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KD 100 fine for not wearing masks



His Highness the Prime Minister received the President of the Iraqi Council of Representatives.

KUNA photo

Relations 'excellent'

The new foreign minister of Iraq Fuad Hussein Thursday underlined his country's commitment to continue on the path of developing good relations with Kuwait and other Gulf countries.

"We have good relations with Gulf countries and we want to continue this," he told a press conference in the Brussels Press Club Thursday.

Hussein noted that the first foreign minister to visit Baghdad when he was appointed was from Kuwait followed by the Saudi foreign minister, and an Iraqi delegation visited Kuwait and Riyadh recently.

"We have an excellent relationship and we are also cooperating on how to face the COVID-19," he said.

There is support from Kuwait, from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries to the Iraqi health sector, he added.

On his first official visit to Europe as the Iraqi foreign minister, Hussein said he started his trip from Berlin, then to Brussels and from then will go to Paris. Germany holds the current EU Presidency.

"It is important for us to inform our European colleagues, friends and the public opinion about what is going on in Iraq and the region," he said.

Wednesday, the Iraqi foreign minister met NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg as well as EU High Representative Josep Borrell and EU parliamentarians and later Thursday he will meet with the Belgian foreign minister.

He said that NATO can play an important role by training the Iraqi forces and discussions about ties with the Alliance will continue.

He said that Iraq is facing several challenges including the COVID-19 crisis and collapse of the oil prices. (KUNA)

Cases up 825

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 17, (Agencies): The committee formed by the Council of Ministers to follow up the implementation of health requirements to combat the spread of COVID-19 has intensified its campaigns on commercial complexes and shops located in the commercial centers of the country to monitor the extent of the commitment of workers and customers to wearing masks and gloves, reports Al-Qabas daily.

During the fourth stage of the plan for the return of normal life, the committee registered more than two thousand violations in all six governorates. These violations, whereby neither workers nor customers were required to wear masks and adhere to other health requirements, were observed in stores both inside and outside commercial complexes.

Informed sources explained that the business owners will be held responsible for the violation of not wearing masks. If a worker does not wear a mask or gloves, a citation is issued against him for the violation. However, if he and the customers do not adhere to the measures, the facility gets closed down completely.

Violation

The violation of the customer or the owner of the facility not wearing a mask necessitates a "reconciliation order" which is valued at KD 100.

The sources revealed that the Farwaniya committee headed by Engr Fahad Al-Muweisari recorded 350 violations of non-compliance with health requirements, particularly masks by shop owners.

They said approximately 20 violations were recorded in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate, 15 in Jahra and 10 in Hawally.

Regarding violations of not wearing masks outside commercial centers or in public places, the sources affirmed that the fine for such a violation is KD 100.

They added that judicial officers affiliated to the Ministry of Commerce, Kuwait Municipality, Public Authority for Industry and Public Authority for Manpower, with the support of teams from the Ministry of Health, can record such violations on individuals in the places where they are allocated.

Kuwait's confirmed coronavirus cases increased by 825 to 97,824 with four people having succumbed to the disease raising the death toll to 575 in the past 24 hours, the health ministry said on Thursday.

The figures include people, who have come into contact with infected individuals, and others whose source of infection is currently being investigated, read a ministry statement.

There are 94 people currently receiving intensive care for the virus out of a total of 9,338 patients being hospitalised.

Some 5,968 swab tests were conducted in the last 24 hours, out of a total of 695,556 so far, added the spokesman.

Earlier, the ministry said 724 people have recovered from the virus, upping the total number of those to have overcome the disease to 87,911.

Ban

Kuwait on Thursday expanded its COVID-19 ban on incoming commercial flights from "high-risk" nations to include Argentina, France and Yemen but has removed Singapore from the list.

This decision comes in accordance with the instructions of health authorities, Kuwait General Administration of Civil Aviation said in a press statement.

The list now includes a total 34 countries.

The remaining countries are Armenia, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Hong Kong, Hungary, Lebanon, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Nepal, North Macedonia, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, the Philippines, Serbia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Syria and Yemen.

Following the announcement made by the US President Donald Trump about the availability of a vaccine to prevent COVID-19 within three to four weeks, Kuwait's Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) has given the Ministry of Health the green light to complete necessary procedures for importing the vaccine, reports Al-Qabas daily.

They revealed that the first batch of vaccines is expected to arrive from more than 20 international companies that are currently testing the vaccine for COVID-19.

Kuwait's Ministry of Health will open a drive-through Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) testing station in Sabhan Area next Sunday, Sept 20, an MoH official said Thursday.

The new station, to open upon instruction of Health Minister Sheikh Dr Bassel Al-Sabah, will conduct swab tests and is part of the MoH's efforts to conduct as many tests as possible to contribute to curbing spread of coronavirus pandemic, Dr Fahad Al-Qemlas, Director of Public Health, told KUNA.

