

Local

Kuwaiti women playing an important role in society

Councilmember tackles pollution, traffic crisis

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti women play an important role in society and have made significant contributions to various fields in the country. In recent years, Kuwaiti women have gained more opportunities to participate in politics, business and other sectors of society. In an exclusive interview, Municipal Councilmember Sharifa Al-Shalfan told Kuwait Times that Kuwaiti women have been proving themselves since the sixties, when they were among the first Gulf women to study abroad in Britain, Egypt and Lebanon.

"Kuwaiti women are now ambassadors, ministers and bank executives in the private sector. Kuwaiti women's achievements have reached the highest levels. Today, the confidence of the Kuwaiti leadership is appreciated in supporting women to enhance these achievements. The presence of women in these positions is important, because it gives young girls encouragement and motivation that women are capable of anything," she said.

Shalfan is one of four women appointed to the

Kuwait Municipal Council for the first time. She said women are now offering a new point of view to the council. "The presence of women today in the Municipal Council contributed to the interest in the environmental aspect, as women see the current problems from another perspective," she said.

"The woman is a mother, and we women see pollution is increasing in Kuwait. I have children with asthma. When I go to the hospital, I see it is full of sick children with masks. It hurts my heart. All of this is because of us and due to air pollution. Environmental campaigns are not just a slogan. Environmental pollution affects our health and the health of our children," she explained.

On the issue of landfills, Shalfan said members of the Municipal Council visited three landfills for household waste, where waste is dumped and covered with a layer of sand daily. "There must be an insulator so that the waste does not decompose into the soil, thus affecting groundwater and emitting gases," she said. She noted that there is no health or environmental control, as workers sort the waste by

hand with no protection. "The situation is not good. We are working with the Municipality to try to fix this situation and put in place regulation for solid waste management."

Regarding the traffic crisis, she said among the simple solutions to resolve the problem is to control traffic and regulate taxis, bicycles, motorcycles and public transportation, pointing out that the law must be strictly applied to everyone. "Also, we can adopt the rapid bus transit system and set special lanes on highways for buses to make their destination easier to reach, as well as organizing regular buses in terms of expanding their routes to cover all areas and work on their timings," Shalfan said.

Shalfan expressed the importance of focusing on the problem of stray dogs, as they cause inconvenience to residents living in several areas around Kuwait. "It is an issue of utmost importance, both from an animal rights perspective as well as the health and safety of people." Proposal by Shalfan and several councilmembers discussed the dangerous diseases transmitted from dogs to humans



Sharifa Al-Shalfan

and possible attacks by dogs. The suggestion was to open shelters for stray dogs in several areas and coordinate with the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources to limit the spread of dogs by removing them from the streets and finding a safe place for them.

Kuwait's Charity distributes Iftar meals to refugees

BEIRUT: To celebrate the advent of the Holy Month of Ramadan and help Syrian refugees, Al-Najat Charity distributed Iftar meals to Syrian refugees in Aarsal camps located at the border area in northeastern Lebanon. Speaking to KUNA, Tarek Al-Essa, public relations official at Al-Najat Charity, said that a delegation from the charity joined the refugees in Aarsal to welcome Ramadan and hold Tarawih prayers.

Within the framework of the "One Million Fasting Meals" campaign, which includes several countries including Lebanon, the delegation prepared a mobile kitchen to distribute breakfast meals, he mentioned. In addition to distributing breakfast throughout the month, food baskets were distributed to the camps in the region, he pointed out. Al-Essa, who was accompanied by the director of the Kaifan Zakat Committee at Al-Najat, confirmed the association's keenness to support the refugees and help them, especially in this holy month that represents mercy, goodness and giving.

In another development, GCC Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi on Thursday condemned a decision by the Zionist occupation authorities to re-settle in areas in the north of the West Bank. Al-Budaiwi, in a statement released on Thursday, expressed strong denunciation of the decision that flagrantly breached international laws and added to obstacles in the face of regional and international peace efforts. He has affirmed that the Palestinian cause remains the top question for the Arabs and Muslims, also re-asserting support for establishing an independent Palestinian state within the 1967 June 4th borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Moreover, he called for boosting efforts for pushing the peace process forward.

