

## Local

# Disagreements on final solution could force delay of proposed bedoons' law

## Court adjourns blogger's case to Oct 16; sentences teacher with fake degree

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** A proposed law to end the plight of bedoons (stateless) might be delayed till after November and probably January, said parliamentary sources, justifying the possible delay to disagreement concerning the final solutions suggested for the problem. The sources added that the Central Agency of Illegal Residents insists that bedoons who deserve citizenship are less than 5,000 while most bedoons actually hold other countries' citizenships and only claim to be stateless just to stay in Kuwait and enjoy privileges. The sources added that, on the other hand, another team believes that proving that an uncle or cousin holds another country's nationality does not necessarily mean that a bedoon holds the same nationality. Moreover, the sources said lawmakers strongly reject a proposal to fund bedoons and help them get other countries' citizenships.

National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem had announced last July that under directions from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a comprehensive and just solution will be struck to end the decades-old problem of thousands of stateless people or bedoons in a way that wouldn't "inhibit their national identity rights." Insisting that the solution will not undermine Kuwait's national identity

and will not be at the cost of Kuwaiti citizenship, Ghanem said that the parliament will be called to approve legislation either early next term starting in late October or could be invited to an emergency session during the summer recess.

In other news, the criminal court yesterday adjourned the case of a Kuwaiti blogger known as Ateej Al-Mesayyan for another hearing on Oct 16, 2019. Security sources said yesterday's hearing was limited to the defendants' attorneys and that the court refused releasing the main suspect - a bedoon - and others accused with the same charges of instigating the murder of officials at the Central Agency of Illegal Residents and calling for an uprising against local security forces. The court also said that the suspect has several Twitter accounts that he uses in collaboration with others abroad.

### Homosexual jailed for entering ladies' salon

In another case, the criminal court sentenced a female Kuwaiti teacher to prison for presenting a fake master's degree in psychology to the Ministry of Education. Meanwhile, the court of appeal yesterday sentenced a homosexual Kuwaiti to two years with labor for entering a ladies' salon disguised as a woman and kissing the owner, pretending to be a woman.

The court of appeals also fined MP Saadoun Hammad Al-Otaibi's nephew KD 5,000 for charging into his uncle's diwaniya and posting a video he



The National Assembly.

recorded there while insulting his uncle and other parliamentary election candidates. And in an attempt to escape punishment, a Kuwaiti who was arrested for planting cannabis at his house told the court yesterday that he had no intentions of trading in the drug. "I planted it for my own use," he told the judge.

Separately, General Customs Department's Director

Jamal Al-Jalawi announced that air cargo inspectors managed to foil an attempt to smuggle a number of Pharaonic items hidden in a 65-kg parcel. Jalawi added that the case was referred to relevant Kuwaiti authorities pending returning the items to Egypt after experts from the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters examine the five confiscated items.

## Mainstream media's role essential amidst fake news: US envoy

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** US Ambassador Lawrence Silverman hosted a reception to welcome the US Embassy's new Press Attaché to Kuwait Stewart Beitz. "For me, it's also one last chance to see some of the friends and partners that I've had the privilege to get to know over the last three years," said Silverman, whose tenure is ending. "The US Embassy is very fortunate to enjoy a close relationship with you, the media professionals who educate and inform the Kuwaiti public on the issues that matter most to them," he added.

Silverman thanked local media partners for the last three years of media coverage, interviews and pull-asides. "I hope that your ratings and readership did not suffer too much whenever you covered one of our events," he quipped.

He said the role of the mainstream media cannot be compared to social media nowadays. "I know that the role of mainstream media did not diminish even a bit with the advent of social media - in fact, your role is more essential for verification. You are the ultimate source of truthfulness amidst fake news and mis-

representations and misinformation. You can interview both sides and present them to people in a more balanced and unbiased way," the envoy said. "Thanks to you, we have helped the Kuwaiti public better understand not only US government policies, but also American society and values," he pointed out.

Silverman added that both the American and Kuwaiti constitutions enshrine freedom of the press and expression. Kuwaitis should be proud of their free and active press, vibrant civil society and the most democratic parliament in the region. "Kuwait's diwaniya culture of frank and open discussion is truly unique, and you see its positive effects on the media environment. While it saddens me to leave, I will be departing with very fond memories of Kuwait and its people. Most of all, I am very proud of the things we achieved during my tenure," he said.

The ambassador pointed out that Kuwait and the US have strengthened their relationship in areas including defense cooperation, trade, investment, education and consular affairs. "We also signed agreements and implemented programs that will deliver practical ben-



Lawrence Silverman



Stewart Beitz

efits to the people of Kuwait, such as improving the teaching of English, strengthening counter-terrorism capabilities and making international travel safer," he said.

"With our Kuwaiti partners, we worked on initiatives to foster innovation and entrepreneurship. The recent passage by the National Assembly of a new intellectual property rights law should, if implemented properly, help incentivize and protect Kuwaiti artists and innovators who are working to diversify the economy and attract greater investment," Silverman said. He noted that the embassy's Public Affairs Section is expanding people-to-people exchanges that are the foundation of the US-Kuwait relationship.

He also introduced the new press

attache Beitz, who has spent the past two years studying Arabic. He's a veteran of the United States Navy and also worked for several years at General Electric as an engineer. Beitz also served at the US embassies in Honduras and Mexico and while serving in Honduras, Beitz was recalled to active duty naval service and was part of Operation Enduring Freedom in Djibouti and Uganda.

