

Local

Kuwait's expats over 60 face sudden reality of leaving 'home'

University degree, family visa only remaining solutions

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Expat employees who reach 60 years of age and are not university graduates have a short time remaining in Kuwait. They won't be able to work anymore, but they may have a chance to stay in Kuwait - according to certain conditions - if their children are working in the country.

When this decision by the Public Authority for Manpower was issued a few months back, nobody explained the reason for it. People in this category - many of whom have called Kuwait home for most of their lives - usually work in technical or low-wage jobs, which are shunned by Kuwaitis. If the reason was potential pressure on medical services due to their age, then can pay more for health insurance, for instance.

An administrative mistake can change the life of an entire family. Abu Mohammed, who has been living in Kuwait for almost 50 years, will be forced to leave the country. "Unfortunately, I'm paying for somebody else's mistake. Although I'm a university graduate, the mandoub (company representative) did not submit my certificate, and they registered me as a high school graduate. I never checked this information before as I didn't need to. When the mandoub informed me of the new decision and said he won't be able to renew my visa next year, I was shocked. I told him to change my educational status based on my degree, but he said that it's not allowed to modify the status now, as many years have passed," the 65-year-old Jordanian told Kuwait Times.

'Long work experience'

Abu Mohammed hopes that something changes. "Most of these people have been living in Kuwait

for 20 or 30 years and even longer, and are loyal to this country much more than those who arrived just a few years ago. Kuwait should benefit from our long work experience here. Most of us feel like strangers when we visit our home countries, as we have lived the majority of our lives here," he said.

The only solution for such residents is to transfer to a family visa, but this option is not available for Abu Mohammed. "Unfortunately, my children live abroad. I only have three younger brothers living in Kuwait, and I can't be dependent on them as it's not allowed. If this decision doesn't change, I will have to leave the country, sadly," he added.

Most of these people have families abroad depending on them, and many will find it difficult to return to their homelands, especially developing countries. Abu Abdullah is a 61-year-old Iranian who has been living in Kuwait since the early 1960s, when he arrived here as a child. When he renewed his residency in July, his employer told him that he won't be able to renew his residency next year due to the new regulation.

New decision applies from Jan 2021

'Very tough situation'

"I work as a driver at a private company and I only receive KD 250 monthly. I send most of my salary to my family in Iran, where I have my wife and six children. The situation there is very tough, and even my married daughters depend on my support. In Kuwait I only have one daughter, who is married. I can't become her dependent as she is not employed and her residency is dependent on her husband. I really don't know what I will do next year, as the situation in Iran is difficult and in my old age no one will employ me," stressed Abu Abdullah. There are many more similar cases. Abu Abbas, 62,



KUWAIT: This archive photo shows a group of people waiting at a bus stop in Kuwait City. This photo is for illustration purposes only. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

is an Iranian blacksmith living in Kuwait for over 25 years. "I was very sad to hear that this decision will be applied from January. My family back home depends on my salary. Also, I'm living with only one kidney, so I have to drink at least 5 liters of mineral water daily. If I go back home in this situation, it would be impossible to get this quantity of water there and most probably I will not survive," he said dejectedly.

According to a report published by Al-Qabas Arabic daily on Tuesday, many company owners believe that this decision is unjust towards occupational workers who were trained inside and outside Kuwait and honed their skills until they became experts, and it is not fair to let them go in this man-

ner. The report said Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chairman Mohammad Jassim Al-Saqer said the decision, besides not being right, will have negative effects on certain economic activities, adding the peak of a man's contributions are during the period between 60 and 70 years of age.

According to the latest available official statistics, there were 79,506 expatriate workers over 60 years in Kuwait as of June 30, 2020, of whom 73,480 were employed by private firms and 6,026 in the public sector. The statistics, released by the Central Statistical Bureau's Labor Market Information System, do not specify the educational levels of those labor forces.