Other Voices

The circle of peace can heal our troubled region

By Khalaf Ahmad Al Habtoor
UAE Businessman

CONGRATULATIONS to the peoples of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and Israel who following the historic signing of the Abraham Accords on the Sept 15, 2020 in the White House Rose Garden can now look forward to a wealth of new opportunities in all fields of endeavour. These are exciting times opening all kinds of doors for our children and grandchildren.

Thanks to the forward thinking of HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, and the Bahraini Monarch HH Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa who embraced peace with Israel notwithstanding the inevitable critical chorus, there is an optimistic buzz in Israel's air.

My appreciation also goes to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for ignoring the naysayers at home clamouring to annex Palestinian lands. But the person without whom peace would have remained a distant dream is US President Donald Trump.

Trump promised to cement 'the Deal of the Century' during his 2016 campaign. There were those who laughed at the suggestion. This may not be the deal he envisaged that was roundly rejected by the Palestinians on the grounds of pro-Israel bias and, indeed, it was heavily weighted in Israel's favour.

However, I think the Abraham Accords has far greater potential than that largely conceived by Jared Kushner, especially if it expands to include other major Arab countries and flourishes. Together with Egypt and Jordan, that signed peace treaties with Israel, the UAE and Bahrain are the kernels of hope destined to grow into permanent Middle East peace.

Until now, the Israelis felt empowered to take a hard-line stance on just about everything connected with the Palestinians, largely because they could, and they had absolutely nothing to lose. It stands to reason that the more Israel is connected with its Arab neighbours on multiple levels, the more it will be open to making compromises.

Just about everyone in my part of the world seeks justice for the Palestinians, and we will continue to demand that they receive their rights. The UAE and Bahrain have both recently reiterated their support for two states side-by-side with East Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital. That said, instead of stomping on Emirati flags and referring to Emiratis and Bahrainis as "traitors", forgetting all the financial and diplomatic support they have been given over many decades, they should quit their policy of self-isolation and begin talking else risk being disregarded.

Notably, Hamas launched 15 rockets into Israel as soon as the Emirati Foreign Minister HH Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan began delivering his speech on Tuesday. What exactly does Gaza that is bleeding from poverty and joblessness gain from such pinprick attacks when more often than not Israel retaliates with excessive force? Palestinian residents of massively overcrowded Gaza live in misery because Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other militant groups are more attuned to militancy than peace.

I salute President Trump for driving the carriage with determination and transparency. He achieved the outcome he wanted be-

cause he would not take no for an answer. He does take a controversial approach in his dealings which may rattle some people, but he is not afraid to take action and he almost always delivers on the big issues impacting the United States and the world.

It is a pity that his successes are often underrated. For this step alone, he should be honoured with a Nobel Peace Prize even though the Nobel committee lost credibility when they chose president Barack Obama as a recipient early in his presidency.

Our utmost respect and appreciation go to Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed for his courage and determination to keep the UAE a pioneer in all fields and an ambassador for peace. Sheikh Mohammed realizes the importance of this new accord, and the turning point it constitutes in the peace process in the region and the world.

As for me, I could not be happier. From a personal perspective, although I hoped to be able to visit Jerusalem in my lifetime, I did not really believe I would get the chance. Now I am looking forward to a journey of discovery visiting historic sites, gaining fresh perspectives, exchanging views and even making new business partnerships.

Whatever the passport they hold, people are just people with similar hopes and dreams. Once Israelis and Arabs begin listening to one another without self-defensive posturing, they will discover that the children of the Prophet Abraham (PBUH) have more in common than they imagined.

Cooperation in a spirit of friendship will certainly deliver enhanced security, stability and prosperity for the participating countries. Success will shine a light on the path, attracting others to complete this courageous 'Circle of Peace' which will strengthen our hand against our shared enemies.

Peace is always a blessing, yet in the Middle East, it has been exceptionally hard to achieve primarily because some minds were glued to a single unrealistic signpost pointing to nowhere. So many wasted years! So many wasted lives!

The reason our region is viewed around the world as a basket case is due to the fact that certain countries have been stuck in an ideological time warp. Iran is a glaring example; its messages of hate have not changed since the 1979 Khomeini revolution.

Iranians are suffering. The economy and the currency are on the rocks and sanctions have decimated the country's oil revenues. If only the Iranian leadership wakes up and changes course, everyone would greatly benefit. For one thing, there would be less spent on weapons leaving more to better standards of living.

I would urge the ayatollahs to cut relations with all armed proxies, end all support for terrorism, tone down the anti-Western/anti-Arab rhetoric and instead come to the table to join the circle of peace.

Lastly, it is my hope that this Israeli-Arab détente will not merely remain on paper but will be embraced by governments as well as citizens. Let us open our arms to a warm peace that will stand as an inspiration to all.



