

Bahrain court postpones 'coup plot' trial to January 20

The postponement was decided after the defendants refused to allow the lawyers assigned by the justice ministry to defend them

- Staff Report
- Published: 15:05 January 13, 2011

Manama: The High Criminal Court has postponed the trial of 25 men, including two in absentia, on charges of forming and belonging to an illegal association to destabilise Bahrain, to next Thursday.

The postponement was decided after the defendants refused to allow the lawyers assigned by the justice ministry to defend them.

The stalled trial has now waded into further controversy amid the ministry's threats to reprimand lawyers, a pledge by the bar association to defend its lawyers, negative comments about the trial made by Al Wefaq, the largest parliamentary bloc, and higher risks of a war of statements through the media between all parties involved.

The original lawyers had walked out after complaining that the court did not investigate torture claims made by the defendants arrested in August.

Under Bahrain's rules, a defendant must have a lawyer for the trial to proceed and the justice ministry nominated new lawyers for the case following the walkout. However, 19 of the 23 new lawyers said they could not be involved in the case after the defendants refused their services. According to the lawyers, Bahrain's laws do not allow them to represent the defendants without their consent.

The justice ministry, wary of the increasingly complex situation, has moved to discipline the 19 lawyers for allegedly refusing to comply with the law.