

Local

Assembly rejects changes to labor law to cut salaries

Tenants can delay rent payment • Tougher penalties for domestic violence

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: In a 12-hour marathon session, the National Assembly formed a three-member panel to investigate the Malaysian fund corruption scandal and passed several laws, but rejected a draft law that allows reducing salaries of employees in the private sector due to the coronavirus pandemic. The amendments to the labor law in the private sector sought to allow employers to reduce the salaries of their staff by up to 50 percent and ask them to take unpaid leave in a bid to cut costs during the pandemic. But MP Abulkarim Al-Kandari said the proposed law allows companies to cut salaries retrospectively, which violates the constitution, adding that the bill impacts some 600,000 employees in the private sector who draw high salaries and does not provide protection for some 72,000 Kuwaitis in the private sector.

Scores of companies have already fired thousands, cut salaries of most of their employees and forced many to take unpaid leave among other measures to counter the financial impact of the coronavirus. During the debate, a number of MPs urged the government to accelerate the appointment of Kuwaitis and to reduce the number of expats in the country. MP Safa Al-Hashem said that many senior expat advisors are still occupying key posts in the government, including the Council of Ministers, "exposing the country's confidential information". She called to replace them with Kuwaitis.

The Assembly approved amendments to the rent law, giving the right to tenants to delay payment of rent or ask the court to make pay-

ments in installments as a result of the coronavirus. The amendments make it more difficult for landlords to evict tenants. MPs also passed a law on the right to obtain information but excluded military or sensitive information. They also passed a law imposing tougher penalties for domestic violence.

The Assembly also debated the corruption scandal of the Malaysian sovereign fund case which is being investigated by the public prosecution. Following the debate, the Assembly



Panel to probe Malaysian fund scandal

elects a three-member parliamentary investigation committee to probe the corruption scandal. The elected MPs are Safa Al-Hashem, Shuaib Al-Muwaizri and Awdah Al-Awdah. The committee was given two months to submit its report to the Assembly. Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Mubarak Al-Harees told MPs that the case is under investigation by the public prosecution and asked them while speaking not to mention names or information that could impact the investigation.

MP Kandari said the case is a real test of the government's determination to fight corruption,

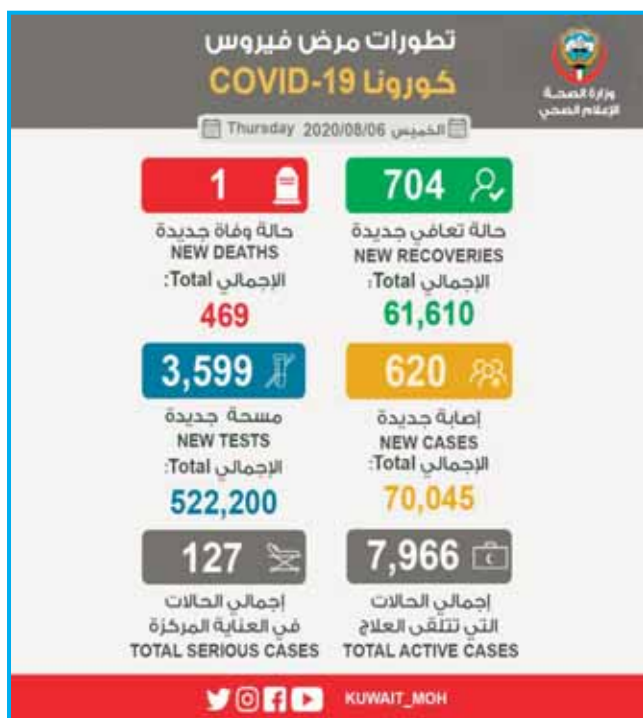


KUWAIT: MPs attend a session at the National Assembly on Wednesday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

adding that the case began four years ago when the account of the main suspect received \$1.2 billion with no action taken by the supervisory authorities. He said the main suspect was released on bail despite having a private jet, and inquired if a former senior official is involved in the case. MP Yusef Al-Fadhlah wondered why the case was first exposed from abroad and not by the country's supervisory authorities like the financial intelligence unit (FIU) and banks themselves.

MP Omar Al-Tabtabaei said the post of the head of FIU has remained vacant for the past two years after the previous chief resigned, adding that three banks reported inflated ac-

counts of some persons without any move by the Central Bank. MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said the government complaint on the case is not complete. MP Hashem said the case had been shelved in Kuwait for years but the government was forced to reopen it after the US attorney reported it. MP Khaled Al-Otaibi said he believes there are other major corruption cases in which high-profile people are involved and warned that sanctions could be imposed on Kuwait. HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah called on MPs not to involve the country in such corruption cases, insisting that only individuals are involved in these cases and will be held to account.



Moms can approve children's surgeries

KUWAIT: In a tweet, Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah said mothers are now allowed to give permission for their children's surgery or in other emergency situations. Either parent can give approval unless it is an urgent surgery - doctors are then allowed to perform it without waiting for permission.

Officer killed cleaning gun

A Kuwait Army first lieutenant was killed when his gun accidentally went off while he was cleaning it in his house in Saad Al-Abdullah, said security sources. Case papers indicate that detectives responded and immediately rushed to the citizen's house accompanied by paramedics. The man was already dead when they arrived. Initial investigations showed the officer was cleaning his gun when it went off by accident. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress. — Al-Rai

Son threatens to kill mom

A female citizen called Jahra police requesting immediate protection from her son who had insulted and threatened to kill her before damaging the furniture and all electrical appli-

ances in the house. Security sources said the crying mother provided detectives with information about her son, who is in his twenties. A case was filed and the son is being summoned for further investigations. — Al-Rai



Firefighters remove an iron ring stuck in a girl's finger in Salmiya.