

Salmaniya nursing Bahrainisation may take 10 years: Jalahma

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TDT | Manama

Bahrainising the nursing workforce at Salmaniya Medical Complex could take between five and 10 years, according to Government Hospitals chief executive Mariam Al Jalahma.

He told Parliament yesterday that the pace is tied to a simple gap in numbers: there are more than 1,500 non-Bahraini nurses in post, while Bahrain produces only about 200 Bahraini nursing graduates each year.

She said that made a full handover far slower at Salmaniya than at health centres, where the smaller staff base made the first wave of replacement far easier to carry out.

At the kingdom's main public hospital, the scale is different. Any shift, she said, has to be phased and thought through with care.

Al Jalahma said the plan also counts on natural retirement as part of the changeover.

'Breathing room'

MPs approve urgent fee relief plan for war-hit small and medium-sized businesses

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War-hit businesses could be spared water, electricity and municipal charges after Parliament backed an urgent proposal yesterday aimed at easing the strain on firms hit by the regional conflict.

MPs approved the measure during the Council's weekly sitting after its sponsors said small and medium-sized businesses had taken a direct hit from attacks reaching Bahrain and from the market strain that followed.

The proposal was put forward by Mohammed Janahi, Ahmed Qarata, Ahmed Al Salloom, Mamdouh Al Saleh and Hassan Bukhammas. Janahi said firms across Bahrain had been hurt by broken supply routes and dearer day-to-day costs.

"Many small and medium-sized enterprises in the Kingdom of Bahrain have been harmed as a result of supply



"Many small and medium-sized enterprises in the Kingdom of Bahrain have been harmed as a result of supply chain disruption and higher operating costs."

— MP MOHAMMED JANAH

chain disruption and higher operating costs," he said.

Cash

He said the case for relief was plain: businesses were running short of ready cash at a

time when traders still had to keep goods moving and shops stocked.

"In war conditions, companies suffer from a lack of liquidity," Janahi said, adding that easing payment burdens would

leave traders with "immediate cash sums" to help them carry on trading and keep goods in the market.

He also linked the move to food and medicine supplies, saying lower upfront charges at entry points would help speed key goods through and cut hold-ups linked to financial clearance.

"Reducing advance financial burdens at customs points speeds up the flow of strategic goods and prevents their accumulation or delay," he said.

Price

Janahi said the move would also help check price rises.

He said instant tax payment at the border created "a financing cost" that traders often passed on to shoppers in the final selling price.

Delaying that payment, he said, would help keep prices steady for Bahrainis.

He based the proposal on the exception set out in paragraph (b) of Article 51 of the Value Added Tax Law No. 48 of 2018.

MP Seroor seeks nursing Bahrainisation timetable



MP Dr Muneer Seroor
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MP Dr Muneer Seroor called for clear figures on current Bahrainisation levels in hospital nursing and a timetable for reaching 100 per cent at Salmaniya Medical Complex and health centres.

He told Parliament yesterday that the government had supported the aim but had not given the numbers or a path to get there.

During debate on the proposal, Dr Seroor welcomed the government's reply and its view that Bahraini staff should be first in line for hiring, calling that a good sign.

But he said the response stopped short of giving the present share of Bahrainis in hospital nursing or saying when the target would be met.

He said the proposal was not meant to make hiring harder or pile on red tape.

Hiring

Its purpose, he said, was to widen the hiring of Bahraini staff in a field tied closely to people's health and their sense of safety in the health system.

Dr Seroor said reaching 100 per cent Bahrainisation in primary healthcare centres was an achievement worth praising, but said it also raised a fair question: if that had been done there, why not in government hospitals too, above all at Salmaniya.

He said this called for a clear staged programme, especially with trained nursing graduates leaving college each year and looking for work.

Drug smugglers caught at airport

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What appeared to be a routine arrival at Bahrain International Airport turned into a major drug bust after customs officers intercepted two passengers carrying narcotics concealed inside luggage.

