



KUWAIT: The Canadian Ambassador to Kuwait Douglas George marked Canada Day, the official day of Canada's independence, with a celebration at Salwa Al-Sabah Hall on Feb 5. The ambassador welcomed guests from the government and diplomatic corps in Kuwait as well as friends and citizens. —Photos by Joseph Shagra

KAC AWAITS GOVT APPROVAL TO SIGN AIRBUS CONTRACT

BID TO AVOID CONFRONTATION WITH NA

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) is going to put on hold the signing of a contract to purchase new aircraft until the government reaches an agreement with the National Assembly. The parliament on Tuesday assigned its legal and legislative committee to investigate the deal by KAC to purchase 25 Airbus planes and lease 12 others, with an option to purchase 10 more. The value of the contract was not announced. MP Adnan Abdulsamad said the probe is "necessary amid reports that the KAC board turned down cheaper offers," without providing further details.

While newspaper reports suggested that an Airbus delegation was due to arrive in Kuwait this week to sign the deal, sources revealed that KAC has decided to put these plans on hold "until the contracts are reviewed with Minister of Communications Essa Al-Kandari and the government in general". The decision helps the KAC avoid the possibility of putting the contract under parliamentary investigation and potentially canceling the deal, in a similar scenario to the K-Dow deal where the government had to pay a \$2.16 billion penalty to Dow Chemical last year due to canceling a joint venture in late 2008.

"The KAC is asking for a green light from the government to go ahead with signing the deal," said the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity. "Otherwise, the contract will be postponed to avoid confrontation with the parliament."

Medical segregation

Ministry of Health officials sent a recommendation to their seniors which calls for adopting a nationality-based segregation system for clinical appointments in public medical centers around Kuwait, after a similar step adopted at Jahra Hospital last year proved to be successful. The system gives Kuwaitis priority in medical check-ups during morning shifts and makes it mandatory for foreigners to visit during afternoon shifts for medical tests at all outpatient clinics at public hospitals. "The change in ministers prevented the recommendation from being adopted previously," said ministry sources who argued that the segregation system was important to "solve overcrowding and address delayed appointments for citizens".

The ministry introduced the decision as part of the government's attempts to improve the quality of services at its overcrowded medical facilities. Infrastructure development continues to lag behind the country's fast-paced demographic growth. After news about the decision drew negative reactions given its 'discriminatory' nature, ministry officials later clarified that the plan is not applied at emergency rooms and trauma centers at public hospitals and polyclinics, which to remain open to Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis alike throughout the day. There is currently no set date for when the system is expected to be generalized locally.

KIA refutes MPs' allegations

The Kuwait Investment Authority finished preparing a lengthy report which covers its suc-

cessful investments and profits recorded in the past years following the global economic crisis. This was reported by sources familiar with the news, who explained that the report will be sent to the government to serve as a response to lawmakers' allegations that the sovereign fund recorded losses and invested in loss-making projects in recent years.

"The report will be sent to Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh who will review it to the Cabinet in order to prepare proper responses to MPs' allegations," said the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity. The sources did not provide details about the nature of the report or a timetable for when the response is expected to be made. "Minister Saleh still plans to verify the accusations in order to improve cooperation with the parliament despite the fact that the majority of them talk about inaccurate or old issues that have already been addressed," the sources said.

State budget

The Cabinet has sent to the parliament a number of draft laws of individual budgets of state departments for the fiscal year 2014/2015. The budgets committee in the parliament will study the draft laws before they are put for voting in the parliament before the beginning of the new fiscal year on April 1, 2014. In addition to ministries, public authorities and independent institutions, the Cabinet sent proposed budgets for the Central Bank, Kuwait Investment Authority, Public Institution for Social Security and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation.

