

DIWANIYA ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Govt, people, judiciary must unite to clear chaotic mess'

'Kuwait must end corruption or could face Lebanon's fate'

"I HOPE that the fate of Kuwait will not be the same as that of Lebanon and I hope that we will not follow same path of Lebanon ... I hope, I hope and I hope," columnist *Iqbal Al-Ahmad* wrote for *Al-Qabas* daily.

"If corruption in our country continues as it is and does not cut its course with fire and iron and if our current government will not continue to cut off the hands of money embezzlers and put the corrupt in prisons and it does not continue to confront negligence and indifference I am frightened that we shall then walk on the same lane of Lebanon.

"The explosion that recently rocked Beirut is actually the explosion of corruption, negligence and government leniency. It is the explosion of accumulated mistakes and dragging solutions to the pressing issues until further notification.

"But unfortunately the features of this stage and the picture that we saw in Lebanon after this explosion says otherwise... The state killed its people.

"In other words, if our incumbent and forthcoming government will not make haste to surmount various shapes, grounds and associations of corruption then we shall be victims of similar scenarios unfolding in Lebanon - God forbid.

"However, the huge explosion that rocked Beirut whose impact reached North and South Lebanon in addition to the mountainous areas, was neither due to Israeli bombardment, nor it was caused by the Hezbollah weapons or by so and so, rather this explosion occurred because of the collapse of the infrastructure of Lebanon and deterioration that has reached the lives of the Lebanese.

"In other words, this infrastructure resembles the wooden door that has been made hollow from inside by the termites and it collapsed with time. The hungry termites had nothing to do and 'gnawed' their way into the wood, while the owners of the house were in deep slumber. Moreover, they had failed to pay attention to the door and overlooked the defect and postponed to correct the situation.

"However, the collapse of the Lebanese State and the problems currently facing its citizens did not happen overnight rather they are the outcome of the winds of change that have been battering Lebanon over the years during which all concerned parties were of the attitude, 'This is not my business, why should I bother about it'.

"On the other hand, we say negligence, recklessness, closing eyes to the mistakes, postponing solutions, leniency in punishing

the guilty, poor government performance and negative attitude of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled recently uncovered and is doing all his best to get rid of this foul smell. However, we hope Abu Khaled (HH the Prime Minister) will not put the cap back on this barrel until the last man is found and punished.

"As a matter of fact, Lebanon is a lesson for us and this means all of us in the State of Kuwait must learn from it.

"Lebanon is beauty, tourism, good eating and the weather that takes the mind but it has been turned into a heap of sadness, worry and pain.

"In other words, Lebanon no more attracts tourists, the beauty disappeared and the good bite stood in the pharynx and polluted the weather, and the people of Lebanon cried as the mother cried over her son who breathed his last before her very eyes.

"Oh the government of the State of Kuwait... Oh the Kuwaiti officials... Oh the Kuwaiti citizens, you have to cooperate in order to end corruption, halt the administrative collapse which has seeped into many state institutions... You have to cooperate to protect our country and protect the cover that ensures a good night's sleep for us.

"Oh Prime Minister ... Oh the Kuwaiti Judiciary... Oh the Kuwaiti people, you have to work hand in hand to lift our country from the swamp of corruption and shift it to a cleaner and more beautiful place.

"However, we hope this hope will remain intact... but the hope without effort, will achieve nothing, as such we have to halt abuses, doubts and rumors and this means fighting rumor mongers and those who always attempt to negatively affect our unity and our love for each other and this can be done only by respecting the laws which should be implemented decisively without discrimination."

Also:
"Beirut is burning and the hopes of all of the Arabs and the Lebanese before them towards the creating of an Arab Switzerland (Lebanon) as an example for coexistence as like that of the West's Switzerland are simultaneously burning," columnist *Abdulmohsen*

Jumah wrote for *Al-Jarida* daily.

"In other words, all talks about creating modernity and civil rule in Lebanon, was just nonsense, simply because sectarianism, the creation of a provincial and ethnic cantons have come out victorious in Lebanon.

"However, this is the inevitable outcome of the sectarianism, provincial and ethnic rule, where the latter only helps set fire to the homelands as we have seen it happening in Yemen, Lebanon, and Iraq and before that in Somalia.

"Personally speaking, I want to take this opportunity to address the sons of my homeland who are preparing for tribal elections, sectarian liquidations, class selectivity, regional fanaticism, and encouragement from the authority and overlook those practices that have the same result, which is destruction and the annihilation of homelands.

"In this context, we say the government or the governments that coexist with all kinds of nervousness, distribute positions and gains according to these balances, will strike the pillars of the state and destroy them, sooner or later, and no one tells me that Lebanon's situation is different from us, but it is the same with change of some names, so Lebanon is a developed cocktail of tribes, sects, feudal lords and monopolists of all shapes and types.