Al-Habtoor

US sanctions 2 Lebanon-based firms, Hezb-linked person

BEIRUT, Sept 17, (AP): The US Treasury on Thursday imposed sanctions on two Lebanon-based companies and a man described as an official with the Lebanese militant Hezbollah group.

The United States considers the Iran-backed Hezbollah a terrorist organization and has imposed sanctions on many of the militant group's officials in the past.

The new wave of sanctions comes as Lebanon is passing through its worst economic and financial crisis in decades. The country is also facing a political deadlock amid delays in the formation of a new crisis Cabinet, because of a portfolio dispute.

The US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control, or OFAC, sanctioned the companies Arch Consulting and Meamar Construction "for being owned, controlled, or directed by Hezbollah."

OFAC also sanctioned Sultan Khalifah Asaad, saying that he is a Hezbollah official closely associated with both companies.

"Hezbollah leverages Arch and Meamar to conceal money transfers to Hezbollah's own accounts, further enriching Hezbollah's leadership and supporters, and depriving the Lebanese people of much-needed funds," the Treasury said.

Last week, the Treasury sanctioned two former Lebanese Cabinet ministers allied with Hezbollah - the ex-finance minister, Ali Hassan Khalil, currently a lawmaker, and the former public works and transportation minister, Youssef Fenianos.

Lebanon's Prime Minister-designate Muatapha Adib told reporters after meeting President Michel Aoun on Thursday afternoon that he will allow more time for discussions over the formation of a new Cabinet.

The talks have stalled over which of Lebanon's sects will get the finance ministry. Hezbollah and its Shiite ally Amal group of Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri are insisting their sect gets the portfolio and that they get to name Shiite ministers in the new Cabinet.

Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to Yoshihide Suga on the occasion of his election as Prime Minister of Japan.

He wished him best of luck for Suga and for the bilateral relations to further develop and prosper.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a similar cable. (KUNA)



KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Wednesday two cables of condolences, one to UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, and the second to Sheikh Saud bin Rashid Al-Mualla, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Umm Al-Quwain.

In the cables, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf expressed sincere condolences on behalf of the Kuwaiti leadership over the demise of late Sheikh Ali bin Humaid bin Ahmad Al-Mualla.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables on the occasion. (KUNA)



KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah conveyed, in a cable Thursday, greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and himself to Governor General of Papua New Guinea Bob Dadae, on his country's National Day.

He wished him everlasting health, and further progress and prosperity of his country.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a similar cable. (KUNA)



KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait is now allowing its foreign workforce to use a digital-based identification system that grants entry to the country for holders of valid residence visas, amid statewide plans to swap paper documents for digital files.

Non-Kuwaitis can access their identity documents through the Kuwait Mobile ID App, which aims to make it easier for people to access public services, the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) said in a statement.

Kuwait's foreign and interior ministries, in addition to its civil aviation regulator, have all been apprised of the new guidelines, according to PACI's Director General Msaad Al-Asousi.

The digital identity system links biometric data to a digital code which allows access to identification and government services anywhere, besides helping users streamline other transactions. (KUNA)



KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait on Thursday said it would provide \$20 million in emergency aid to Yemen, amid its "great concern" over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the war-torn nation.

Given the "extremely alarming" conditions in Yemen, Kuwait remains committed to political dialogue as the only way out of the country's war of attrition, Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah told a ministerial-level conference via video link.

Collectively hosted by the foreign ministers of Kuwait, the United Kingdom, Germany and Sweden, on the sidelines of the 75th annual UN General Assembly, the talks aimed to push for political progress in Yemen, amid ongoing friction between the country's warring parties. (KUNA)



KUWAIT CITY: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim said that the Parliament session will conclude according to the outcomes of the upcoming regular session scheduled on Tuesday.

The Parliament will attempt to hold one or more special sessions if time permits, Al-Ghanim told reporters, indicating that two grillings against His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah are planned on Tuesday.

Furthermore, he said that a session on Wednesday will be dedicated to discussing laws.

The grillings, submitted separately by lawmakers Abdulkarim Al-Kandari and Al-Humaidi Al-Subaiee, have been postponed twice since Sept 1, the second time being after several lawmakers tested positive for COVID-19. (KUNA)



WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and British counterpart Dominic Raab affirmed Wednesday that their countries are standing against Iran's getting of nuclear weapons.

In a joint press conference with Raab, Pompeo said the US rejects, in principle, allowing Iran to get nuclear weapons on Oct 19, the date of ending the sanctions on weapons that were imposed by the UN.

He stressed that Iran is still the biggest country supporting terrorism in the world, and the US doesn't believe that Iran's ability to weapons war trade without punishment is not an 'acceptable matter'. (KUNA)