



UN voices concern on over-60s saga, expat rights

Opinion

'Hearsay agency' forms government

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah
Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

GIVEN the fact that "hearsay" is the most active news agency in Kuwait, the rate of rumors has intensified with the start of the search for new ministers. You would hear that so-and-so will be appointed or so-and-so will be excluded from the future government. However, all this remains guesswork until the actual announcement of the new Cabinet.

This is the fourth government of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, who was entrusted by an Amiri order to choose those who will assist him to run the government. Given that there is a good segment of people who wanted someone different to take over the premiership, all that is to be done is to accept the choice made by the top political leader of this country.

There are many figures who have been tried. For three decades, some of them have been almost permanent candidates due to either family, commercial, sectarian or tribal considerations, despite their abject failure in the tasks entrusted to them.

Hence, all Kuwaitis wish for the names that are currently circulating not to become a reality, as it will be a setback for the government and will be reflected in its performance in the future, especially as the country needs constitutional and legal reforms to allow young blood to be pumped into all its facilities.

What is required are ministers who are competent, and not those who cave in or bow to the game of mutual interests.

In all countries around the world, especially democratic ones, the selection is made according to competence and knowledge. There are no considerations on the basis of tribe, sect, region, or financial and commercial strength. This has been emphasized by top leadership, and whatever has been conveyed through their opinion regarding their vision of the future government, because it is the natural path of reform.

In this regard, we can go back to what the National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim said at the General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference. He directly described the State of Kuwait by saying, "The apotheosis of any system, even if it is a system with a democratic form, is the first obstacle to renewing democracy and addressing its imbalances. And if it exists, we must not be afraid when we are referring to a wrong practice, for democracy in its origin is a means, not an end... It is a practice, not a slogan or symbol".

There is no doubt that the democratic practice in Kuwait, especially in the parliamentary and governmental fields, has deviated from its course and turned into a tool of demolition due to adherence to the form without working on the constitutional text and its content. This affected a series of laws, some of which have not been amended for 40 or 50 years.

Ultimately, this led to the inability to solve the problems related to housing, economic, industrial development, food security, banking system, improvement of sovereign credit rating, freedom of opinion and expression, health, and infrastructure.

Therefore, in order to fix these imbalances, a healthy relationship between the two authorities is necessary. All of this requires amending the constitution to correct the imbalances, and reform the relationship between all authorities.

Ignoring that and returning to square one through bickering between the government and the parliament, seeking to immunize oneself from parliamentary accountability, and MPs fighting their personal battles at the expense of the public interest and making clandestine deals will exacerbate the crisis, and will mark the fourth Cabinet of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled with failure.

The question is — Will he accept that on himself?

Email: ahmed@aljarallah.com

Follow me on:



ahmedaljarallah@gmail.com

Domestics raised

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 29: The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations has expressed its concern about the administrative decision recently issued by the Public Authority for Manpower to ban the issuance of work permits to those aged 60 years and above who hold high school diplomas or below and its equivalent, reports Al-Jarida daily.

During its concluding observations on Kuwait's third periodic report, a copy of which was obtained by the daily, the committee stressed on the need to do away with the decision to ban the renewal of residence permits for people 60 years and above in addition to taking legislative measures to abolish the punishment for "runaways" to protect their economic, social and cultural rights.

The committee also expressed concern about the continued violation of the rights of expatriate workers, in addition to continuing to punish absconding workers, which exposes them to abuse and forced labor.

It also recommended the need to raise the inspection capacity to monitor working conditions within companies to ensure the effective implementation of sanctions imposed on perpetrators of violations against labor rights and facilitate their access to courts, the judiciary and other dispute settlement institutions.

With regard to domestic workers, the Committee expressed its concern about the continued exploitation and abuse by business owners (sponsors) of these workers, as well as the failure to protect them with the purpose for which they were set, recommending the need to take the necessary measures to ensure the protection of the rights of migrant domestic workers and the imposition of deterrent penalties on business owners who violate the regulating legislation and inflicting effective deterrent penalties against them, in addition to the need to remove obstacles and barriers for such workers to access courts and judicial bodies, and to raise awareness among the public in general and employment of the Articles of Law (68/2015) regarding domestic workers, and to ensure the effective regulation of the work of recruitment and employment agencies and monitoring them to prevent the exploitation of labor, as well as harmonizing the laws of domestic workers and work in the private sector with regard to working hours, salaries and sick leaves, and ratifying the International Labor Organization Convention on Domestic Workers No. 189/2011.

