



■ Staff Commander Shaikh Isa with Maj Gen Shaikh Saeed

Spotlight on UAE defence ties

STAFF Commander Shaikh Isa bin Salman Hamad Al Khalifa yesterday visited the Abu Dhabi Naval Base in the UAE.

Upon arrival, he was received by UAE Naval Forces Commander Major General Staff Pilot Shaikh Saeed bin Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Nahyan along with senior officers.

The visit is part of the Bahrain-UAE co-operation in the military field, specifically between the Royal Bahrain Naval Force and the UAE Naval Forces.

Staff Commander Shaikh Isa affirmed the deep-rooted Bahrain-UAE relations,

supported by His Majesty King Hamad and UAE President Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

He was briefed on the establishment and development of the UAE Naval Forces, including their capabilities, potential, and level of readiness in carrying out their national tasks and duties.

Staff Commander Shaikh Isa toured the naval base, where he observed various types of warships and the latest advanced naval systems in use. He also met with several ship captains and crew members.

Pets to be blessed at special church service

By JULIA CASSANO

FUR babies in Bahrain will be 'blessed' at a special pet service set to be held at St Christopher's Cathedral in Manama on Friday morning. Every year, animal owners from all around the world

bring their animals, mainly cats and dogs, to churches to have them 'blessed' in memory of Saint Francis of Assisi, the patron saint for ecologists - a

title honouring 'his boundless love for animals'.

The day also serves as a time to 'remember the role four-legged friends play in our lives', according to the organisers.

"We invite individuals and

families with pets to head down to the church for the service," said the cathedral's dean, The Very Reverend Dr Richard Fermer.

"This kind of commemoration hasn't been held for many years, so we decided to bring it back to remember the importance of the created world. Animals are extremely valuable to humans and sometimes, relationships with animals may be even more important than with humans, as they offer us a great deal of comfort."

During the service, there will be short interactive reflection of prayers, two biblical readings about animals, singing and a ceremony allowing each animal to 'be blessed'.

Father Richard added that the ceremony also attempts to highlight Bahrain's stray dog struggles with many heartlessly dumped each year on the streets and in the desert, blamed mostly on the transient nature of expatriate life and the cost of taking them back to home countries.

"We are aware there is an issue with pet abandonment in Bahrain and we should be treating animals with much more respect as they too are a part of God's creations," he said, adding that the Abrahamic faiths underscore the importance of respecting animals and treating them with kindness and compassion.

"We should take this time to really appreciate how animals add to our life and the different dimensions of the created



■ A schoolgirl with her pet

world," he added.

Though all animals are welcome at the special service, he urged owners to ensure that their pets will cope with the church's environment and being surrounded by other animals.

"There will be other pets at the service so we recommend that owners consider that first as we don't advocate putting the animals in stressful situations."

In recent years, it has become increasingly popular for pets to be blessed at churches

around the world on October 4. Typically, saints are remembered on the day of their passing. In the case of St Francis of Assisi, he died in the evening of October 3, 1226.

He was born in the 12th century, lived in Italy and founded the men's Order of Friars Minor, women's Order of St Clare and the Third Order of Saint Francis for men and women. The service will start at 10am.

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■ Father Richard, Dean of St Christopher's Cathedral