UNSC applauds cooperation on missing Kuwaitis

NEW YORK: The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has applauded current cooperation between Kuwait and Iraq in the search for missing people from Kuwait and other states. The UNSC adopted a press release yesterday alluding to the handover of human remains, believed to be of Kuwaiti nationals, from the Iraqi government to the Kuwaiti government on September 16, 2020, and before that on August 8, 2019. The council member states expressed gratitude to Iraq for the logistical support, lauding particularly the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the "tripartite mechanism" for

implementing the UN Resolution 2107 (2013) for resolving standing issues related to the missing people from Kuwait and other countries. They also hailed the Iraqi government for the continuous repatriation of Kuwaiti properties, urging it to pursue the search for other missing items, namely the Kuwaiti manuscripts. Moreover, they expressed hope that the team of Kuwaiti coroners will finish the task of determining identity of the delivered human remains that have been sent to the country from Baghdad.

Furthermore, the UNSC member countries voiced gratitude to the Iraqi government for seeking to honor remaining commitments at this level according to the council relevant resolutions. Iraq's ousted regime of the late Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait early August 1990 and occupied the country for months. During the aggression and occupation, hundreds of Kuwaiti citizens were abducted by the occupiers and remained missing since then. —KUNA

Ten-day cancer awareness campaign kicks off Friday

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: A ten-day cancer awareness campaign titled 'Know Cancer Better' will kick off tomorrow, reaching out to various sections of the Kuwaiti society. The awareness campaign is organized by Center for India Studies (CIS-Kuwait) in association with the Indian Doctors forum (IDF), Kuwait and Kuwait Medical Association (KMA). As the chief guest, Indian Ambassador Sibi George will inaugurate the campaign at 5:30 pm on Friday, November 27, on Zoom platform. "Cancer is one of the major killers of the modern world. There is a popular belief that it is a dead end. But it is not. It can be prevented or cured if the disease is detected early at a precancerous stage itself. For that, we need public awareness," said the ambassador, while congratulating CIS and IDF for initiating the awareness campaign.

Dr Sadeq Abu Zalouf, Chairman, Radiation Oncology, Kuwait Cancer Control Center

(KCCC), as the guest of honor, will address the audience and brief the listeners about the various facilities available for cancer treatment in Kuwait. "Cancer awareness among the general public helps dispel the myth about the disease and enables early diagnosis, thus reducing mortality," said Dr Zalouf. According to Dr Zalouf, the most common cancer cases in Kuwait are prostate and lung cancer in males and breast and endometrium in females. Today, KCCC has state-of-the-art diagnostic and therapeutic facilities to treat cancer, he added. Wishing the campaign all success on behalf of KCCC and the Kuwait community, Dr Zalouf said he is quite privileged to participate in this ten-day cancer awareness campaign.

Dr Amir Ahmed, President of IDF will address the audience as the guest of honor. Dr Juzer Ali, Radiation Oncologist, Kuwait Cancer Control Center, will deliver the keynote address. Dr Surendra Nayak, CIS advisor, will be releasing a pamphlet on cancer awareness, prevention and treatment in different languages that would

be distributed to the attending organizations and public forums. "The ten-day campaign will be held via virtual mode in view of the present COVID situation. Various socio-cultural organizations have become part of this campaign with over 20 sessions being already scheduled," said Vibheesh Thikkodi, the CIS president.

A panel of eminent specialist doctors from IDF Kuwait and from India will address people on specialized topics relating to cancer awareness during the campaign. The organizers have announced that there will be exclusive programs for women audiences. "The primary purpose of the campaign is to create awareness about how to prevent the disease and how to get treatment and cure on time. There will be general cancer awareness talks and also on specific cancers such as breast cancer, cervical cancer, colorectal, oral and laryngeal, lung and prostatic cancer," said Dr Nayak. Periodic screening tests are important as they help in detecting the disease at precancerous stage itself, he said.

Kuwait reports 422 new COVID cases, one death

KUWAIT: Kuwait listed 422 new coronavirus cases yesterday which the Ministry of Health said were registered over the previous 24 hours, raising total infections to 141,217. Meanwhile, one patient died over the past 24 hours, which upped Kuwait's COVID-19 death toll to 871, the health ministry said. The number of people hospitalized with the virus currently stands at 6,313, with 78 of them in intensive care units, said ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad, adding that 6,117 swab tests were conducted over the past 24 hours out of a total of 1,068,193 so far. The ministry had earlier reported that some 626 more people had recovered from the virus over the same period, raising the total of patients to have overcome the disease to 134,033. The spokesman went on to urge the public to abide by health precautions, including social distancing, which he said remains critical to halt the spread of the virus. —KUNA



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