Protect all basic right

Al-Budaiwi also underlined the GCC countries safeguard human rights and guarantee all basic

rights, including equality and non-discrimination, under the directives of their leaders of the GCC countries. The GCC Secretary-General made the statement on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, annually marked on March 21.

Al-Budaiwi has stressed out that the GCC countries are committed to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination and criminalizing its acts, in accordance with the legislation, laws, procedures and measures adopted by the GCC countries. He indicated that "the world today still suffers from campaigns of racism, discrimination and hatred, and related intolerance that has created challenges for the international community to find solutions to combat racism in all its forms and places."

In addition "the GCC countries have been working to spread and promote a culture of tolerance, respect for human rights, justice, equality, and rejection of racism, in application of the tolerant Islamic Sharia which prohibits discrimination in all its forms." Al-Budaiwi stressed the importance that the international



GCC Secretary-General Jassem Al-Budaiwi

community condemns discourses that promote ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, or that incite racism and discrimination. — KUNA



AKKAR: A girl speaks with another as he carries a young boy while walking past tents at a make-shift camp for Syrian refugees in Talhayat in the Akkar district in north Lebanon. — AFP

to the election, which included: (1) The election process was done with false procedures, as the decision to dissolve the 2020 parliament violated article 107 of the constitution, as the government that requested the dissolution was new and sworn in on the same day, nullifying all conflicts between the previous government and the parliament. (2) The election process, namely redistricting, was made without the approval of the National Assembly. (3) The election process in the second district had procedural errors with regards to the voting process, counting of votes and announcement of results.

Constitutional expert Mohammed Al-Faili told Kuwait News and Kuwait Times "the ruling is similar to the first annulled parliament in 2012, where the process of dissolution was made by the resigned government before forming a new government. The court decided to annul the parliament based on the same reasons," he said.

The court headed by Consultant Mohammed bin Naji ruled any conflict between the government and the parliament ends with the formation of a new government. Therefore, the Sept 29, 2022 election is completely annulled and the 17th parliamentary legislative term is annulled along with all decisions made during that term, reverting to the previous 2020 parliament.

to 1.518 million people. While the percentage of Kuwaitis in the total population declined from 33.94% at the end of 2021 to 32.04%, according to the latest figures. The number of Kuwaiti females totaling 773,100 - exceeds the number of males at 744,400.

The non-Kuwaiti population increased by 322,400 people or an increase rate of 11.1%, to reach 3.219 million people with a compound annual growth rate during the years 2013-2022 at 1.9%. The total number of workers in Kuwait amounted to 2.858 million workers or 60.3% of total population, while this percentage for Kuwaitis reached 31.7% of the total number of Kuwaitis. It is noted that the percentage of non-Kuwaiti workers out of the total non-Kuwaiti population amounted to 73.8%.

When compared with the end of 2021, we find that the percentage of Kuwaiti workers out of total number of workers in Kuwait decreased from 18.1% to 16.8% as in December 2022, and the percentage of female workers out of total Kuwaiti workforce



KUWAIT: A picture shows the National Assembly (parliament) building in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

There are two scenarios that may occur if we review the historical context. It is likely that what happened in 2012 repeats again, leading to another election this year, or the 2020 National Assembly will resume its duties until it finishes its term. The 2020 opposition, no longer the majority after the annulment, is put in a tight place, where they will have to accept the current situation, try to cooperate with the government and move forward with new legislation.

stabilized at 51.1% at the end of 2022 and at the end of 2021, while the percentage of female employment out of total employment in Kuwait was 29.5%. The number of Kuwaiti workers increased by 12,000 workers to reach 481,000 workers, rising from 469,000 workers at the end of 2021.

The number of workers in the government reached 380,600 workers or 79.1% of the total number of Kuwaiti workers. It is believed that the unemployment of Kuwaitis has increased to 26,100 workers or 5.4% of total number of Kuwaiti workers at the end of 2022, compared to 25,400 workers or 5.4% at the end of 2021. The total number of workers (Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti) amounted to 492,900 workers in the government sector or approximately 10.4% of the total population, and the percentage of Kuwaitis working in the government sector is about 77.2%, according to the same source. It must be recalled that the two official sources (PACI & CSB) of these numbers are not compatible.

