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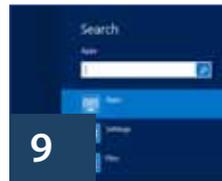
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Jordan's Cabinet Endorses Draft Consumer Protection Law

AMMAN - The Jordanian Cabinet endorsed the 2012 draft consumer protection law, which will be referred to Parliament. The bill seeks to safeguard consumers from price manipulation and ensure the quality of food items. It also stipulates the formation of a union of consumer protection societies to coordinate civil institutions' efforts in safeguarding citizens.

The law includes three aspects, the monitoring of goods by government and civil society institutions to ensure they meet the set standards; the legislative aspect, which entails revisiting all existing laws related to consumers; and the awareness aspect, which aims at increasing consumers' awareness of their rights and duties.

Under the law, a higher consumer protection council will be established to draw up and suggest regulations related to consumers and coordinate with all concerned agencies.

The draft law also adopts a set of consumer rights stipulated in international conventions and gives the consumer protection directorate, which will be part of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the right to refer traders violating its provisions to the judiciary without prior notification.

His Majesty King Abdullah has directed the government on several occasions to draft such a law to safeguard citizens against harmful market behavior.

Source: Jordan News Agency



Saudi Labor Ministry Plans to Retire Foreigners at 60

JEDDAH - The Ministry of Labor has drafted a new law recommending the termination of the services of expatriates who turn 60.

Expatriates over 60 who enjoy considerable experience in a field that is important to the Kingdom will be exempt from the law, Al-Madinah newspaper reported.

An informed source said the Ministry and all concerned authorities including relevant committees at the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry discussed all important aspects of the law before sending it to the higher authorities for approval.

Chairman of the Human Resources Committee at the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dr. Samir Hassan, said it is important that new legislation is in place to facilitate the process of replacing expatriates who turn 60 with Saudi employees. He said authorities should prevent any expatriates from circumventing the law by changing their date of birth in their passports.



Hassan called on authorities to start working on the criteria they would use to exempt expatriates with rare specialties from the law.

Dr. Amal Shira, deputy chairperson of the human resources committee, said she did not understand how the social insurance system stipulated that Saudis who reach 60 should be retired, while it allows expatriates to work beyond this age. She estimated the number of expatriates over 60 working in the private sector at half a million, and called for speeding up the implementation of the new law and considering the implementation of other rules, such as preventing expatriates, over 55 from being recruited.

Shira declared that 25 years should be the maximum period an expatriate can work in the Kingdom, while older expatriates with considerable experience should pass their knowledge to Saudis and should not be allowed to renew their work permits.

Older expatriates granted an exemption from the proposed law should be allowed to stay five or 10 years depending on their qualifications, she said.

Source: The Saudi Gazette



Oman's CMA to Enact New Insurance Regulation

MUSCAT- Oman's Capital Market Authority (CMA) is set to enact a new insurance law, which will offer more flexibility for insurance companies for providing risk coverage. The draft of the law has been circulated among related parties (especially insurance firms), and now CMA is reviewing the recommendations or feedback from insurance companies.

"The base for the proposed insurance law is in line with the draft regulation agreed by GCC countries. We have received comments from insurance companies and the public," said Abdullah bin Salem bin Abdullah Al Salmi, executive vice-president of CMA.

Several details in the existing law have been shifted to the executive regulation, which will give more

flexibility and will cover a wide range of areas of the insurance sector. Sources at CMA said that the new draft law has to be circulated among Majlis Al-Shura and other relevant government agencies, before submitting to the Cabinet for approval.

Meanwhile, media reports said that plans to have a unified insurance policy for automobiles in the GCC region are in the pipeline and if things go as planned, regional motor insurance schemes might be launched before the year-end.

A preliminary draft of the proposed policy has been framed, and approved by the Gulf Insurance Federation at its February meeting in Dubai.

Source: Times of Oman



The Turkish Government Passes Freedom Legal Amendments

ANKARA-The Turkish Government has passed a draft law to the Parliament that focuses on amending a number of regulations in response to the European Union's demands, widening the base of human rights, public confidence and media freedom.

The government stated that the legal amendments, considered the fourth of its kind, aim at enhancing the country's democratic activities, fight the violations of human rights and offer justified trials. The draft also indicates that such amendments shall reduce the detention period before court, the thing that affected Turkey in a negative way.

