



basketball



Detailed demographics bill submitted

Putin daughter inoculated

Speaker signs on

Skepticism as Russia clears virus vaccine

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Arab Times Staff



In this file photo taken on July 9, 2020, Russian President Vladimir Putin gestures during a video conference meeting at the Novo-Ogaryovo residence outside Moscow in Russia. Putin says that a coronavirus vaccine developed in the country has been registered for use and one of his daughters has already been inoculated. (AP)

MOSCOW, Aug 11, (AP): Russia on Tuesday became the first country to clear a coronavirus vaccine and declare it ready for use, despite international skepticism. President Vladimir Putin said that one of his daughters has already been inoculated.

Putin emphasized that the vaccine underwent the necessary tests and has proven efficient, offering a lasting immunity from the coronavirus. However, scientists at home and abroad have been sounding the alarm that the rush to start using the vaccine before Phase 3 trials – which normally last for months and involve thousands of people – could backfire.

Speaking at a government meeting Tuesday, Putin said that the vaccine has undergone proper testing and is safe.

"I know it has proven efficient and forms a stable immunity, and I would like to repeat that it has passed all the necessary tests," he said. "We must be grateful to those who made that first step very important for our country and the entire world."

The Russian leader added that one of his two adult daughters has received two shots of the vaccine. "She has taken part in the experiment," Putin said.

Putin said that his daughter had a temperature of 38 degrees Celsius (100.4°F) on the day of the first vaccine injection, and then it dropped to just over 37 degrees Celsius (98.6°F) on the following day. After the second shot she again had a slight increase in temperature, but then it was all over.

"She's feeling well and has high number of antibodies," Putin added. He didn't specify which of his two daughters – Maria or Katerina – received the vaccine.

The Health Ministry said in Tuesday's statement that the vaccine is expected to provide immunity from the coronavirus for up to two years.

Inoculated

Putin emphasized that vaccination will be voluntary, Russian authorities have said that medical workers, teachers and other risk groups will be the first to be inoculated. Deputy Prime Minister Tatyana Golikova said that the vaccination of doctors could start as early as this month.

Professor Alexander Gintsburg, head of the Gamaleya Institute that developed the vaccine, said that vaccination will start while the Phase 3 trials continue. He said that initially there will be only enough doses to conduct vaccination in 10-15 of Russia's 85 regions, according to the Interfax news agency.

Russian officials have said that large-scale production of the vaccine will start in September, and mass vaccination may begin as early as October.

Russia has registered 897,599 coronavirus cases, including 15,131 deaths.

When the pandemic struck Russia, Putin ordered state officials to shorten the time of clinical trials for potential coronavirus vaccines.

Becoming the first country in the world to develop a vaccine was a matter of national prestige for the Kremlin as it tries to assert the image of Russia as a global power. State television stations and other media have praised scientists working on it and presented the work as the envy of other nations.

Gintsburg raised eyebrows in May when he said that he and other researchers tried the vaccine on themselves.

Human studies started June 17 among 76 volunteers. Half were injected with a vaccine in liquid form and the other half with a vaccine that came as soluble powder. Some in the first half were recruited from the military, which raised concerns that servicemen may have been pressured to participate.

Amid Russia's rush to become the first to create a vaccine, the US, Britain and Canada last month accused Russia of using hackers to steal vaccine research from Western labs.

As the trials were declared completed, questions arose about the vaccine's safety and effectiveness. Some experts scoffed at Russian authorities' assurances that the vaccine drug produced the desired immune response and caused no significant side effects, pointing out that such claims need to be backed by published scientific data.

US military probes blast claim

No attack on border post: Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 11, (Agencies): Kuwait's army has denied reports about a sabotage attack on a northern border post.

The army's General Staff stressed, in a statement early Tuesday, that the northern borders are stable and secure.

The US military, meanwhile, said it was investigating a militant claim by a newly formed Iraqi Shiite militant group of a bombing at the Iraq-Kuwait border. Both the Iraqi and Kuwaiti military denied an attack had taken place.

A little-known group, called Ashab al-Kahf, claimed in an overnight statement it destroyed "equipment and vehicles belonging to the American enemy" in a bombing targeting a border crossing south of the Iraqi city of Basra.

The group later published an 11-second video clip it claimed showed the blast, according to the SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors militant groups. The out-of-focus video shows what appeared to be an explosion and lights in the distance, with a man speaking in Arabic. The Associated Press could not immediately verify the video.

US Army Maj John Rigsbee, a Central Command spokesman, said the American military was looking into reports of the explosion.

Early Tuesday, the Iraqi military denied the attack took place and called the video a fabrication intended to "mislead public opinion." A Kuwait military statement carried by the state-run KUNA

news agency similarly denied reports about "a sabotage attack on a northern border post."

