



soccer

Pages 14 & 16



markets

Page 9

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'GLOBAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITY RECOVERING POST-COVID REOPENING'

IMF sees Kuwait economic slowdown

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Ministry of Health announced, Thursday, 746 new infections of the coronavirus (COVID-19), raising the total to 114,015. Deaths reached 684 with the addition of eight fatalities.

Official Spokesperson of the Ministry of Health Dr Abdul-lah Al-Sanad told KUNA that there were 133 patients receiving treatment at intensive care wards. Those still receiving treatment amounted to 7,485.

The health authorities conducted 8,554 swab tests in the past 24 hours, raising the whole count to 809,491, Dr Al-Sanad added.

Earlier, the Health Ministry announced the recovery of 610 people from the coronavirus, bringing the tally to 105,846. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: Government Spokesman Tareq Al-Mezrem reaffirmed on Wednesday that coronavirus preventive measures and all relevant health requirements were strictly applied on all arrivals to Kuwait.

In statements to KUNA, Al-Mezrem pointed out that it was mandatory on all arrivals to provide a new negative PCR test certificate.

Moreover, the Health Ministry teams were conducting random PCR tests for a number of arrivals of different nationalities at the airport, he said.

The government official also noted that even after passing these measures, all arrivals were obliged to stay in home quarantine for 14 days.

He underlined that the relevant bodies were also taking into considerations other measures related to the people coming from the countries with which Kuwait had previously suspended flights owing to the coronavirus.

Al-Mezrem dismissed as untrue circulated information on social networking sites about exempting some Arab travelers who were stranded in a Gulf country from the health requirements for entering Kuwait. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah said on Thursday that terrorism "continues to pose a grave danger and a threat to international peace and security."

The minister was heading Kuwait's delegation at the First Antalya Diplomacy Forum, held remotely, which discussed efforts to combat terrorism under pandemic conditions.

Kuwait's foreign minister stressed the importance of maintaining the positive results recently, achieved by the international community, in combating terrorism and monitoring the latest developments regarding these accelerating international changes.

He also recalled Kuwait's role in supporting these efforts by continuing to extend a helping hand to the peoples of the world, providing support worth \$290 million during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is to ensure the continuity of combating the spread of the pandemic, in continuation of its relief role for impoverished and refugee communities around the world, and working to strengthen the elements of security and stability in conflict zones, he explained.

This matter necessitates the strengthening of international partnerships and cooperation to achieve additional successes, particularly to eradicate terrorism, halt its funding sources and to provide full support to achieve security and stability in conflict zones, he added.

The event was held under the joint auspices of the foreign ministers of Turkey and Malta, Mevlut Cavusoglu and Evarest Bartol. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: The Court of Cassation headed by Counselor Saleh Al-Muraidh has sentenced an Egyptian to life imprisonment, reports Al-Rai daily.

The man is found guilty of joining the ISIS and attempting to kill five American soldiers on the Sixth Ring Road and damaging an American military vehicle in October 2016.

Case papers shows the Egyptian driving a garbage truck loaded with explosives and ISIS papers rammed into a car carrying five US soldiers, injuring himself in the attack.

The attempted attack was said to be the first attack on American troops in Kuwait. The state-run Kuwait News Agency had identified the attacker as Ibrahim Suleiman, born in 1988.

The five soldiers were not injured but Suleiman suffered multiple fractures and injuries.



The new 'Courts Complex' recently inaugurated in Farwaniya Governorate has started to receive visitors.

Photo by Mahmoud Jadedee

Mayor recalls 2011 quake aid

Japan host city mourns late Amir

Scandal rocks subsidized items

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 15: The parliamentary Business Environment Improvement Committee on Thursday voted on several bills and proposals which were discussed in previous meetings, says Committee Chairman MP Khalid Al Fadal.

He disclosed the committee voted against the bill amending National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Law No. 98/2013, because the law was amended in the second half of the current parliamentary term.

He affirmed completion of all the bills in the agenda of the committee, stressing the achievement rate of the committee is one hundred percent contrary to the claim of a local daily claiming that its achievement is zero percent.

He added the committee is working on its final report and it will be submitted to the National Assembly Secretariat General upon completion.

Meanwhile, the Handicapped Affairs Committee discussed the proposal to give a physically handicapped individual with normal mental faculty a chance to decide his custodian (father or mother).