"We wish Lebanon safety and recovery, but the situation has become hopeless, and the stakes of governance are even at the level of a department head in a small interest that cannot be relegated to them, so we say to each of our sane people in the Arab world: 'Do not replicate the Lebanon model'.

"We hope that our brothers and neighbors in Iraq stop to reproduce another Lebanon, and prevent reaching the point of no return - the situation that has destroyed many homelands.

"In conclusion, I ask every citizen in my country who is planning to participate in any type of primary, be that ethnic or sectarian, to remember the Lebanese experiment - which is right in front of our eyes after the county became independent 75 years ago."

"The giant oil companies for the first and second quarters of this year incurred losses exceeding \$9 billion for each of the American Exxon Mobil and Chevron companies, as well as other international oil companies, reflect the financial and economic situation of oil," *Kamel Abdullah Al-Harimi* wrote for *Al-Rai* daily.

"The current oil price, in the range of \$40 a

barrel, is unprofitable making investments in oil fields unprofitable, while financial losses in the profits of oil companies force them to curb expenses and also reduce investment rates as much as possible, especially as they have obligations to provide and pay the shareholders annually.

"They record large losses in profits that directly reflect in the value of their assets in the global stock exchanges without exception, reducing their market values, as the size of reduction and disposal of assets ranged between 17 and 22 billion dollars in all the activities of oil companies in the exploration and production fields.

"This also applies to us, that is to say, our oil companies, despite not announcing and disclosing their profits, despite their production rate is among the lowest in the international oil companies. There are also giant investments in oil fields in most OPEC countries and in our region including Iraq, Abu Dhabi and Qatar, as well as partnerships with Saudi Aramco, Nigeria and Algeria.

"The costs of these global oil companies are limited, well-known and tight, unlike the governments of oil-producing countries, which also have to provide and cover all their annual expenses through the financial return of all crude oil sales, oil derivatives, and petrochemicals and gas, as costs increase sharply. This indicates the need for a price range between \$85 for most Arab Gulf states and more than \$150 for Algeria and \$300 for Iran.

"We, in Kuwait, need a constant price rate of \$80, as the cost of oil production is in the range of \$12 per barrel.

"With the current average rate of Kuwaiti oil at 43 dollars and discount of 12 dollars, it means that the daily transfer of the state treasury is 31 dollars per barrel, while the daily deficit is 49 dollars. This is what drives us to use the mechanism of covering the financial deficit by exploiting the fund of future generations for our foreign investments, while oil is currently unable to provide the funds required to meet our increasing expenses of 22 billion dinars annually.

"It is not expected that the price of oil will reach more than 55 dollars in the coming years and 10 dollars more than the current range, with the possibility of reaching 60 dollars by the end of 2023.

"Oil companies can deal with the current data by compressing expenses, the most important of which is to cut down the number of employees, locate financial losses, dispose of their assets, and amend and organize their financial books, even if the need arises to re-

duce the financial distributions to their owners by half. They believe the current prices are not reassuring, but it acclimatizes and deals with the current data.

"What about governments and oil companies, and how should we deal with the low prices? It will remain an annual problem in the absence of radical solutions?."

"Corruption is a word that has been widely used in various local media outlets. It has come to advance most of the issues circulating in our internal arena, in which citizens discuss among themselves and interact regarding these issues that directly and significantly affect their lives and the future of their children," columnist *Jassem Mohammad Kamal* wrote for *Annahar* daily.

"As we know, corruption is varied. The first type is minor secondary corruption, whose impact is small and unclear in a country where the amount of money is few or people have no strong influence in the country.

"The second type is the huge corruption with direct and long-term effects on the country. This involves large sums with the participation or blessing of high caliber officials in the country. An example is the embezzlement of funds allocated for the implementation of projects that serve the public or increasing the funds allocated for the makers of legislation and laws in the interest of a person or a group of persons, in addition to giving grants and command centers to unqualified persons.

"Because everything happens for a reason including corruption and personal ambitions, most of the time the cause of corruption is limited to the officials' absolute desire for money and power, low national and moral sense due to lack of education or negative and bad educational experience for those who are responsible, low awareness, and lack of courage among the rest of society to combat corruption. All these factors encourage the corrupt to continue their corruption.

"Certain cultural environments encourage and condone corruption where evading responsibilities and the ability to achieve personal gains in illegitimate ways are considered impressive in some of these societies, in addition to non-deterrent laws and regulations. Therefore, the legal weakness in corruption centers leads to widespread corruption, slow judicial processes and obstruction of justice."