Kuwait has been a staunch US ally since the 1991 Gulf War expelled Saddam Hussein's occupying Iraqi forces. Today, Kuwait hosts some 13,500 American troops, many at Camp Arifjan, home to the forward command of US Army Central.

Since the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled Saddam and the later war against the Islamic State group, American troops and contractors sometimes travel by road with equipment and supplies between the two countries.

Ashab al-Kahf means "Companions of the Cave" in Arabic, referring to a Christian and Islamic story about youths escaping religious persecution hiding in a cave for hundreds of years.

The group has emerged alongside renewed threats by Shiite militias amid rising tensions between the US and Iran. In January, an American drone strike killed a top Iranian general in Baghdad. Tehran responded with a ballistic missile attack that wounded dozens of American troops at a military base in Iraq.

The SITE Intelligence Group has referred to Ashab al-Kahf as "reportedly an Iranian proxy unit." The group initially threatened US forces in April and claimed an attack on a convoy in July in Iraq's Salaheddin province.

On Aug 9, another explosion targeted a convoy in the southern Dhi Qar province, reportedly caused minor damage.



Protesters celebrate after removing a concrete slab from a barrier to open a road leading to the parliament building during demonstrations following Tuesday's massive explosion which devastated Beirut, Lebanon on Aug 10. (AP) – See Page 6

Cabinet holds weekly meeting

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 11, (KUNA): The Cabinet held on Monday its weekly meeting virtually under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

At the onset of the meeting, the Prime Minister briefed the ministers on the stable health condition of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, saying that it is improving, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh said after the meeting.

The ministers expressed their deep satisfaction about His Highness the Amir's health, praying to Allah the Almighty to bless His Highness the Amir with a speedy recovery and full well-being, and his safe return to the homeland in the near future.

The ministers were apprised of the directives of His Highness the Deputy Amir and the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on providing aid and relief materials to the brotherly Lebanese people to face the consequences of the huge blast that rocked Beirut port last Tuesday.

His Highness the Prime Minister informed the Cabinet of the results of the Kuwaiti delegation's participation in the donors' conference on Lebanon that was held via videoconference Monday.

The videoconference, co-organized by France and the UN, gathered a number of world leaders and pledged to provide urgent assistance worth about \$300 million to help the Lebanese people overcome the repercussions of the Beirut port explosion.

During the conference, Kuwait declared the reallocation of the remaining amounts from the prior obligations of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development worth \$30 million, in agreement with the Lebanese government to cover the costs of rebuilding the damage resulting from the blast, in addition to urgent medical and food aid worth \$1million. Al-Saleh, also Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, said.

The Cabinet expresses its sincere condolences to Lebanon and the families of the victims in particular, stressing Kuwait's solidarity with brothers in Lebanon and its backing to every effort that contributes to mitigating the impacts of this humanitarian disaster, he noted.

In addition, the Cabinet is following up with deep

sorrow the effects resulting from the massive blast in the Beirut port and the consequent of severe damage that claimed the lives of dozens of people, and injured thousands of persons, in addition to several missing and severe material damage.

The ministers lauded the precautionary preparations and organized efforts made by Saudi Arabia to ensure means of performing easily rituals of pilgrimage, pointing to the wonderful and safe organization amid the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

They said this organization reflected a civilized image and a good example of brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and their keenness on maintaining the safety and health of pilgrims.

Al-Saleh informed the Cabinet of the application of "Hawiyati", means my identity, launched by the Public Authority for Civil Information that enables both residents and nationals to issue a digital ID to be used at all government and non-government bodies.

He pointed out that this application is a digital alternative to the ID and will facilitate services of both expats and citizens. The ministers extolled this application and good efforts made by the authority.

The Cabinet, meanwhile, listened to a presentation by Minister of Health Dr Sheikh Bassel Al-Sabah on the developments of country's health conditions, the details and statistics pertaining to the injuries, recoveries, deaths and those who are receiving treatment.

The Cabinet was informed of the recommendations by the Legal Affairs Committee on a draft law regarding the residence of foreigners that aims to address and settle the deficiencies and gaps shown by the reality of applying foreigners' residence law issued six decades ago.

The draft included a set of provisions aimed at boosting coordination of procedures and provisions of supervision on circumventing the law and combating trade in residence and illegal profiting therein.

Furthermore, it was briefed on a draft law on practicing medicine, its auxiliary professions, the rights of patients and health facilities that aim to regulate the practice of these professions and legalize medical transactions at their institutions and their human staff as well as the rights of patients.

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 11: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim, MP Ahmed Al-Fadl, MP Rakan Al-Nisf, MP Nasser Al-Doussari and MP Khalid Al-Shatti submitted a bill on demographic issue.

