

KUWAIT READY FOR RESUMPTION OF SCHOOLS IN SEPTEMBER

India commercial flights suspended

Mutants threaten safety of Gulf states

KUWAIT CITY, April 24, (Agencies): The Cabinet decided on Friday to suspend all direct commercial flights with India, until further notice, due to the grave health condition in the republic.

The Government Communication Center account on Twitter stated that the decision thus stipulates a "ban of entry to Indian nationals to the country, namely those that are coming from the Republic, whether coming directly or through other countries, unless they reside outside of the Republic for at least 14 days, and until further notice."

The decision came after India announced Thursday, that it had detected 314,835 new confirmed cases and 2,104 deaths

from Covid-19 virus, thus registering a new daily record for the pandemic.

The decision also comes due to challenges facing the health sector there, and due to a shortage in oxygen supplies and vaccines.

Meanwhile, local authorities imposed complete shutdown in the capital New Delhi for six days to limit the spread of the virus. Minister of Education Dr. Ali Al-Mudhaf, on Thursday, affirmed the resumption of studies at schools next September through a well-studied plan for the safety of students in all grades.

Regular studies at schools were suspended for more than one year across the country due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The minister wished, at the same time, conditions would be available for a safe return to schools, concurrently with the vaccination campaigns carried out by the Ministry of Health (MoH) for all the Ministry of Education (MoE) staff and students.

Speaking to Kuwait State Television, Al-Mudhaf prioritizes health of students, adding that all matters are going better and the ministry is doing its best to introduce safe conditions for the exams of both 12th grade and all other grades.

He revealed that the ministry has formed some committees of specialists to evaluate education in Kuwait.

He said the ministry is planning to develop the national council for education development and the higher council for education as well as educational system for setting a specified and clear strategy to upgrade the education system using in international indicators.

The ministry has faced some challenges due to the coronavirus, and teachers and students have been trained on online education, he said, noting that this kind of learning is not alternative to the regular one.

He noted that the exam of the 12th grade will be carried out through paper not electronically, reassuring people about relevant health matters.

Guarantee

He affirmed that the MoE has worked with the MoH through some committees to set health measures to guarantee the safety of students.

Up to 49,000 male and female students will be examined in the 12th grade, and that every classroom has only six students with the implementation of a two-meter social distancing between a student and another.

The minister pointed to some measures taken at schools like wearing facemask, using hand sanitizer and measuring temperature, in addition to the presence of a number of medical emergency teams.

The MoE provided the MoH with names of all staff and students to receive vaccines, Al-Mudhaf said.

The Consultant of Internal and Epidemiological Diseases at Al-Adan Hospital, Dr. Ghanem Al-Hujailan has warned of the emergence of new strains of the Covid-19 virus in large numbers in India and its transmission to a large number of European countries and countries near the borders of Kuwait such as Iran, as well as the high number of infections in some Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

In a statement to Al-Seyassah, Al-Hujailan stressed on the need to expand the frequency of immunization among arrivals, saying the transmission of infection means a return to square one. He cited a comparative graph between the number of infections in April last year and this year, which shows there is an increase in the number of infections with similarities during the same time every year.

He explained the number of infections in April last year was up to 88, while it reached 1,400 this year, stressing that the reasons for the failure to contain the pandemic are due to the defect in the application of the curfew, pointing to the people seen in groups along the streets, parks and cars and pedestrians seen throughout the night until the early hours of the morning without supervision or control, which helped spread the infection, which means the end of community immunity among the residents and a return to zero again.

Violators

Al-Hujailan stressed on the need to expand community immunization to include groups who are violators of residence law, who are estimated to be 100,000, and these may cause the transmission of the virus.

Returning to the mutated virus species, Al-Hujailan said every few days a new mutation of 'Covid-19' appears, and the current concern appears in the graph of infections in both India and Iran, where they recorded the highest number of daily infections among countries during the past few days, to the point that the occupancy rate in intensive care in Iran has reached 100 percent.

He also spoke of the effectiveness of vaccinations to confront the virus.