The second bill is on assigning two persons to take care of those with severe disabilities such as quadriplegia. The suggested amendments are in line with the international criteria.

On the other hand, MP Khalil Abul recently discussed with Deputy Prime Minister, State Minister for Cabinet Affairs and Minister of Interior Anas Al-Saleh the incidents in the Central Jail including the prison guards who assaulted inmates.

He said the minister promised to form a fact-finding committee to determine the factors leading to the incidents and ways to prevent their recurrence.

In another development, several MPs commented on the smuggling of large quantities of subsidized foodstuff to some Arab countries.

MP Nasser Al Doussari stressed the importance of toughening the monitoring process in order to control the distribution of subsidized commodities.

He called on the concerned institutions to replace expatriate employees assigned in the warehouses for subsidized items with citizens.

MP Safa Al-Hashem said that she previously warned Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalid Al-Rawdan about the smuggling of subsidized commodities, adding the time has come to Kuwaitize jobs in this field. She asserted the distribution of subsidized foodstuff must be organized to ensure they are given only to deserving citizens - those with low salaries. She stressed it is unacceptable that citizens with high salaries are getting subsidized commodities.

Furthermore, Chairman of Youth and Sport Committee MP Ahmed Al-Fadl said the committee held its last meeting for this term to complete important reports. He explained the achievement rate of the committee is not determined through the number of accomplished bills, but the quality of these bills.

On the coronavirus issue, he urged the health authorities to double check the protocol on sterilization, especially in the intensive care units of some hospitals. He said several patients were confined in intensive care units due to coronavirus, but they suffered from other serious diseases like blood poisoning. He supported his claim with the statements of the relatives of these patients. He clarified the relatives of these patients are not demanding for compensation, as they rather want to prevent the recurrence of such errors.

Moreover, MP Adel Al-Damkhi revealed he forwarded a letter to the Assembly calling for the withdrawal of the bill on amending the Election Law; but the concerned committee ignored it, even if it was first submitted on Jan 15, 2017.

He pointed out the bill stipulates that each voter is allowed to vote for two candidates in the constituency where he lives. He also expressed disappointment over the refusal of the National Assembly Office to schedule a special session to discuss proposals related to the Election Law.

In addition, Al-Damkhi expressed satisfaction over the recent decisions concerning the Judicial Authority; stressing the Executive Authority is in need of reform as well. He asserted whoever was part of the era of corruption cannot be part of the era of reform.

NIHONMATSU, Japan, Oct 15, (KUNA): Japan's Nihonmatsu City, which will host Kuwait in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, has offered condolences on the passing of His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and expressed gratitude for his support given to the disaster-hit region.

It also lowered the Japanese and the city flags to half-mast at the city hall in honor of the late Amir, officials from Nihonmatsu City and the city's Chamber of Commerce and Industry said in a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Thursday.

Mayor Keiichi Miho sent a letter to Kuwaiti Ambassador to Japan Hasan Mohammad Zaman following Amir's demise, in which he said, "I would like to offer my sincerest condolences to the people of Kuwait on receiving the news of the passing of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah," according to the statement.

"After the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, we received a generous amount of support from Kuwait For reconstruction. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude once again," said Miho.

With the approach of the Tokyo 2020 Games, Nihonmatsu City in Fukushima Prefecture, located about 200-km northeast of Tokyo, was registered as an "Arigato (Thank You) Host Town for Supporting Reconstruction" for Kuwait.

"While we were in the midst of preparing our Host Town with the hope of showing our gratitude to the Kuwaiti teams, related personnel, and all the citizens of Kuwait, we heard the tragic news of his passing," the mayor said.

"I would like to express my deepest gratitude for Kuwait's kindness, and on behalf of the people of Nihonmatsu City, I extend my heartfelt sympathy at this difficult time," Miho noted.

G-20 projects upturn

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 15, (Agencies): In its revised forecast of real GDP cuts in 2020 for all member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) except Saudi Arabia, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) sees an 8.1 percent contraction for Kuwait.

Earlier in April, the IMF predicted a contraction of 1.1 percent for Kuwait.

Meanwhile, the IMF revised the expected contraction for United Arab Emirates (UAE) from 3.5 percent to 6.6 percent, from 2.8 percent to 10 percent for Oman, from 4.3 percent to 4.5 percent for Qatar, and from 3.6 percent to 4.9 percent for Bahrain.