Vietnam envoy shares Ramadan experience

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: On the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, Kuwait Times is chatting with ambassadors to Kuwait in an attempt to see Ramadan through their eyes. Vietnamese Ambassador Ngu Twang Thang spoke with Kuwait Times about his experience of Ramadan in Kuwait. He said his first posting was at an overseas mission in the Gulf region, where he sat at iftar tables during the holy month of Ramadan. "Kuwaiti people are very friendly, and these occasions are an opportunity for ambassadors and diplomats to understand and create connections with the Kuwaiti people, thus boosting trade and investment relations with each other," he said.



Vietnamese Ambassador Ngu Twang Thang

The Vietnamese ambassador showed his interest in nightly meetings (diwanias), which he considers a very important tradition in Kuwait. "Through the diwanias, I understand more about the Kuwaiti culture and appreciate the people's hospitality. I have also tried a lot of fine Kuwaiti delicacies, and I have a few favorites. One of them is machboos, either mutton or chicken — I enjoy it very much. Another is Umm Ali — a dessert whose taste I like. I feel that in the holy month of Ramadan, people seem to get closer than ever, and it seems very easy to communicate for work. It is also a pleasure to see each other," he said.

Regarding Ramadan in Vietnam, Thang said around 100,000 Muslims are currently residing in his country. "I am aware that the holy month of Ramadan is important to Muslims. I think Muslims around the world will celebrate the month with general activities that are proper to the Islamic religion and have their own customs according to the region. In Vietnam, Muslims and people of other religions live in harmony with each other. The holidays of every religion are respected and celebrated in the local community," he said.

The ambassador added the COVID pandemic affected many aspects of daily life. He rued that when he started his mission as ambassador in 2021, the pandemic restricted a lot of close contacts and therefore affected the diwanias. "After a year, I got the chance to attend a few of the diwanias, but noticed that the time was a bit short, only from 8 to 11 pm. I hope this year with the new situation, the Ramadan activities would last longer — until midnight or later. It would be better for people to have more chances to communicate with each other," he said.

Ambassador Thang expressed Ramadan wishes to HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and to the Kuwaiti people, wishing everyone a Ramadan full of joy, peace and blessings.

Schools almost empty on the first day of Ramadan

KUWAIT: Schools were quite on the first day of Ramadan Thursday morning, with a large number of elementary and middle school students not attending, while high school students showed limited commitment to attendance. School administration, which finished its preparations for the holy month, have prepared schedules specifically for Ramadan, suspending arts, physical education and music classes, but have been alert after the phenomena of informal collective invitation to be absent in schools occurring.

Administration expressed its fears about the increase of absence in schools during the holy month. It may have negative effects especially with regard to study the curriculum during the second term especially with the reduction of school weeks and the increase of holidays.

In other news, the Education Ministry has received the first day of Ramadan with flexible work schedule, splitting schedules into three terms which have contributed to the decrease of traffic nearby its main headquarters and parking. The first day of fasting witnessed a great commitment to work by male and female employees, who started their work since 9:30am, with an early deployment of cleaners throughout the southern and northern towers of the building.

Constitutional Court's ruling and its effects

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: The National Assembly was annulled by the constitutional court on Sunday, March 19, 2023, leading to a complete overhaul of the 17th parliamentary legislative term's decisions, including retirement reforms as well as all laws placed on the agenda but have not been voted on.

It is worth mentioning that the National Assembly has been annulled three times in history. A ruling on June 20, 2012 annulled the parliament, reverting to the 2009 National Assembly for similar reasons as the current annulment. After two invitations to the parliament that were not heeded by most members of the parliament, the Assembly was again annulled in Oct 7 of the same year.

The Constitutional Court ruled in the latest instance based on former MP and 2022 election candidate Ahmad Al-Hamad's objection

Kuwait's population and the labor force

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Civil Information issued the latest detailed data on population and employment statistics at the end of December 2022, and it did not release the detailed data for the end of 2021, showing that the total population in Kuwait reached 4.737 million in December 2022, with population growing by 8% compared to the end of 2021 amounting to 4.386 million people (4.217 million people according to the Central Statistical Bureau). There is an absolute increase during 2022 by 351,200 people, and the absolute decline for 2021 was 285,000 people, ie a decline of 6.1% in 2021 compared to a decline of 2.2% in 2020.

The Kuwaiti population increased during 2022 at a growth rate of 1.9% - bringing their total number