The Committee recommended that Kuwait reconsider ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

Non-discrimination should ensure that no one is left behind, as well as encourage the involvement of NGOs and other members of civil society in follow-up to concluding observations and in the national consultation process prior to the submission of their next periodic report.

In accordance with the procedures for following up on concluding observations adopted by the Committee, Kuwait is required to provide, within 24 months, of the adoption of these observations, information on the implementation of the Committee's recommendations, as well as submit its next periodic report in accordance with Article 16 of the Covenant by the end of October 2024, unless it is notified otherwise due to a change in the review cycle, and in accordance with General Assembly Resolution 68/268.

Arab pointed out the compulsory health insurance policy is currently issued by the Ministry of Health for 50 dinars, with additional fees for radiology services, laboratory, and other services in government centers and hospitals.

He added that the company's implementation of the integrated system for the maintenance of health (Health Maintenance Organization HMO) provides a new policy that will cover all the needs of the beneficiary in all aspects of health care.

Arab explained that the price of the policy at 130 dinars will be applied to all expatriates, including the wife and children who have a residence status to join a family, especially since the price of the policy, which is set at 130 dinars, is considered as the base price for a person, noting at the same time that the presence of private health insurance for the expatriate has nothing to do with compulsory health insurance upon renewal of residence, as according to the current compulsory health insurance system of the Ministry of Health, which implements the texts contained in the Kuwaiti law, the compulsory insurance is a must for a person residing in Kuwait even if he possesses private health insurance according to the decisions of the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Health.

Enough food stock for over 6 months

Weary world closing doors



A woman holds onto a cotton pad after being inoculated with AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine during the first day of a nationwide three-day vaccination drive at a school in Quezon city, Philippines on Monday, Nov. 29, 2021. There has been no reported infection so far caused by the new variant in the Philippines, a Southeast Asian pandemic hotspot where COVID-19 cases have considerably dropped to below 1,000 each day in recent days, but the emergence of the Omicron variant has set off a new alarm. (AP)

More omicron cases pop up

BRUSSELS, Nov 29, (AP): Countries around the world slammed their doors shut again to try to keep the new omicron variant at bay Monday, even as more cases of the mutant coronavirus emerged and scientists raced to figure out just how dangerous it might be.

Japan announced it would bar entry of all foreign visitors, while new cases of the variant identified days ago by researchers in South Africa appeared in places such as Hong Kong and Australia. New cases in Portugal and Scotland might already point toward local spread of the variant outside of southern Africa.

Call for restraint

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Remarks at the second session of the conference on the establishment of a Middle East Zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. New York, 29 November 2021 [as delivered]

I WISH to start by extending my warm congratulations to Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi for his election as the President of the second session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

It is a pleasure to join you today in continuing this important process. Since 1967, five nuclear-weapon-free zones have been established around the world.

They include 60 percent of the United Nations Member States and cover almost all of the Southern Hemisphere.

Expanding such zones to more regions will strengthen global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation norms and contribute to building a safer world.

That is particularly the case in the Middle East, where concerns over nuclear programmes persist, and where conflicts and civil wars are causing widespread civilian casualties and suffering, undermining stability and disrupting social and economic development.

I reiterate my call upon all parties to exercise restraint and avoid escalation.

The return to dialogue on the full and effective implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, is an important step.

All parties must ensure this valuable instrument remains effective.

The perpetrators of chemical attacks must be identified and held accountable.

States must join forces and seek every opportunity to ease tensions, resolve conflicts and build lasting peace and security.

This Conference represents one such initiative and could bring tangible benefits to the Middle East region and beyond.

Achieving a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction will eliminate the possibilities of nuclear conflicts in the region and contribute to realizing a world free of nuclear weapons.

It will strengthen the international bans on chemical and biological weapons. It will build trust, reduce tensions and prevent conflicts and human suffering.