The bill states that the Council of Ministers will specify the maximum number of required expatriate workers in accordance with the results of researches and studies. The council will then specify the required number of expatriates who will be brought to Kuwait every year, as well as their specializations and qualifications. Diplomatic, judiciary, political and military delegations are exempted from the specified number; in addition to GCC aviation workers, domestic laborers, wives and children of Kuwaiti citizens, and the workers hired by foreign companies executing infrastructure projects.

The council will terminate the excess expatriate workers in the public, private and oil sectors within five years. There will be no residency renewal for the abovementioned expatriates, except for cases defined in the executive decree of the bill.

The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) will establish and administer a fund for supporting expatriate workers, cover the plane ticket cost for those deported, and compensate those who will be injured or die because of job hazards. This compensation does not nullify the civil and criminal responsibilities of the employer in case the laborer is injured or he dies due to job hazards.

Resources for financing the fund include fees to be collected from expatriate workers in the form of stamps worth KD 5 for the issuance of visa, vehicle registration and driving license. The expatriates will also pay KD 3 in the form of stamps for renewing these documents; as well as the issuance and renewal of the Civil ID, while KD 1 will be collected over the price of every plane ticket booked by an expatriate worker, and KD 1 to be added to the electricity and water bills.

The State will allocate part of the collected fees and fines for the expatriates fund according to this Bill and Law No. 17/1959.

Donations

The fund will receive donations from Zakat House, diplomatic delegations and civil society organizations. The gains resulting from investing the money of the fund will be used to increase its capital.

Apart from Law No. 1/1999 on health insurance for foreigners, the employers in private and oil sectors will pay fees for the health insurance of their expatriate workers. The fees will be specified in the executive decree of this bill; taking into consideration the qualifications and specializations of the expatriates.

Companies owned by the government or those where it has shares are exempted from aforementioned fees.

Banks will update PAM about the regular payment and withdrawal of salaries, especially if the process is executed through one or a few number of ATMs but the number of beneficiaries is big. PAM must investigate the issue in order to see if the company hires workers without providing them jobs.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry will inform PAM about companies which do not send their budget for two years.

An Arbitration Section will be formed in the First Instance Court to be chaired by one judge and two arbitrators – each of them representing the two disputing parties (laborer and employer). The verdict can be appealed at the Court of Cassation in case the disputed amount is more than KD 5,000.

Whoever violates the organizing decisions issued by the Council of Ministers concerning this bill will be imprisoned for three years and fined KD 1,000 maximum for importing each labor illegally.

Whoever attempts to urge, call or threaten any public official to help him accomplish an illegal transaction concerning this bill will be imprisoned for three years and fined KD 1,000 maximum.

Any employer proven to be hiring workers for visa trading will be imprisoned for two years maximum and fined equal to the money he collected from the workers or any of these two penalties. The Public Prosecution is tasked to investigate the crimes stipulated in this bill.

In another development, the parliamentary Complaints and Petitions Committee on Monday met with representatives of the Society of Workers in Education Technology. They discussed the petition that the society submitted on Sept 16, 2019 about Civil Service Commission (CSC) Decision No. 16/2019 to grant allowances to support staff in schools.

The complaint focused on discrimination between the workers in schools and their colleagues in the main administration districts at the Ministry of Education, which led to low turnout of workers in the central administration sites.

Plausible

The committee listened to the presentation of the representatives of the society and promised to study them and present plausible recommendations.

Chairman of the committee MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf, Rapporteur MP Naif Al-Merdas and members Sa'ad Al-Khanfour and MP Soud Sguwai'er attended the meeting as well as the representatives of CSC.

On the other hand, MP Osama Al-Shaheen forwarded queries to Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh about the quantity of nitrate ammonia stored in Kuwait. He wants to know where this dangerous substance was imported, purpose and place of storage.

He asked about the institution tasked to store such a substance, if the storage rooms meet the security and safety criteria, and if the storages are near the residential areas.

Meanwhile, MP Muhammad Al-Dallal forwarded queries to Minister of Finance Barrak Al-Shitan about the circulars issued by the Central Bank of Kuwait to implement the decision of the Council of Ministers to tackle the economic consequences of coronavirus (COVID-19) including the provision of low interest loans and financial facilities.

He asked Al-Shitan to provide him with copies of circulars issued in this regard by every bank, list of the loan applications submitted by citizens and companies to the banks, total amount of requested money compared to the granted amount, and time needed to accomplish each request.

Also, MP Ahmed Al-Fadl disclosed that he submitted a proposal to the Council of Ministers to task the Public Authority for Manpower to exempt the owners of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) from depositing the full salary of expatriate workers to their bank accounts in case the owners supplied the authority with written agreement between the employer and worker to reduce the salary due to the coronavirus crisis.