

'Foreigners needn't be treated equally in education'



Mohammed Al Maarifi



Abbas Al Madhi

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A veteran parliamentarian said yesterday that the expatriates need not be treated equally with the citizens when it comes to free services such as education.

Services Committee head Abbas Al Madhi, who has been representing Al Dair and Samahej areas in Muharraq for a decade, raised the issue in the weekly meeting of the House of Representatives held at Gudaibiya yesterday.

The House was discussing the committee's report on a proposal to impose annual fees of BD400 on non-Bahraini students in public schools.

Defending the proposal, Al Madhi said, "I am not ashamed of saying it. My principle is that a Bahraini citizen should be given a distinguished status in his own country. We must respect all residents including the expats, but making them equal to our own citizens isn't acceptable," he said, adding that some expats are earning more than double of what Bahrainis are earning, and what if they pay more fees for their children's education?

Criticising other MPs who rejected the proposal, Al Madhi commented, "It will be a disaster if we can't make a distinction between our citizens and the expats at least in education and employment. This should be fundamental to any country

that respects its people."

"We have Bahrainis working abroad, and they are paying fees for their children's education. Let's treat this issue in the same way. Nothing more and nothing less," Al Madhi said.

The MPs who rejected the proposal included Isa Al Kooheji, Mohammed Al Maarifi, Khalid Al Shaer and Anas Buhindi.

Al Kooheji said that imposing the new fees is unfair on the people who left their countries to serve ours". Buhindi said that it was "unjust". Al Shaer tackled the issue from an economic standpoint, stating that imposing the fees would push expats away from Bahrain, and it might harm the national economy.

Al Maarifi said the fees would eventually be borne by employers, mentioning the state's mandate in the cases of expats working for the public sector.

This was, however, supported by Shura Council and Representatives Council Affairs Minister Ghanem Al

Buainain.

"Logically, the employers will bear the costs of the foreign employees in their children's education. It is mentioned in the work agreements that they should, whether they be in private or public sectors," he said.

There were others who took the occasion to reject the proposal as well as support it. The House, however, decided to set aside the committee's report for two weeks to revise it before bringing it back to the discussion table.

DT News had reported earlier that the proposal, submitted by MP Jalal Kadhim stipulated the amendment of the seventh article of the existing Law 27 of the year 2005 with respect to educational services in the Kingdom in imposing revised annual fees of BD400 on non-Bahraini students in public schools.

The current law, however, lays down that fundamental (primary and intermediate) and secondary education should be free for all in public schools in the Kingdom.

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Khalid Al Shaer



Minister Ghanem Al Buainain

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