

New insurance plan for maids proposed

A DEDICATED insurance system for domestic staff in Bahrain has been proposed by rights activists.

The system was introduced in Jordan last year and ensures medical, life and personal accident coverage for expat housemaids and other household workers.

However, it also compensates employers in the event of such staff absconding or refusing to work.

Women's rights activist Mariam Al Ruwai revealed plans to invite Jordanian recruitment agencies to Bahrain to discuss the initiative.

"Often housemaids are stuck inside homes and their voices are rarely heard, but there is definitely denial of rights," she said.

"Meanwhile, employers spend money on recruitment and have the right to expect the service they are promised.

"We will try to bring representatives from the Recruiting Agents Association (RAA) of Jordan, which got this system implemented in that country, to

By RAJI UNNIKRISHNAN

Bahrain to discuss the proposal."

Ms Al Ruwai was among participants who took part in an event organised in Qatar earlier this month by the Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), which focused on developing the skills of human rights advocates and expat employees in the Middle East.

RAA general secretary Rami Asrawi, who also took part, suggested GCC governments could reduce the exploitation of domestic staff by adopting the Jordanian model.

"The GCC can definitely benefit from this model, as it will help the government eliminate the risk of domestic worker suicides and runaway issues," he said.

"Domestic workers are at risk because they are not covered by labour laws in the GCC, but they are not slaves.

"(Even when they abscond) the term 'runaway' is unaccept-



Domestic staff in Jordan are benefiting from a dedicated insurance scheme

able. Society often sees workers as troublemakers and fails to look at why they react."

He explained the insurance system adopted in Jordan meant it was easier for domestic workers to leave their jobs, since employers could claim compensation for costs incurred.

"If a domestic worker wishes to leave for sane reasons, they should be allowed," he added.

"This thought made us work

towards setting up private insurance for them."

The scheme was initially made possible when the Jordan Insurance Company agreed to pilot the new insurance product, with relevant government approvals.

"One company came forward to take the risk and we tried it for six months and it was a big success," said Mr Asrawi.

He said the result had been a drop in complaints relating

to the treatment of household staff.

"Complaints are minimal from the domestic worker segment in Jordan since the system has been in place," he added.

"It costs \$320 annually for the first year and then \$100 for the subsequent years, but this covers the employee's ticket, health expenses and the employer's expenses as per the contract."

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BD6 million dialysis unit work on track

WORK on a new kidney dialysis unit in Hunainiya, near Riffa, is 35 per cent complete, according to Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning Ministry Works Affairs Under-Secretary Ahmed Al Khayyat.

The BD6 million government project is being funded by the Saudi Development Fund, as part of the \$10 billion support pledged to Bahrain by its neighbours in 2011 in the form of the Gulf Development Fund.

Work is being conducted by Aradus Contracting and Maintenance and currently focuses on construction of the main building, sub power station, a services building and external works.

Land measuring 21,550 square metres has been allocated for the unit, which will have a built up area of 8,854sqm.

The main building will have two levels and a 60-bed capacity.

A reception and registration hall, six external clinics, treatment rooms, labs, a pharmacy, X-ray department, waiting areas, rooms for the nursing team and a central store will be located on the ground floor.

The first floor includes three wings for peritoneal dialysis and blood wash, an isolation wing, a fluid purification station and a repair workshop, in addition to administrative offices and public utilities such as toilets.

There is also a car park able to accommodate 232 vehicles, along with disabled access.

The project also incorporates green building practices.

Market toured

SOUTHERN Municipality director general Asim bin Abdullatif visited Riffa Central Market and was briefed on the progress of maintenance work, including air-conditioning, safety and fire emergency systems and CCTV surveillance cameras.

Scheme reviewed

LABOUR and Social Development Minister Jameel Humaidan received the team in charge of the family products project and was briefed about plans to expand the community scheme, in co-operation with Tamkeen, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism and the Family Bank.



Mr Asrawi



Ms Al Ruwai



Quality Education School celebrated its annual day and the graduation of its first batch at the Indian School premises in Isa Town. The year's top students were honoured in the presence of school chairman Baboo Kewalram, guest of honour Nabeel Ajoor and the board of directors. The event included musical performances, dances, songs by teachers and students and skits. Above, the top students honoured at the event. Right, Mr Kewalram, seated, with the first batch of graduates and officials.