The amendments include expanding the limits of freedom of expression, enriching the freedom of press and restraining the legal limits that protect the journalists at any press release.

The government claimed that enhancing human rights is the main reason behind these amendments and goes along with the agreement's provisions which Turkey has signed lately.

This step is a reaction to the European wave of criticism that hit Turkey after dozens of journalists were imprisoned after been accused of publishing provocative rumors.

Source: Kuwait News Agency (Kuna)

UAE, Benin Sign Conventions on Double Taxation and Investment Protection

ABU DHABI - The Ministry of Finance (MoF), on behalf of the UAE, has signed two agreements on the avoidance of double taxation on income, protection and promotion of investments with the Republic of Benin.

The signing of the two agreements is in line with efforts to promote investments between UAE and Republic of Benin and to facilitate the movement of capital and provide protection from all commercial risk, MoF said in a press release.

The signing ceremony took place at MoF's headquarters in Abu Dhabi. Both agreements were signed by Younis Haji Khouri, Undersecretary of MoF, on behalf of the UAE, and Isa Moussa Toure, Ambassador of the Republic of Benin to the UAE.

These conventions reflect the Ministry's commitment to further develop and promote the UAE's investment and trade relations following the privatization policy of the Republic of Benin in diverse sectors including telecommunications, water, electricity and agriculture. The major advantages of the two agreements for the UAE are that they grant investment tax incentives for governmental entities and exempt government institutions from any type of income taxes in various production sectors.

Source: Emirates News Agency (WAM)





Sarayreh Addresses Expectations and Challenges Facing Jordan Customs

AMMAN - Jordan Customs Department (JCD) Director General Ghaleb Sarayreh lectured on “Jordan Customs and the WTO” at Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Knowledge Forum (TAG-Forum). He addressed the expectations and challenges facing the Department and highlighted the achievements made in the past two years.

The lecture, organized by the Policy Development Forum (PDF) and moderated by HE Dr. Mohammad Abu Hammour, was attended by a host of high profile officials in the presence of HE Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh along with representatives of government and non-government entities in the Kingdom.

Sarayreh stressed at the beginning of his lecture on the mission of the Customs Department which seeks to provide distinct custom services that keep pace with rapid global developments, and meet the requirements of comprehensive sustainable development by seeking a balance between customs controls and facilitation of trade, and to continue building the institutional capacities of the customs.

“The Customs’ work has been upgraded in all countries from levying charges and taxes to protecting national economic interests (supporting

local industry), and to the protection of society and the environment (from smuggling drugs, weapons and other harmful substances), and then to achieving economic development (trade facilitation), to playing a greater security role against threats to all of supply chain,” he added.

While concerning the challenges facing the Department, Sarayreh said that the Customs is one of the departments that changes tasks constantly due to the nature of the change in international and regional circumstances, and perhaps the most significant of those are the security challenges generated by the waves of international terrorism, which introduced the Customs Department to new regulations that were unknown, such as: Combating smuggling weapons in all its forms (conventional, chemical dual-use, nuclear among others), combating money laundering and serious cross-border smuggling of people.

Sarayreh stressed that Jordan Customs Department earlier realized that its role is no longer limited to the collection of customs duties, but extends to all aspects of economic and social life in addition to economic and social and national security.

Source: Ag-IP News

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AGIP Launches Search for Published Patents Service in the GCC States, Lebanon and Yemen

AMMAN- After being successfully launched in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates, Abu-Ghazaleh Intellectual Property (AGIP) is pleased to launch the comprehensive and distinguished search for published patents service in the GCC countries, Lebanon and Yemen to meet clients' demand.

Published patent searches will be conducted by highly trained and qualified staff of the Intellectual Property Published Registrations (IPPR) - Patents Data Center using sophisticated searching techniques.

The search shall cover the following types: Bibliographic Search, Equivalent Patent Search, Keyword Search /Classification Search and Subject Search, noting that the last three are only applicable in the GCC states.

The search report incorporates the following information: bibliographic data including the abstract; legal status including the effective date, the expiry date of the right and transactions; original document of the patent of interest, as well as translation of claims (the last two are only applicable in the GCC), if available.

For further information, please contact our GCC, Lebanon and Yemen Offices at: ksa@agip.com, lebanon@agip.com and yemen@agip.com , respectively.

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