Finance ministers and bank governors of the G20 group affirmed that the global economic activity is showing signs of recovery as our economies have been gradually reopening and the positive impacts of our significant policy actions started to materialize.

However, the recovery is uneven, highly uncertain and subject to elevated downside risks, they said at the conclusion of their meeting late Wednesday.

"We reaffirm our determination to continue to use all available policy tools as long as required to safeguard people's lives, jobs and incomes, support the global economic recovery, and enhance the resilience of the financial system, while safeguarding against downside risks," they said in their final communique.

"The G20 Action Plan, endorsed at our meeting on 15 April 2020, sets out the key principles guiding our response and our commitments to specific actions to drive forward international economic cooperation as we navigate this crisis and take steps to support recovery and achieve strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth," they noted.

Recognizing that members are in different stages of responding to the crisis and that the global economic outlook continues to evolve, we endorse the updates to the G20 Action Plan (Annex I).

These updates will ensure that we promptly respond to the evolving health and economic situation. The global landscape continues to be rapidly transformed by economic, social, environmental, technological, and demographic changes, they added.

"We will sustain and strengthen as necessary our efforts, considering the different stages of the crisis, to achieve strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth, while making the most of current transformations in shaping the recovery, in a way consistent with our pre-crisis agenda."

They reiterated commitment that the G20 Action Plan is a living document and to regularly review, update, track implementation of, and report on it.

They also underlined the urgent need to bring the spread of the virus under control, which is key to supporting global economic recovery, and will take forward the commitments agreed at the G20 Finance and Health Ministers meeting on Sept 17, 2020.

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Moreover, the officials affirmed that they will continue to facilitate international trade and investment and build resilience of supply chains to support growth, productivity, innovation, job creation and development. We will continue to take joint action to strengthen international cooperation and frameworks, they added.

Meanwhile, they noted that they will remain committed to continue working together to support the poorest countries as they address health, social and economic challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. We remain committed to implementing the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), allowing DSSI-eligible countries to suspend official bilateral debt service payments through end-2020.

The preliminary reporting from the fiscal monitoring framework by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group (WBG) highlighted that, together with exceptional financing, the DSSI is significantly facilitating higher pandemic-related spending, they said.

The IMF and WBG have also continued to work on their proposal of a process to strengthen the quality and consistency of debt data and improve debt disclosure.

In light of the continued liquidity pressure, while progressively addressing debt vulnerabilities, we agreed to extend the DSSI by six months, and to examine by the time of the 2021 IMF/WBG Spring Meetings if the economic and financial situation requires to extend further the DSSI by another six months.

The affirmed that they will continue to closely coordinate its ongoing implementation to provide maximum support to DSSI-eligible countries. The officials also expressed their disappointment by the absence of progress of private creditors' participation in the DSSI, and strongly encouraged them to participate on comparable terms when requested by eligible countries.

They welcomed multilateral development banks (MDBs) commitments of \$75 billion to DSSI-eligible countries over the period between April-December 2020 alone, part of their \$230 billion commitment to emerging and low-income countries as a response to the pandemic.

While protecting their current ratings and low cost of funding, MDBs are encouraged to go further on their collective efforts in supporting the DSSI, including through providing net-positive flows to DSSI-eligible countries during the suspension period, including the extension period, they said.

"We ask the MDBs to provide further details on the new resources provided to each eligible country. Building on the proposal by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to host the data repository, we look forward to further update on the implementation of the Institute of International Finance (IIF) Voluntary Principles for Debt Transparency."

"Given the scale of the COVID-19 crisis, the significant debt vulnerabilities and deteriorating outlook in many low-income countries, we recognize that debt treatments beyond the DSSI may be required on a case-by-case basis."

"In this context, we agreed in principle on a "Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the DSSI", which is also agreed by the Paris Club. We look forward to the endorsement of the Common Framework by members, subject to their domestic approval procedures," they said.

They added that they will convene, ahead of the Riyadh G20 Leaders' Summit in November 2020, an extraordinary G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting where they will publish the Common Framework and also discuss outstanding issues related to the DSSI.

They reiterated their commitment to ensure a stronger global financial safety net with a strong, quota-based, and adequately resourced IMF at its center, and will keep demands on IMF resources under close review.