

Kuwait fourth on index of number of Internet users

UAE tops ICT index in Gulf with 5.43 points, Kuwait in second place

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) use index in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries for the Year 2021, said the percentage of Internet users in the GCC countries, which occupied a leading position at the regional and global levels, exceeded 98 percent, and that the percentage of mobile phone subscribers reached 137.66 percent of the total population during

2021, reports Al-Rai daily. The report issued by "Orient Planet Research", the independent unit of the "Orient Planet" group, showed that the Gulf countries were able to achieve a major leap in the use of information and communication technologies during the past two decades that made a difference in the services provided to users through the development of digital infrastructure.

The UAE topped the ICT use index for the Gulf countries for the year 2021, which measures the rate of Internet penetration and communication services, achieving 5.43 points, while Kuwait came second with 3.74 points, followed by Saudi Arabia third with 3.64 points, Qatar fourth with 3.62 points, Oman was fifth with 3.49 points and Bahrain sixth with 3.38 points. On the index of the number of Internet

users, Kuwait came fourth with 98.6 percent, second in the index of the number of mobile phone subscribers with 158.53 percent, sixth in the index of the number of fixed broadband subscriptions with 1.73%, and second in the index of the number of mobile broadband subscriptions at 127.44 percent. The mobile phone services and information technologies, the report said, developed rapidly in the GCC coun-

tries, in light of private sector companies entering the communications market, which significantly increased the number of users, to enhance the usage of digital economy in the region, and its contribution to increasing productivity levels, competitiveness, and the development of new mechanisms for accessing government e-services, to keep pace with the upcoming industrial revolution, and update artificial

intelligence and the Internet. As for the number of fixed phone lines, the UAE topped the GCC countries in terms of the number of fixed phone lines relative to the population with 24.07 percent, followed by Saudi Arabia with 16.51 percent, Qatar with 15.78 percent, while Bahrain ranked fourth with 15.67 percent, Kuwait fifth with 13.66 percent, and Oman last with 12.68 percent.

Environment authority, oil ministry ink agreement on emissions check

Cooperation to reflect positively on public health

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18, (KUNA): The Environment Public Authority and the Ministry of Oil signed on Tuesday a memorandum of cooperation to monitor various emissions and try to reduce them, which will reflect positively on public health and Kuwait's commitments to in-

ternational treaties.

The Chairman and Director-General of the authority, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Hamoud Al-Sabah, told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) after the signing that the statement will be transmitted through this memorandum through an electronic system between the two sides to monitor various emissions and conduct joint training courses be-

tween the two sides to transfer the expertise in the oil sector to the environment authority to deal with oil issues.

Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad added that the memorandum would contribute to the implementation of international commitments related to reducing Kuwait's emissions and participating in climate change conferences and others, which would positively affect public health, in addition to carrying out many environmental awareness campaigns to raise community environmental awareness in all issues, especially oil and emissions issues and how to deal with it.

He explained that there are many previous agreements between the two parties, and through this memorandum, the electronic link will be direct with the oil, because it is from the competent authorities of the oil companies to transfer information from them to the ministry and then deliver it to the Environment Agency.

Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad affirmed the state's continued dependence on oil as a source of income, and therefore work will be done to continue this source and work to reduce emissions in direct coordination with the Ministry of Oil and the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, indicating that the authority's stations are working continuously to monitor emissions and the stations of the Ministry of Oil that are connected to the authority's automated system.

For his part, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil Sheikh Dr. Nimr Fahd Al-Malik Al-Sabah said that this memorandum will contribute to the flow of data and information between the two sides and link them automatically to ensure that the documentary cycle of this data is reduced.

Sheikh Dr. Nimr Al-Sabah indicated that this memorandum will support the Ministry of Oil in supervising oil companies and implementing the applicable laws and regulations, which will be reflected in Kuwait's position in international agreements.

He pointed out that this memorandum will contribute to qualifying employees through joint training courses, which will benefit both sides in dealing with emissions.

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He asserted the Kuwaiti deal was settled without the approval of SAB and the amount of commission has been shrouded in controversy. He asked why the minister did not reveal the facts, adding that the manufacturer received Euro 520 million even before the payment was due. He said the minister did not investigate the Purchase Tenders Committee for violating the regulations in this regard. He added pilots have not been trained to fly the Eurofighter aircraft although the deal was settled three years ago.

He said the minister ignored the recommendation of SAB to conduct comprehensive feasibility studies on the disposal of old aircraft and the purchase of new ones.

He asserted the minister denied the information about selling F-18 aircraft to Malaysia but the Malaysian defense minister revealed the truth when he confirmed that the sold F-18 aircraft is in good condition.