According to court records, the incident began when a customs officer monitoring X-ray scans noticed irregularities in two suitcases on the baggage conveyor belt.

The bags, belonging to a man and a woman arriving from an Asian country, were flagged for inspection and directed to the red channel.

When asked if they had any-

thing to declare, both passengers said no.

Search

A subsequent search revealed multiple sealed packages of dried fish and shrimp.

Authorities said the narcotics were carefully concealed in six transparent bags embedded within the seafood, in what investigators described as a deliberate attempt to evade detection.

Similar packages were found in the second suitcase, concealed among clothing and food items.

During questioning, the male defendant told investigators he had received the suitcase abroad and that he had been promised payment for delivering it to a



contact in Bahrain.

Account

The woman gave a similar account, saying she had been asked to transport the bag and hand it over upon arrival.

Investigators later uncovered that a hotel room had been arranged for the pair, where the handover was expected to take place. Under police supervision, the suspects contacted the individual believed to be coordinat-

ing the operation.

The handler instructed them to photograph the suitcases and provided combination codes to open them.

Pair

He told the pair that someone would collect the bags from the hotel. No one arrived.

Instead, the suspects were told to leave the suitcases in the room, place the key nearby and return to the airport, where they were informed that tickets had been arranged for their departure.

Authorities later determined the tickets were fraudulent. Efforts to trace the handler were unsuccessful, and he ceased communication shortly afterwards.

Nurana Island plots left without roads or services

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Nurana Island has been left hanging for 15 years, with plot owners still paying the price while roads, sewerage and lighting remain absent, Services Committee chairman Mamdouh Al Saleh told Parliament yesterday.

He said plots had been sold and distributed in 2011, yet those who bought them were still waiting for the most basic works needed to build or live there.

The people bearing the cost, he said, were not residents but owners who had met their side of the bargain and were still left with bare land and little else.

"How can a citizen build or live on an island that lacks the most basic infrastructure?" Al

Saleh said. "No roads, no sewerage, no lighting... nothing that makes it possible to start life there."

He said some owners were still paying off loans after years of delay, despite no real work being carried out on site. That, he told the chamber, had left them in a hard and unfair position.

Al Saleh rejected the government's reply to the urgent proposal on Nurana, saying it gave no firm answer and instead relied on old measures and open-ended dates tied to unclear steps. In practice, he said, that meant the delay was still going on.

The government said in its written reply that the aim of the proposal was already being met through planning, regulatory and executive steps already in force.

Push for three-month loan payment freeze

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An urgent parliamentary proposal calls for personal loan instalments to be put off for three months, with no extra interest, after MPs warned that the economic fallout from the Iranian attacks could hit household budgets.

The proposal asks the relevant bodies to study the move in coordination with the Central Bank of Bahrain, banks and finance firms, with the aim of giving families breathing space while keeping the banking sector stable.

Khalid Buanaq, one of the MPs behind the proposal, said the call came amid regional strain and security unrest that could carry an economic toll for individuals and families.

Households

He said some households



"A pause for a set period would help ease the strain and give people time to reorder their finances."

— MP KHALID BUANAQ



Payment delay should come without any added interest or fees so that the move gives real relief rather than leaving people with a bigger bill later.

might face short-term money strain because of a drop in some business activity or a rise in living costs, making it harder to keep up with monthly dues.

"In such exceptional circumstances, some families may face

temporary financial challenges," he said.

He added that this could affect "their ability to meet their financial obligations, especially personal loan instalments due to banks and financial institu-

tions".

Dues

The lawmaker said personal loans were among the monthly dues carried by a large share of citizens, and that keeping those payments due during emergency economic conditions could place another weight on some families.

A pause for a set period, he said, would help ease the strain and give people time to reorder their finances.

Buanaq said the delay should come without any added interest or fees so that the move gives real relief rather than leaving people with a bigger bill later.

"It is also important that this postponement be made without charging any additional interest or fees during the postponement period," he said, "so that the intended purpose of this measure is achieved in genuinely easing the burden on citizens".