specialized courts, including three state security courts in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam as well as family, traffic and commercial courts.

"The new courts will operate in line with the Kingdom's general judicial system and people will have the right to appeal their verdicts," the minister said.

The setting up of specialized courts comes as part of judicial reforms introduced by the government in April 2005. According to the new plan, a supreme court will be established in Riyadh and new appeals courts in each of the Kingdom's 13 regions.

Under the new justice system, there will be general courts to deal with all conflicts except labor, commercial and family disputes and criminal courts to address crimes. Civil courts will handle family and personal conflicts.