He asked Sheikh Jaber Al-Ali to specify the date for the fact-finding committee to submit its report on the deal.

On the minister's lack of cooperation with SAB, Al-Azmi revealed that almost 95 percent of SAB's comments have remained unanswered till date.

He said the Assembly approved the KD 3 billion budget of the ministry in 2016 for armament development deals, emphasizing that the MPs want to know how the ministry spent such amount.

Al-Azmi stated that the minister did not reply to 51 out of 156 parliamentary queries. He pointed out the minister responded to the queries of MP Abdulaziz Al-Saqaabi about the three missiles launched from Iraq and landed in Kuwait. He said the minister denied the incident until the Iraqi side confirmed it.

He continued saying that the minister replied to the queries of MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri about referring officers for early retirement by merely asserting the issue is a top secret and then he gave an irrelevant answer.

The minister replied to the queries of MPs Hassan Jawhar and Al-Saifi Mubarak Al-Saifi about the Kuwait Army Fund by urging them to get the answers from the court or from the accused.

Al-Azmi added the Ministry of Defense violated the circular issued by the Ministry of Finance on the need for every ministry and public institution to specify the plots, land and real estate they own inside Kuwait or abroad. He said the minister presented the annual report stating that the ministry does not own any of the aforementioned properties.

He said Sheikh Abdullah Jaber owns chalets established on the properties of the Department of Weapons and Ammunition at the Ministry of Defense.

Regarding the issue of violating the policy on the replacement of expatriate workers with nationals; Al-Azmi said the number of expatriate workers reached 3,976 compared to 2,600 Kuwaitis. He revealed 286 expatriates are working in the offices of the minister and assistant undersecretaries. He added an expatriate consultant is receiving a salary of KD 4,200 and a trainer is receiving KD 4,100.

He claimed many expatriates occupy certain positions even if they do not hold the required academic certificates; such as computer technician,

ship engineering technician, computer programmer and aircraft engineering technician.

In response, Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali acknowledged the constitutional right of MPs to file grilling motions against ministers. However, he cited the decision of the Constitutional Court that a minister cannot be grilled on anything which happened during the term of his predecessors. He said the grilling motion against him was filed only a couple of hours after he took the constitutional oath.

He clarified this does not mean he is not ready to discuss the grilling motion and disprove the points therein.

On the decision to allow women to enter the Army, he explained that women will provide medical services like nursing duties and administrative jobs at the ministry. He affirmed that the decision has nothing to do with fighting or carrying weapons.

He said the aim of the decision is to grant working women the same allowances and salaries given to their male colleagues. He added 34 Islamic countries including Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain have allowed women to join the Army and they were even given military tasks.

He recalled the heroic role of Kuwaiti women during the Iraqi invasion, when they joined the military resistance and some of them became martyrs. He emphasized that women have worked at the military hospital for years and no one objected simply because this does not violate the Islamic Sharia and the Constitution of Kuwait. He added the opinion of scholars cited by Al-Azmi talked about actual combat, which is not included in the decision to allow women to occupy medical and technical positions. He said women are already working in the maintenance and repair of patriot missiles, as well as at the Information Technology Department in the ministry. He pointed out that women will not be allowed or forced to work for days, as they will go to work and leave every day just like those working in the civilian institutions.

He went on to say that the decision excludes compulsory orders for women to join the Army as it is all up to them. He disclosed that the defense minister in 1988 - the late Sheikh Salim Al-Sabah - was the first to take such a decision when he allowed women to volunteer in the Army.

He said another decision was issued in 1994 on allowing women to join the Army, adding that the trainers completed training courses in the UAE under the tutelage of female instructors and then they returned to Kuwait to work. He asked Al-Azmi to point out the violations against Islamic Sharia and Constitution.

Regarding the Eurofighter deal, the minister revealed the contract was signed in 2016 according to the memorandum of understanding between Kuwait and Italy.

He added that according to the comments of SAB, the issue was referred to the Public Prosecution and a fact-finding committee was formed to investigate it.

He clarified the training of pilots was not cancelled; but suspended due to the Covid-19 crisis, confirming that the training resumed later.

He stressed that if Kuwait sold any aircraft to Malaysia; such a step requires the approval of the Higher Council for Defense, monitoring institutions and manufacturer.



KUNA photos
Chairman of the Board of Directors and Director General of the Environment Public Authority Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Hamoud Al-Sabah and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil Sheikh Dr. Nimr Fahd Al-Malik Al-Sabah during the signing of the memorandum of cooperation.

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