"After that, he served in the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement and the Office of International Information Programs," Silverman said. Beitz thanked Silverman for the great words and warm welcome, saying he is looking forward to working with the local press during his stint as press attache.

## Farwaniya residency department changes working hours

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Interior's relations and security information department said official working hours of the companies' department at Farwaniya residency affairs will be changed from evening to morning - from 7:00 am to 2:30 pm. All concerned parties should comply with the new times for speedy processing of transactions.

In other news, ASTM International organized a workshop in cooperation with Kuwait Municipality in the field of construction codes in the presence of president of the organization and several international organizations and GCC representatives at the Regency Hotel titled "sustainable standards and codes in construction." US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman thanked Kuwait Municipality, led by Director General Ahmad Al-Manfouhi for holding the event. He extended his greetings to the leaders as well as the speakers, who are experts in construction.

Silverman said the workshop is the result of coordination and cooperation since five years in the field of standards and sustainable codes in construction projects, adding that this project gives official status to coordination between trade departments in the US and the international trade management of ASTM International and the Word Codes Council.

Manfouhi welcomed the US ambassador and the participation of other officials. He said the establishment of a unified Gulf code became a reality due to the joint work and exchange of experiences between GCC countries. Manfouhi lauded ASTM for holding the workshop and allowing everyone to benefit from its experience by having model standards for construction rules, which reflects on the unified Gulf code.



Ahmad Al-Manfouhi

## Ministry signs KD 88 million Abadly road development deal

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Public Works has recently signed a KD 88 million (around \$280 million) deal to develop Al-Abadly road, which will service the northern region of Kuwait and the future Al-Mutla City, a ministry statement said yesterday. It said Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Minister of Public Works Dr Jenan Boushehri signed the deal, adding that the road development project will be immensely important for Al-Mutla City. It will provide adequate entry and exit roads for Al-Mutla city and will better connect it with the rest of the country, indicated the ministerial statement.

Meanwhile, Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) Suha Ashkanani said the contract - part of the second phase of Al-Abadly road development project - was signed with Italy's ITINERA S.P.A and a local representative contract. She revealed that the project would take around three years to complete, adding that it will link Al-Mutla City with the 26-kilometer-long regional Al-Salmi road. The project will expand outgoing and incoming lanes from three to five and it will include three intersections, six bridges and developed infrastructure, Ashkanani said. — KUNA

## Kuwait hosts Customer Engagement Technology Conference

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** The Customer Engagement Technology Conference was held yesterday at J W Marriot to bring together marketing, digital/IT and business heads to discover the latest solutions that enable greater customer experience in various industries.

On the sidelines of the conference, Kuwait Times spoke with Nayab Rafiq, CEO of Pinnacle Middle East, to learn more about the digital industry in MENA. "The Customer Engagement Technology Conference is a platform that connects major industry players of the region with key decision-makers to digital innovations that help shape the future of the business-customer relationship. The event successfully brought together over 300 participants to discover the latest solutions that enable greater customer experience in various industries," he said.

Speaking about Pinnacle Middle East, Rafiq said the company provides the platform for knowledge exchange and partnerships that help shape the future of business. "The company is helping business leaders to understand the greatest opportunities in their industry. We are in more than six countries. Our headquarters are in Dubai, but we have launched in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Egypt, and the UK."

Rafiq pointed out that business leaders must consider a digital switch and choose the best digital platform to use to promote their business and expand, noting that the e-commerce base enables businessmen at very low cost to be ready to sell and reach a high volume of people by tapping into the digital world. "You can be a Kuwaiti SME but you don't have to be selling only to the Kuwaiti market. The e-commerce base allows you to reach customers around the world and allows you to offer incentives to your potential customer base," he said.



KUWAIT: Nayab Rafiq, CEO Pinnacle Middle East, speaks during the conference. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

About Kuwait's digital innovation market, Rafiq said the Kuwaiti government is making excellent progress towards digitalization and innovation. "The New Kuwait 2035 vision seems to have digital at the core of the initiative. We had great support from the Kuwaiti government with the participation of Kuwait's Central Agency for Information Technology in today's conference," he said. "IT is a big part of this vision, with more than \$60 billion invested towards the 2035 strategy with a further \$100 billion still to be invested. I believe that this vision will make a big change to the future of Kuwait."

Rafiq added Kuwait is an interesting market because it has unique characteristics, as Internet penetration in Kuwait's households is among the highest in the world at 98 percent. "Also, we know that Kuwait is launching an initiative to create a \$200 million fund for investments in technology, which will drive the country's digital innovation market to nearly KD 300 million this year," he said.

Regarding social media, he said Kuwait has the highest percentage of social media users in proportion to the population in the Middle East, adding that Kuwait has made the most advances in adopting digital transformation and these numbers confirm that it is on track and adapting well to the digital era's demands.

## Army lieutenant killed in crash

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** A Kuwait army lieutenant was killed and another was seriously injured when their vehicle collided with another car along Sixth Ring Road yesterday, said security sources. An investigation was opened to reveal the circumstances behind the accident.

### Economic guidebook

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) yesterday issued resolution number 385/2019 in which it added seven new activities to the unified GCC economic activities guidebook. A press release issued by MoCI explained that the new activities include child spas, e-payment systems, e-money and precious items' collection and delivery, electronic bill collection, cash and point of sale (POS) collection and manufacturing non-woven fabric medical products such as gloves, shoes and head covers.