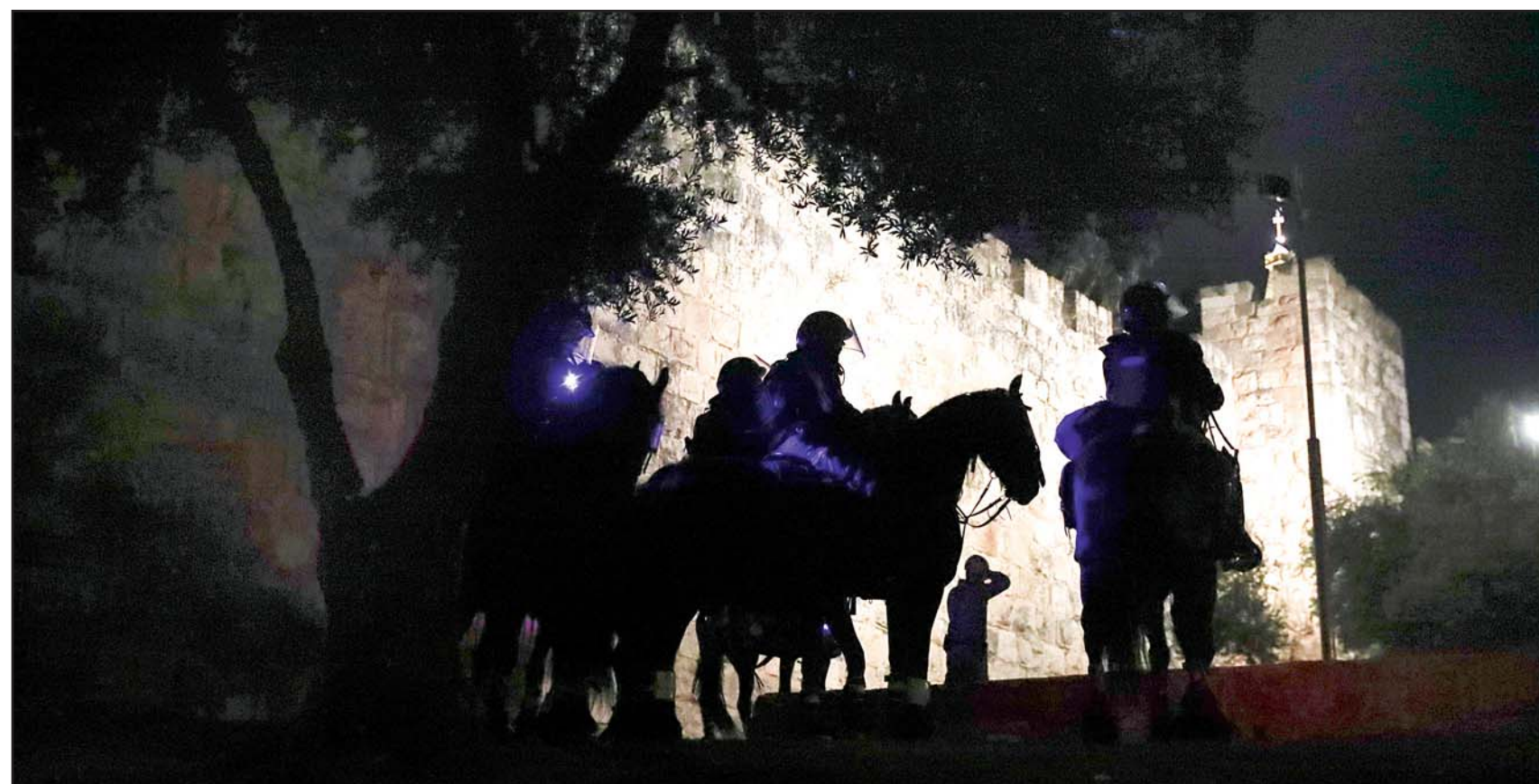
Meanwhile, the President of the Kuwaiti Pharmacist Association, Walid Al-Shimmari, praised Kuwait's permanent membership in the World Health Organization's program to monitor drug safety, after the success it achieved in meeting all the necessary standards and requirements.

The Health Ministry announced on Friday 1,432 coronavirus (COVID-19) infections, 1,312 recoveries and nine deaths. Health Ministry spokesman Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad indicated that this brought the tallies of infection and recoveries to 264,198 and 247,136 respectively. Deaths stood at 1,502.

He indicated that there were 222 patients at ICU due to COVID-19, while 15,650 cases are receiving regular treatment for coronavirus. Swabs in the last 24 hours reached 9,171, putting the total at 2,265,300.

Ramadan Timings

Iftar ..... Sunday..... 18:21
Imsak..... Monday ..... 03:36



Israeli border police stand guard during clashes between Palestinians and Jewish extremist group 'Lahava' just outside Jerusalem's Old City, April 22. Members of the Jewish extremist group plan to march to the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem's Old City, where Palestinians have clashed with Israeli police in recent days over restrictions on outdoor gatherings during the holy month of Ramadan. (AP)

Kuwait: Hold Israel accountable

The State of Kuwait has called for enforcing political and legal action against Israel, and holding it accountable for relentless violations against the Palestinian people.

While the international community is busy fighting Covid-19, "Israel, the occupying power, continues its hostile policies against the Palestinian people to remind us it will not retreat from plans to annex more Palestinian territories in the West Bank and East Jerusalem," Permanent representative to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi said.

In a statement to a UN Security Council session over the Palestinian issue, Al-Otaibi said Israeli policies were forcing occupation through illegal activities and policies including expansion and construction of thousands of Jewish housing

units, and annexation of lands in clear violations of UN Security Council resolutions, namely Resolution 2334.

