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Lawmakers urge government to create more jobs for Kuwaitis

Assembly votes to reduce detention, preventive jail; Coronavirus cases nears 5,000

By B Izzak

Kuwait Times, Kuwait News' Yasser Al-Zayyat's photo among 'world best'



KUWAIT: Several world news agencies selected a picture by Kuwait Times and Kuwait News photographer Yasser Al-Zayyat among the 'best photos of the week' in yet another achievement in the organization's continued endeavor to reaching excellence in local, regional and international arenas. — (See Page 3)

KUWAIT: Lawmakers yesterday called on authorities to strictly apply laws and decisions issued to create more jobs for Kuwaitis in the public sector and to reduce the appointment of expats in such jobs. The calls came during a debate on three draft laws that aim to create more jobs for citizens. The bills were however returned to the concerned Assembly panel to include remarks made by MPs.

MP Abdulaziz Al-Saqabi said that unemployment among Kuwaitis rose from 26 percent to 32 percent in the past six months, while MP Osama Al-Shaheen said that Kuwaitis are now coming back to the public sector from the private sector because of the lack of incentives. MP Saleh Al-Mutairi claimed that advertisements for government jobs are "tailored for expats", while MP Muhammad Al-Sayer called for preventing expats from working two jobs.

MP Abdulkarim Al-Kundari said that ministers should not be given the power of exemption in employment, adding that expats are given public sector jobs from "the back door". MP Saifi Al-Saifi said that it is strange that after 80 years, oil companies are still appointing foreigners in the oil sector. "Foreign manpower is milking the country and we need a law to force the private sector to employ Kuwaitis".

During yesterday's special session, the Assembly approved provisional amendments to the procedural law to cut detention at police stations to a maximum of 48 hours from four days and preventive arrest for up to 10 days down from three weeks. Lawmakers charged that the long preventive detention is being misused to punish suspects who are later acquitted in court. One of the amendments scraps detention for people suspected of misdemeanor charges whose penalty is less than three months in jail.

The Assembly also approved amendments to the press and publication law and the audio-visual law to expand freedom of speech and reduce penalties on the freedom of expression charges.

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Students struggle as Lebanon crisis cripples the sector

BEIRUT: Power shortages and soaring petrol prices mean many Lebanese university students can neither afford to reach their classes nor study from home, a conundrum that is ravaging a generation's future. Agnes, a 22-year-old dentistry student from south Lebanon, is among the few still plodding to class in Beirut four days a week.

The five hours she spends on a bus daily now costs her 1.3 million Lebanese pounds a month—"that's half of my father's salary", she said. Such expenses are now

beyond the reach of most Lebanese students, with their country in the throes of a financial, political and health crisis that has ravaged its economy. The national currency has lost more than 95 percent of its value on the black market, and the minimum wage of 675,000 pounds is worth little more than \$20, which barely pays for a full tank of petrol.

Transport "is becoming more expensive than my semester's tuition fees", said Tarek, a 25-year-old student at the Islamic University of Lebanon who, like the others interviewed, declined to give a family name. As a result, and also because teachers face similar difficulties, many universities continue to offer online classes. But staying connected during state power cuts that often last more than 20 hours a day also comes at a cost.

Amina, 22, a student at the public

Lebanese University, said she has reverted to doing most of her work from books due to the lack of electricity at home. There are "about 75 students in the class, of whom a maximum of five" can attend online, she said, adding that she needed to study around nine hours a day in order not to fall behind. To keep laptops and modems running, families have to pay for expensive private generators, but that option too is unaffordable for many.

Some students are spending their money on mobile phone data so they can connect their computers to an internet hotspot. The spaghetti wiring connecting laptops, routers and phone chargers to all manner of back-up devices—from commercial uninterruptible power supplies to homemade contraptions using car batteries—means study areas now often look like the back of an IT workshop.

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BEIRUT: A man on a motorbike drives past the campus of Beirut's Sagesse University in the Lebanese capital Beirut yesterday. — AFP

UAE condemns ship seizure

DUBAI: The seizure of a UAE-flagged ship by Yemeni rebels is a "dangerous escalation", the United Arab Emirates said yesterday, urging the UN Security Council to adopt a firm position. The UAE's first public condemnation of the hijacking comes 10 days after Houthi rebels captured the Rwabee with 11 crew on board in the Red Sea.

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What's in Wordle? Five-letter puzzle craze goes global

WASHINGTON: Five letters, six attempts, and just one puzzle to solve per day: the "Wordle" formula couldn't be simpler, but in a matter of weeks the online brain teaser has got millions guessing around the world. "It just grabs you," daily player Susan Drubin told AFP of the code-breaking word challenge — perhaps best described as a cross between the retro board game "Mastermind" and a daily

crossword. "The great thing about it, is it only takes a few minutes, usually, and it's a very nice, tiny distraction," said the 65-year-old from the Washington suburbs. The puzzle's rise has been meteoric: according to The New York Times, 90 people played on November 1. Two months later, on January 2, more than 300,000 tackled the challenge. The Guardian put the daily player count last weekend at two million, and rising...

Wordle's rules are disarmingly simple: find the word of the day in six tries or fewer. Each guess must be a valid five letter word: letters in the correct space turn green, while letters that are part of the answer but in the wrong spot turn yellow. Only one word is offered up per day, and it is the same

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WASHINGTON: This photo illustration shows a person playing online word game 'Wordle' on a mobile phone in Washington, DC. — AFP