

Local

Court jails Bangladeshi MP, Kuwaiti officials for 4 years

MP proposes restrictions on appointment of expats

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The criminal court yesterday sentenced Bangladeshi lawmaker Mohammed Shahid Islam and Kuwaiti Maj Gen Mazen Al-Jarrah, in addition to a former senior official and a businessman, to four years in jail and a hefty fine of KD 1.97 million over a major bribery scandal.

The rulings are not final and can be challenged before the appeals and cassation courts. A Syrian national was also sentenced to three years in jail in absentia in relation to the case.

But the court acquitted MP Saadoun Hammad and former MP Salah Khorshid of being involved in the case.

This was one of the biggest corruption cases to be handled by Kuwaiti courts. The Bangladeshi MP was arrested several months ago and confessed to offering large bribes to senior government officials including Jarrah, a member of the ruling family, to get his business done in violation of the law.

He was charged with trafficking in persons by recruiting Bangladeshi workers by charging them illegal fees, and for giving bribes to senior

officials and MPs to get his business done. The court however acquitted the convicts from the charge of trafficking in persons.

Meanwhile, MP Hisham Al-Saleh submitted a draft law calling to give priority of appointments in government jobs to Kuwaiti citizens, adding expats should be appointed in such jobs on a temporary basis and only when there are no Kuwaitis to take up those jobs.

The bill stipulates that government jobs should be given first to Kuwaitis, followed by children of Kuwaiti women married to foreign husbands, and then to stateless people known as

bedoons. Nationals of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states come next in priority. It stipulates that before appointing expats, the government must advertise the job vacancies, and if no Kuwaiti is available for the job, expats should be appointed on a temporary basis through a contract.

Secretary General of the National Assembly Allam Al-Kandari said yesterday he has tendered his resignation to Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. He said that his resignation comes after the cancellation of an Amiri decree appointing senior officials for a period of four years only.

MoI extends grace period for illegal expats till March 2

KUWAIT: Minister of Interior Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali Al-Sabah on Wednesday issued a decision granting a new grace period to residency violators to help them adjust their status - from Feb 1 till March 2. Those who don't adjust their residency status during this period will be punished in line with the law, prevented from obtaining valid residency and deported, the ministry's security media department said in a statement. They also will not be allowed to come back to Kuwait, it added.

The decision comes a few days before an ongoing grace period was supposed to end on Jan 31. The decision gives more time to the violators to legalize their status to avoid any punishment and measures to be taken by the ministry after the end of this period, the ministry noted. The move aims to facilitate matters in light of the exceptional conditions due to the novel coronavirus crisis facing the country, it pointed out.

These conditions led to the suspension of flights and activities and the closure of the Public Authority for Manpower for two weeks, the ministry said. These factors prevented violators from adjusting their status, according to the statement. But response by residency violators has been underwhelming, as many prefer to remain in the country due to a variety of reasons, including the inability to pay fines or the airfare, uncertainty whether they will be able to return as issuance of new work permits is suspended and a lack of job opportunities in their home countries.

As inspection campaigns are no longer carried out, the number of residency violators in the country has reached a record of 180,000, Al-Rai Arabic daily reported earlier this month. This is an increase of 38 percent from five months ago, as very few expats have responded to repeated amnesties to allow violators to leave with the possibility of returning with new visas, the newspaper added. —Agencies

KRCS sends relief plane to Lebanon with medical supplies

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) yesterday sent a relief plane to Lebanon loaded with medical equipment, medicines, sanitary supplies and blankets. In a statement to KUNA, KRCS Director of Emergency Management Yousef Al-Maraj said that this trip comes within a series of missions that the association is undertaking to provide aid to the Lebanese people.

Maraj expressed his appreciation to the Kuwaiti ministry of defense for providing the plane and the Kuwaiti ministry of foreign affairs for contributing to the success of this humanitarian mission. Moreover, he affirmed the association's keenness to participate in humanitarian efforts undertaken by Kuwait in light of the directives of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. —KUNA



KUWAIT: A relief plane headed to Lebanon is loaded with medical supplies donated by Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) yesterday. —KUNA

Kuwait reports 588 new COVID-19 cases, one death

KUWAIT: Kuwait announced 588 new coronavirus infections and one virus-related death yesterday, taking total cases to 163,450 and deaths to 958, the health ministry said. The number of people hospitalized with the virus stands at 6,105, with 46 of them in intensive care units, according to ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad. He said some 9,964 swab tests were conducted over the past day, taking the total to 1,500,913 tests.

The ministry earlier reported some 648 more people were cured of the virus over the past day, raising the total of those who have overcome the disease to 156,387. Sanad urged nationals and expatriates alike that abiding by health precautions, mainly by following social distancing rules, is the only way to halt the spread of the virus. —KUNA