Official statistics for bedoons who legalized their status from 2011 to January 31, 2014

	Nationality	Total bedoons who legalized their status
1	Saudi	4353
2	Syrian	613
3	Iraqi	454
4	Iranian	51
5	Jordanian	46
6	Other nationalities	229
	Total	5746

Source: the Central Apparatus for Illegal Resident Affairs

BEDOON DRAFT LAWS UPSET STATE-BODY WORK PLAN

By A Saleh and agencies

KUWAIT: A state-body tasked with finding a solution to the bedoons' problem is reportedly upset from continuous lawmakers' demands pertaining with the decades-old issue, saying that proposals to naturalize a set number of stateless residents is "an intervention in the executive authority's affairs". This comes while the Central Apparatus for Illegal Resident Affairs declared yesterday that up to 5,746 illegal residents had verified their original nationality since the body was founded.

International reports estimate Kuwait's bedoon community at around 120,000, while a newspaper report last month suggested that there are around 111,500 stateless residents registered with the central apparatus. Bedoons demand citizenship as well as civil and social rights they are deprived from given their illegal residence status, but the government argues that only 34,000 qualify for consideration. The rest are considered Arabs or descendants of Arab people who deliberately disposed off their original passports after coming to Kuwait to seek citizenship in the oil-rich country.

In the meantime, the government says that the number of bedoons who applied to legalize their status since the central apparatus announced helping those who do so is on the rise. "The number of illegal residents applying to reveal their original nationality was due to a package of measures undertaken by the apparatus," said Col Mohammad Al-Wuhaib, the director of the nationality authentication department in the Ministry of Interior and the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI).

Among the offered privileges for those who seek to legalize their status is an immediate, renewable free-of-charge residency for all family members valid for five years, in addition to free educational and health services, according to Wuhaib. "The nationality verification process is based on examining the passport of the applicant after authenticating the other filed papers," he said. He urged others "who wish to alter their status and disclose their nationality to file their papers at the immigration department in Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorate or the apparatus office in Ardiya".

Security restrictions

Despite the reportedly increased number of people who legalized their status, it still pales in comparison to tens of thousands who possess official 1965 census documents which the government deems key for naturalization claims. Furthermore, security concerns surrounding a large number of bedoons narrows the list of those eligible for citizenship to a mere 15,000, according to sources within the central apparatus. "While holders of the 1965 census [documents] reach up to 36,000, many of them have security or criminal restrictions that prevent their naturalization," said the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The term 'security restrictions' refers to

conditions by which a stateless resident becomes unqualified for citizenship, including having a criminal record. The sources further revealed that the apparatus "expressed regret" over repeated demands in the parliament to eliminate the security restrictions condition. "Every security restriction was based on official documents that were reviewed over and over again," the sources said. "If a person in that case can provide documents which prove that the restrictions were unjustly placed, the restrictions will immediately be removed".

Naturalization cap

The government also seems unappreciative of MPs' attempts to force the state to naturalize at least 4,000 bedoons every year, according to a draft law proposed recently. A report published by Al-Rai yesterday indicates that the government was expected to reject the law when it sends its response to the parliament next week. "The government will maintain its position calling for naturalizing a maximum of 4,000 bedoons instead," said MP Sultan Al-Shemmari, the rapporteur of the interior and defense committee.

The draft law, which was approved by the parliament's interior and defense committee on Thursday, has also been criticized by the central apparatus according to the sources. "The apparatus informed the Interior Ministry that MPs' demands are considered an intervention in the executive committee's work," the source said, "and obstructs its work plan to resolve the bedoons' issue within the period of its work". Established in 2010, the Central Apparatus for Illegal Residents was given a five-year ultimatum to sort out the bedoons' community and find those who meet conditions of naturalization, including residents whose bedoon ancestors failed to register for citizenship following Kuwait's independence more than fifty years ago. The apparatus adopted measures within a year after its creation to grant stateless residents numerous rights such as obtaining marriage, birth and death certificates as well as driving licenses. But all measures failed to provide significant improvement in living conditions or cut unemployment rates among bedoons, prompting several protests in the past couple of years which saw around 200 stateless men arrested for illegal gathering.

Dual citizens

In a related note, MP Dr Abdullah Al-Turajji told Al-Rai that he handed over documents to Prime Minister HH Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah last week "which prove that some naturalized bedoons and those who filed for naturalization possess Iraqi IDs". The MP had previously announced possession of documents which he says prove that some bedoons who were naturalized in recent years or are in line for citizenship renewed their Iraqi passports as recently as 2005.

