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Health Insurance Bill to be further amended after discussions between syndicate and ministerial committee

Committee discussed updated version of bill with Doctors' Syndicate members

By Menan Khater

The National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) discussed Sunday the newly drafted health insurance bill ahead of the parliamentary review.

The discussion brought together officials from the Ministry of Health, who are in charge of drafting the law, the NCHR board members, and the Doctors' Syndicate board members to outline recommendations for the bill ahead of the parliamentary review.

The Ministry of Health issued a modified version of the draft on Thursday, which amended the category of beneficiaries to include all citizens earning under minimum wage. The bill covers the cost of medical treatment for all citizens with national IDs; those earning more than minimum wage will be taxed from 1% to 3% according to their salary.

"We have been discussing the health insurance issue for many years but all trials came to nothing due to a lack of regulatory laws," member of the Ministry of Health committee drafting the law Wagida Anwar said. "We are currently



NCHR meeting Sunday the newly drafted health insurance bill ahead of the parliamentary review

seeking to develop more than just a basic health insurance system but rather a comprehensive network to cover medical expenses for all citizens."

At least 60% of health expenditures are coming from citizens' funds so the bill aims to reduce these expenses and eliminate the financial burden from families.

Regarding the Doctors' Syndicate's concerns about the Ministry of Social Solidarity being mandated to define low-income citizens, she explained that this ministry is only a coordinator between several ministerial entities in charge of drafting the law.

She also responded to the Syndicate's concern about the potential

status of low-quality public hospitals that do not qualify for the new system.

"We will not neglect these hospitals and we aim to improve their services; the bill will be steadily implemented in pilot governorates and then be established across the whole country," she said.

"This is not the final draft and

nothing will be sent to the Cabinet until we have considered all suggestions," Ministry of Finance's representative from the ministerial committee Mohamed Maeet said.

"We are still studying more solid criteria to ensure social equity among all beneficiaries from the law."

Since its drafting, the bill has stirred up disagreements from the Doctors' Syndicate, local rights groups, and the cabinet over its sources for funding, the capacity of public hospitals, and the beneficiaries.

Article 26, which outlines the identity of the Performance Monitoring Authority, is among the main issues to be amended in the new version of the law, to ensure that the authority is funded government and remains impervious to funding from the private sector.

The new bill aims to provide health insurance to low-income citizens, making use of new medical insurance cards linked to families, rather than individuals.

It defines the citizens of low-income as those receiving social security pensions.