

Govt hospital autonomy: Two trustees on way

TDT | Manama

Mohammed Zafran

Government hospitals in the Kingdom will “very soon” have their financial and functional autonomy as the government is busy completing procedures to make them more patient-centric.

The realisation of the move will be based on the formation of two trustees as all other steps have been given the regulatory green light.

“This restructure will happen very soon. All other steps have been taken, so the appointment of the council could be any time now,” Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health Dr Waleed Khalifa Al Manea said.

“This can further improve the quality of services offered at healthcare centres and would promote efficiency and proactiveness.

“This is a positive step for the government as well as for optimum utilisation of resources,” said Dr Waleed Khalifa Al Manea.

The move, the Undersecretary said, will make healthcare facilities more patient-centric.

One of the two trustees will handle primary healthcare, while the other will monitor secondary healthcare. Besides, CEOs will be appointed for hospitals as part of the arrangement.

The trustees, according to Dr Al Manea, will facilitate the healthcare sector as Ministry will then no longer be involved as a regulator.

Both government health centres and government hospitals will also be granted autonomy.

“With this step, the facilities will have the flexibility to make decisions on their own,” the Undersecretary said.

“Historically the lack of flexibility has hindered the ability



Dr Waleed Khalifa Al Manea

of the facilities to make quick decisions as they needed to take permission and help from various government agencies.

The decision will also bestow upon all autonomous institution tremendous responsibilities. “They will generate their own income and have own CEO as well as various administrative departments,” said Dr Al Manea adding: “They will also have control over the recruitment and termination of employees and will no longer have to rely on various government entities.”

Bahrain’s healthcare sector is expected to see a lot of developments next year as a Social Health Insurance Programme (Sehati) will also be launched.

One of the main objectives of the National Health Plan (2016-2025), is the adoption of the Social Health Insurance Program (SEHATI), to develop the quality of the current health system and ensure sustainability. This system is meant to revolutionise the local health sector through better utilisation of the available resources while overcoming pressing challenges, which are mainly due to the rapid increase in population and shifting demographics

Making housing dreams a reality

MPs all set to work towards eliminating waiting time on the housing list



One of the housing projects in the Kingdom (file)

● **Priority for distributing 25,000 housing units as directed by the Crown Prince**

● **40,000 houses to be distributed in the next four years**

● **Private sector to play crucial role in housing development**

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As Bahrain’s parliament has embarked on a new journey with the naming its first woman speaker, Parliamentarians have come forward voicing in unison that their prime concern will be on eliminating the waiting time on housing lists.

The pledges came as the Kingdom elected Fouzia Zainal, who has become only the second woman in the Arab world to hold the position of House speaker, followed by Dr Amal Al Qubaisi in the UAE’s Federal National Council.

Housing issue, as Bahrain’s Parliamentarians suggested, continues to enjoy top concerns among youngster here too as high construction costs and lack of space are forcing them to move above the homes of their parents in search of a private living space.

“Families need more space,” Basem al-Malki, a deputy, told *Tribune* adding: “It is unacceptable for citizens to live in small areas after many years of waiting.”

Touching another flaming issue, he told us that when it comes to housing, ‘narrowness’ or lack of space is a grave concern.

“Many citizens are adopting vertical construction or moving above the homes of their parents as the cost of construction has become very high or unaf-

fordable,” Al Malki pointed out.

He explained: “Hamad Town, for example, is a residential city, and today the second and third generation, and even the fourth of the city’s population, are waiting for their housing demands.”

While acknowledging the number of housing applications received at the Housing Minister as “very large, he assured *Tribune*: “We will urge the government to expand the housing units through its programme of work.”

When approached, a number of members of the House of Representatives told the *Tribune* that housing files are on their top priority list. “We will be looking into all laws and projects that would contribute in reducing the waiting period for housing service.”

MP Mahmoud al-Bahrani told *Tribune* that the Council will give prime importance in fulfilling the directives of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince, to distribute 25,000 housing units to the beneficiaries.”

Discussion on the housing file is yet to begin, he said, while confirming that a consensus, however, has been reached to increase the number of units to be distributed during the next four years to 40 thousand.”

The private sector in focus

Earlier, on the sidelines of the 5th Arab Housing Conference, Minister of Housing Bassem Al-Hamar stressed the importance of partnership with the private sector in meeting the challenges associated with the housing.

The minister told the conference that the government, so far, has implemented 25 thousand housing units during its programme of work in the past years and “we are moving towards achieving the goal of implementing 40 thousand housing units.” According to him, 65 per cent of the citizens in the Kingdom owns a home.

He also pointed out that the Gulf support to Bahrain in the housing projects amounts to 27 to 30pc of the total cost.

The minister further pointed out that Bahrain has been keen to provide high-quality servic-

es in large numbers and there are more than 7,000 housing units within the social housing project.

On the waiting list, the minister said that most of the beneficiaries on the housing list fall in the age group of fewer than 40 years to 21 years. They make up 70pc of the waiting list and this category can receive funding to fulfil their housing dreams.

According to Bahrain’s official website, the Ministry of Housing provides house loans, flats and house for Bahraini citizens. A waiting time that ranges between 5 to 15 years is a normal practice. The government plans to reduce the waiting time to less than 3 years.

The report further states that despite the increasing activities in the real estate sector, there exists a shortage of housing in Bahrain, especially in the low to medium income family range. In Bahrain, about 3,000 marriages are conducted each year and assuming a 50 per cent requirement of housing units, about 1,500 houses are needed per annum on a continuous basis.

Nuwaidrat blast: Court awards life term to two

Manama

The High Criminal Court yesterday sentenced two Bahrainis to life in jail and ordered to pay BD 573 in fines for damages.

The courts also sentenced two others to three years, Advocate General Ahmed Al Hammadi said.

The defendants were put on trial on charges of attempted murder and inflicting physical injuries on police officers, illegal rallying and rioting,

possessing and using Molotov cocktails.

The men, according to court documents, blocked the streets in Nuwaidrat, caused a blast thereby wounding officers and damaging patrol vehicle.

The court relied on witness testimonies, suspects’ confessions and technical reports in arriving at the verdict.

Under Bahraini laws, the defendants have the right to appeal the verdict at the Court of Appeals and subsequently at the Court of Cassation.

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