Turajji further told Al-Rai on Friday that he already met the premier as well as Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Khalid Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah over the issue, while he is expected to meet Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khalid Al-Sabah this week.

KUWAITI FIGHTER AIRLIFTED TO KUWAIT

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti man was sent back home after he was injured during fighting in Syria, a local daily reported yesterday quoting sources with knowledge of the news.

The injury happened during a fight between rebel fighters and Syrian Army troops. He was transported to Turkey "where a Kuwaiti medical aircraft picked him up and sent him back to Kuwait," said the sources who spoke to Al-Rai on the condition of anonymity.

While state officials had subtly acknowledged that Kuwaitis had joined rebel fighters in Syria since the insurgency against Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's regime began in 2011, there are no official records that mention names or numbers of those fighters. Local newspapers had posted reports in the past couple of years about Kuwaitis who were killed during

in-fightings in Syria, in addition to reports about others who crossed the border with Turkey to join the Free Syria Army.

Political and Islamist figures have been outspoken about providing financial support to rebel fighters in Syria. On June 2013, former Islamist MPs joined a campaign to arm up to 12,000 Jihadists in Syria, and the government later acknowledged that there are unofficial fundraisings organized across the Gulf state.

Raising funds for Syrian refugees requires a special permit from local authorities in Kuwait where official humanitarian aid goes through the United Nations.

Also last year, former Islamism MP Dr. Waleed Al-Tabtabaei posted pictures on his Twitter account which showed him in military suit standing alongside who he said were 'rebel fighters' in Syria.



KUWAIT: Kuwait City sparkles at night with many buildings, businesses and towers lit up as part of the month long celebrations marking Kuwait's National and Liberation Day holidays. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

NATIONAL GUARD FORMS TRANSPARENCY COMMITTEE

KUWAIT: The National Guard has decided to form a committee for transparency tasked with implanting in its personnel optimum values of fairness, justice, and dedication to the institution they belong to, a National Guard press statement said yesterday.

Among the duties of this committee will be to set guidelines for grassroots reforms leading to the eschewing of nepotism and cronyism among the rank and file of all national guardsmen and to the prevention of those who seek to exploit others through their job positions, said the statement.

Moreover, the committee will have the responsibility to regularly review complaints and conduct-related reports and any aspects of corruption among the ranks of the guardsmen in

addition to polling the latter to get their opinions on such issues, said the statement.

To get a better handle on the formation of this transparency committee, the National Guard visited the Public Authority for Fighting Corruption, learning firsthand how the Authority dealt with administrative and financial corruption, noted the statement.

Furthermore, a delegation from the Kuwaiti Society for Transparency visited the National Guard to collect information about its progress in fighting corruption and in instigating measures of reform, especially in view of the fact that the National Guard won the Society's transparency award for 2013, beating numerous government ministries and agencies. — KUNA

KUWAIT DIPLOMAT HAILS FAO CHIEF'S VISIT AS POSITIVE

ROME: Kuwait's Permanent Representative in the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) yesterday praised the positive results of the visit of Director General of the organization to Kuwait last month as "positive".

Kuwait's Representative in Rome Yousif Al-Juhail said that the visit of Dr Jose Graziano da Silva to Kuwait from Jan 23 to 25 resulted in taking decisions to send Kuwaiti youth on scholarships to benefit from international experiences in the field.

Da Silva discussed with Director General of Kuwait's Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAF) Jassim Al-Bader holding training courses for Kuwaiti youth in the authority's different departments, said Al-Juhail.

The two sides also discussed opening FAO's bureau in Kuwait soon, aiming to execute projects related to water, animals, and plant resources, he noted.—KUNA



KUWAIT: Fire broke out in a vehicle near Nuwaiseeb fire center yesterday. Firefighters rushed to the area and extinguished the fire. No injuries were reported. —Photos by Hanan Al-Saadoun