

Supply freedom

MPs approve urgent move to end monopoly in essential medicine distribution

● **Prioritising citizens' health and ensuring market stability**

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Parliament approved an urgent recommendation yesterday calling for fast steps to end monopoly control over the supply and marketing of essential, life-saving medicines and to widen sourcing to strengthen national pharmaceutical security.

The proposal was put forward by MP Abdulwahid Abdulaziz Qarata, who said MPs were following the pressures linked to keeping key medicines available in the local market.

He warned that giving a sole agency or supply route for some medicines to one source can put continuity of treatment at risk, expose patients to harm, and create choke points in the medicines market that affect the buying power of both citizens and the state.

Recommendation

In its text, the recommendation cited Article 68(a) of the Constitution and Articles 127 and 128 of the Council of Representatives' rules of procedure, which allow MPs to submit written recommendations to the



Image used for illustrative purposes only



Government on matters of public concern.

It described the file as having direct implications for citizens' health and for market stability, and asked that it be placed on the chamber's agenda for debate and a vote at the earliest

“Giving a sole agency or supply route for some medicines to one source can put continuity of treatment at risk, expose patients to harm, and create choke points in the medicines market.”

— MP ABDULWAHID QARATA

opportunity. The proposal said dependence on a single supplier can lead to shortages or interruptions if supply is disrupted for technical, logistical or commercial reasons, with knock-on effects across the Kingdom.

It also argued that limited competition can lead to unfair pricing practices and higher costs for patients, while adding pressure to public health spending.

Emergencies

MPs said the issue takes on extra weight during crises and emergencies, when access to key medicines becomes a matter of national security.

The proposal also said monopoly models can conflict with fair-competition principles and international agreements aimed at ensuring access to healthcare.

The recommendation was submitted by Abdulwahid Qarata alongside Bader Al Tameemi, Hassan Ebrahim, Mohammed Al Rifai and Jameel Mulla Hassan.

Health staffing row over vacant clinic rooms and idle doctors

Mohammed Darwish
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Vacant clinic rooms and trained doctors without posts dominated a parliamentary exchange yesterday, as MP Jaleela Alawi pressed the Health Ministry on staffing gaps, promotion routes and how it works out consultant numbers.

Alawi said the ministry's reply to her parliamentary question on consultant and non-consultant doctors in public hospitals and health centres left out key detail needed to judge staffing needs.

“Of course every point in the question was deliberate and had a purpose and meaning,” she told the Council of Representatives. “We want answers because we want to know the real situation, as the ministry did not address many of the details.”

Promotions

She said the reply did not show the latest promotions doctors had received or the career ceiling for each post, and that it relied on general remarks about increasing consultant numbers without explaining how current doctors would be moved to consultant grade, or what the ministry's staffing need was.

“A parliamentary question is a tool through which we extract the remedy and lay the groundwork for effective treatment, and the Ministry of



MP Jaleela Alawi

Health's reply was not, unfortunately, satisfactory,” she said.

Alawi pointed to dentistry and family medicine as examples.

Figures

She said the ministry's figures showed a mismatch between the number of dentists and the number of dental rooms, and asked if there was a plan to staff each room with two to three dentists.

The lawmaker also referred to dentists trained through Tamkeen placements who had worked in health centres for four years and, she said, helped cut appointment waits from six months to two weeks.

She also questioned a split in training routes.

Benefits

Some trainees, she said, were ministry employees with full employment benefits, including pension cover, while others were on the Tamkeen scheme with different grades and pay.

Parliament approves expat ID cards linked to residency length

Mohammed Darwish
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Parliament approved yesterday an amendment tying expat ID card validity to the length of legal residency, pushing it through despite a recommendation from Parliament's Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security Committee to reject the proposal in principle.

MPs also voted down a motion to postpone the discussion, keeping the bill on the day's agenda before approving it at the sitting.

The change amends Article 3 of Law No. 46 of 2006 on the ID Card by adding a paragraph stating that, “in all cases”, a non-Bahraini's ID card must not remain valid beyond the period of residence in Bahrain.

Justice Minister, His Excel-



MP Jalal Kadhemi

lency Nawaf Al Maawda, told MPs that fees were not fixed, saying they were “always under review”, and adding that the ID card fee “will be reviewed” to ensure it covers the real cost.

He urged MPs to distinguish between carrying an ID card and holding a valid residence permit, warning that anyone dealing with a person whose residency has expired faces consequences,



H.E. Nawaf Al Maawda

“Anyone dealing with a person whose residency has expired faces consequences, and that banks and institutions are held to account through Labour Market Regulatory Authority procedures.”

— H.E. NAWAF AL MAAWDA, JUSTICE MINISTER

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Ahmed Qarata

bour Market Regulatory Authority procedures.

“Has any harm fallen on employers from carrying the card?” he asked.

Second deputy speaker Ahmed Qarata backed the bill's aims but said the discussion exposed confusion over which body is responsible for deactivating an expat's ID card once residency ends.

He said there was “a lack of clarity” in the replies of relevant agencies, pointing to differing roles cited for the Central Bank of Bahrain, the Information and eGovernment Authority, and the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA).

Qarata also questioned claims that linking ID validity to residency would drive up operating costs, saying: “Issuing an ID card for a month or a year does not seem to create extra costs,” and calling for a clearer explanation.

MP Jalal Kadhemi said the measure was needed to close what he described as a legal gap created when an expatriate is issued an ID card valid for five years while the residence permit may be limited to two years.

He argued that aligning the validity periods would strengthen labour-market discipline, prevent ID cards from being used after residency expires, and generate additional revenue without placing any financial burden on citizens.

He cited an expatriate population of about 850,000 and estimated the resulting lost income at around BD8.5 million.

Kadhemi also criticised what he described as the state absorbing a BD4 loss per card, noting that the fee charged is BD10 while the actual operating cost is BD14.

Court dismisses pre-sale utility charges claim

Mohammed Darwish
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A Bahraini man who bought a laundry business two years ago has been cleared of a BD6,652 claim for electricity and water charges after the High Civil Court ruled the case was not accepted against him and that the claim itself was too old to be heard.

The claim related to charges linked to the laundry premises

for October 2016 to July 2017, years before the man took over the business.

A social centre that owns the building sued both the former laundry owner and the current owner, seeking payment said to cover use of the unit, including water costs.

The court ruled the new owner cannot pursue claims, as the agreement's rights and obligations apply only to original parties.

Push to expand housing for vulnerable women

Hasan Barakat
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Parliament approved by majority vote a proposal calling for an increase in the number of housing units allocated to women classified under Category Five of the national housing system, including divorced, abandoned, widowed and unmarried women, during debate on a report submitted by the Public Utilities and Environment Committee.

The proposal relates to Ar-

ticle 4 of Decision No. 909 of 2015 on the housing system and was submitted by several MPs, seeking to address what was described as a growing gap between existing housing allocations and the real needs of vulnerable women lacking family support.

Support

MP Basma Abdulkarim Mubarak said the proposal reflects the reality faced by many women living without family backing or secure accommodation.



MP Basma Abdulkarim Mubarak

She told MPs that divorced, widowed and unmarried women often endure daily psychological and social pressure due to housing insecurity, which she said threatens dignity and personal safety.

The lawmaker stressed that housing should be viewed as a form of protection and stability rather than a social luxury, warning that delays in providing accommodation for this category create a hidden social risk that does not always appear in official reports.