It will de-escalate regional arms races and free much needed resources to tackle major challenges, including COVID-19, climate change, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Finally, it will contribute to achieving just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Continued on Page 3

WHO: PCR test valid

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 29: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry confirmed that the country has enough food supply for more than six months, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

These sources made the statement as all countries try to find ways to deal with the new Coronavirus variant, in addition to calls for the government to fully abide by the instructions and guidelines to mitigate the risks of the new strain and to close commercial flights with nine countries in the African continent. Sources confirmed there are instructions to import any commodity that is missing in the local market in order to meet the needs of citizens and expatriates, in addition to increasing the stocks in the ration branches.

Sources stated that shipment through air, land and sea to and from Kuwait is still open and there has been no change in this aspect so far. Sources confirmed that Kuwait has acquired sufficient experience in this field, especially since it has ample food supply that makes it ready for any emergency situation. Sources added the past experience of the country; especially at the beginning of the crisis, laid down a road map for the concerned authorities in dealing with the crisis.

Sources affirmed there is no reason to panic due to the new variant - 'Omicron', as manifested in the fact that the Food Committee was not called to hold a meeting regarding the new variant, as there is no need to do so at present.

Sources indicated that the current food stock is sufficient for a period of more than six months in the event of the worst case scenario. Sources confirmed the ministry is keen on implementing and following the precautionary measures specified by the health authorities.

Future

With regard to importing foodstuff from South African countries, sources said no instruction has been issued regarding this matter so far. This means the import of all kinds of foodstuff from those countries remain the same, sources added. They also ruled out the possibility of closing shipping lines at the moment or even in the near future.

The World Health Organization (WHO) says the PCR tests that are being carried out to detect those infected with the Corona virus are still effective and good enough to detect the new mutant 'Omicron', reports Al-Rai daily.

Nonetheless, the WHO says, studies are underway to measure the effectiveness of other tools in use to detect infection with the disease.

The daily quoting sources said, no new mutant has caused such concern around the world, since the emergence of the mutant 'Delta'. The WHO does not yet know whether the Omicron is more easily transferrable than other mutants.

As many as 15 more countries are added to the list of more than 100 nations which now recognize India's Covid-19 vaccination certificates, says a press release issued by the Indian Embassy in Kuwait quoting a tweet from Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi.

The tweet read, "Mutual recognition of India Covid-19 vaccination certificates continue with the latest recognition coming from Australia, Bangladesh, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Mauritius, Mongolia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Palestine, the Philippines, San Marino, Singapore, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine."

Earlier this month, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare had said that nearly 100 countries had agreed to the Mutual Acceptance of vaccination certificates of India's Covid vaccines and vaccination process.

India's Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya had said the government is in communication with the rest of the world so that beneficiaries of the world's largest Covid vaccination program gets accepted and recognized, thereby easing travel for education, business and tourism purposes.

The Health Ministry along with the MEA is in continuous communication with all countries for mutual recognition of vaccine certificates, and WHO and nationally approved vaccines to facilitate hassle-free international travel across countries.

Day by Day

The thieves are of two types. The first is the ordinary thief who escaped with your money, your bag, your watch, your phone and whatever he can lay hands on.

The other type of thief is a political thief, who robs you of your future, your dreams, your job, your salary, your education, your health and your strength.

The strange irony is that the ordinary thief targets you, but it is you who targets the political thief. Still what is strange is that the ordinary thief is pursued by the police, while the political thief is guarded by police convoys, and this is what we have witnessed a lot. ... Yet, tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Mandatory 'health' starts at KD 130

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 29: The CEO of the Health Assurance Hospitals Company (Dhaman), Thamer Arab, revealed that the price of the mandatory health insurance policy that Dhaman will offer to residents in Kuwait will start at 130 dinars for the first time, and then it will witness a periodic rate increase at an upward rate every two years, with a value of 20 dinars until it reaches the maximum insurance limit of 190 dinars per person after 9 years, reports Al-Anba daily.

In an exclusive statement to Al-Anba, Arab stated citizens and others have the right to benefit from the various "Dhaman" services the cost of which in according to the usage if there is not policy document, pointing out at the same time that the new Dhaman insurance policy will cover all the needs of the residents who buy the insurance from all aspects of health care, including medical advice, diagnosis, treatment and cost of medicines that the company provides.

Arab explained that the insurance policy followed by the company revolves around providing the new mandatory health insurance for residents working in the private sector in Kuwait according to residence under Article 18 only and their families to replace the current mandatory health insurance provided by the Ministry of Health.