— Compiled by Zaki Taleb

Number of fashionistas, celebrities under probe for 'money-laundering' on increase

Eye on lawyers with overnight inflated bank accounts

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8: The number of celebrities and 'Fashionistas' whose assets and bank accounts have been frozen is increasing and according to sources the number has reached 12 and includes a big commercial firm and the husband of one of the Fashioni-

stas, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily quoting well-informed sources.

The daily added, the Public Prosecution discovered their involvement in massive money laundering operations worth millions of dinars through advertisements and foreign transfers.

The daily, quoting the same sources, added the Public Prosecution received two new reports - one about the husband of one of the Fashionistas which proved that money had been transferred from her account into his account.

The source said the bank accounts have been frozen to verify money laundering activities and stressed the investigations with the State Security Agency continues about money that has been seized and with those who have been banned from travel.

Coordination

The source added, the Money Investigation Unit is working around the clock in coordination with the Central Bank looking into the accounts of people whose bank balances have ballooned within a short period.

In one instance, the money that has been seized and persons who are banned from travel, shows a well-known friend's involvement in money laundering operations. She accompanied the suspect in all his overseas trips and her bank balance inflated although she is unemployed.

In a related context, the Kuwait Lawyers Association has submitted an official letter to the Financial Intelligence Unit to summon a lawyer for interrogation based on what has been published on Twitter and verify its authenticity and another lawyer who is said to have received 600,000 dinars from a well-known media outlet - the outlet accused of money-laundering.



Various kind of dates for sale at a shop in Souk Mubarakiya.

Photo by Mahmoud Jadeed

'Main accused sought to buy KD 200m worth land'

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8: The prime accused in money laundering concerning the so-called 'Malaysian Fund' Sheikh Sabah Al-Mubarak allegedly sought to buy land in Malaysia the size of the Kuwait City for a whopping 200 million dinars, reports *Al-Qabas* daily quoting a source familiar with the issue.

The source pointed out, money had already been transferred to Malaysia, but it was 'blocked' after the party of Mahathir Muhammad won the elections and he was appointed Prime Minister. The subsequent investigation

of the corruption files, especially the file of the Malaysian Fund, and the arrest of the former prime minister Najib Abdul Razzaq opened the can of worms.

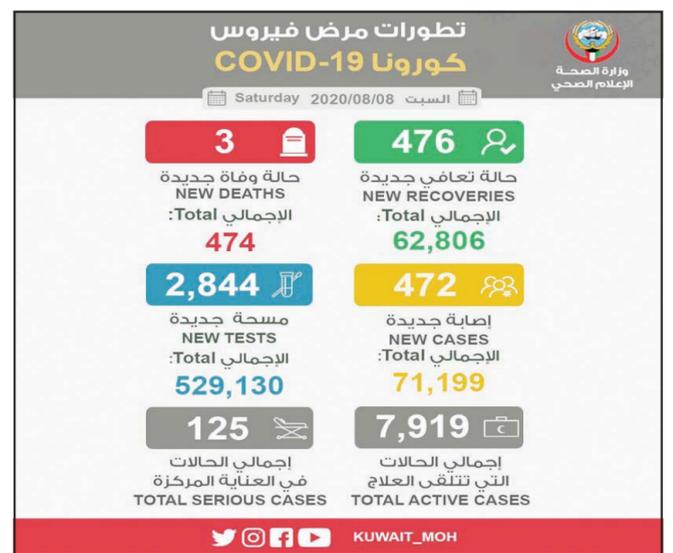
The source also pointed out a foreign bank operating in Kuwait, which transferred the money to Malaysia, remained mum on the transfer of money and did not report it at that time, and justified its silence, when asked, by saying, "We have confidence in our clients."

The source added, during the investigations the first accused always requested for the pres-

ence of the second accused, Hamad Ali Al-Wazzan, saying the man was his financial advisor.

In 2018, the Financial Intelligence Unit addressed informed the security authorities, in line with protocol observed between parties, through what the authorities called 'a flimsy letter' mentioning the money transfer to Malaysia.

The source added, this step taken by the investigation unit looked suspicious and may indicate complicity with the prime accused.



Financial grant for virus-hit workers

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 8: The Ministry of Health has instructed hospitals to submit the list of employees infected with coronavirus in preparation for the disbursement of the financial grant to these workers, reports *Al-Anba* daily quoting sources.

Sources confirmed the list of concerned workers in each health district will be referred to the ministry, indicating the nature of infection must be

mentioned -- whether it is due to work contact or from a source outside the workplace. Sources disclosed the dates of discovering the infection include the end of February until May.

Sources pointed out other cases were discovered after the aforementioned period and the Ministry will look into these cases in order to find a special mechanism for them, in coordination with the Civil Service Commission (CSC).

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