All recent UN reports, he said, confirmed deterioration of conditions in Palestinian territories due to the rising construction of thousands of illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank including in East Jerusalem.

"What concerns us as well is that while Israeli authorities give green light for construction of illegal settlements there are violent acts committed by Israeli settlers and Israeli security forces against unarmed Palestinian people, as well as destruction of buildings and properties whether they were Palestinian or built through donations from the international community like schools and health facilities," he said. (KUNA)

Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: State of Kuwait has updated UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and Security Council members about latest developments about missing Kuwaitis and third nationals, as well as Kuwait's national archive.

Kuwait permanent representative to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi sent two letters to Guterres and President of UNSC, on April 12, about latest developments regarding the two issues in line with UN Resolution 2107 (2013) and UNSC's Statement, issued on November 24, 2020.

He said Kuwait identified, on March 3, eight Kuwaiti martyrs and third-country nationals who were arrested by Iraqi forces during Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Kuwait's Mission to the UN said in a statement Thursday.

The martyrs were identified through their DNA, said Al-Otaibi. (KUNA)

BANYUWANGI: Indonesia's navy on Saturday declared its missing submarine had sunk and cracked open, killing 53 crew members aboard, after finding items from the vessel over the past two days.

Military chief Hadi Tjahjanto said the presence of an oil slick as well as debris near the site where the submarine's last dive on Wednesday off the island of Bali were clear proof the KRI Nanggala 402 sank. Indonesia earlier considered the vessel to be only missing.

Navy Chief Yudo Margono told a press conference in Bali, "If it's an explosion, it will be in pieces. The cracks happened gradually in some parts when it went down from 300 meters to 400 meters to 500 meters ... If there was an explosion, it would be heard by the sonar." (AP)

WASHINGTON: The US renewed commitment to stability in Iraq and its Kurdistan region, US State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said Friday.

In a statement, Price said Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken spoke with Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister Masrour Barzani, and he reaffirmed the US commitment to the stability of Iraq and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR).

The Secretary discussed the continued attacks on Iraqi, US, and Coalition forces, including the April 14 attack on the Erbil International Airport.

The Secretary and Prime Minister agreed that these attacks represent an egregious violation of Iraqi sovereignty.

The Secretary emphasized the importance of free and fair Iraqi parliamentary elections in October, and he encouraged continued close cooperation between Baghdad and the KRG on issues of mutual concern. (KUNA)

Other Voices

Don't forget malaria

By Hervé Verhoosel
Spokesperson at Unitaid

DESPITE its 229 million cases and 409,000 deaths in 2019, malaria is an overlooked epidemic. The emergence of COVID-19 has thrown health systems into disarray and forced countries to shift their focus from malaria to the pandemic response, threatening to reverse 20 years of malaria gains.

Now as we enter the second year of the pandemic, the global response to COVID-19 must not come at the expense of progress against malaria, a preventable and treatable disease. Not only is eliminating malaria possible, but it is also crucial to fighting current and future diseases.

It is vital that the international community remembers that eliminating malaria remains an achievable goal for all countries. Indeed, more countries than ever are either achieving or approaching elimination. In 2017, as part of the "E-2020 initiative", the World Health Organization (WHO) identified 21 countries that could defeat malaria by 2020. Spread across five regions of the world, these countries share the ambitious goal of achieving zero indigenous cases of malaria by 2020. And last year, Algeria, Belize, Cabo Verde, China, El Salvador, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Malaysia all reported zero indigenous malaria cases, achieving their goal, while others made impressive strides forward.

Ridding the world of malaria is a central component of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), linking closely to targets on poverty, inequality, and health and well-being. But as long as it persists, malaria will continue to have a devastating impact on the most vulnerable communities. In the past the Kuwait Fund and the State of Kuwait have invested in the fight against Malaria in support of those targets.

Innovation plays a vital role in the elimination of this disease. New tools, such as those being developed by Unitaid and partners, are needed in the face of emerging insecticide and drug resistance. These can only be developed with sustained and significant investment in malaria research.

Global investments to end malaria have an enormous return on investment. In 2018, they saved 600,000 lives and prevented close to 100 million malaria cases compared to 2000 levels. In the Asia-Pacific region, weighing against the epidemiologi-

cal and economic costs of inaction, Wellcome Trust researchers estimated that eliminating malaria by 2030 could save over 400,000 lives, prevent 123 million malaria cases, and lead to a 6:1 return on investment. These investments also strengthen health systems that are vital to responding to threats such as COVID-19, and help address other vector-borne diseases.

Together with partners, global health agency Unitaid has been supporting the evaluation of the performance of new bed nets under real conditions in malaria-endemic countries to guide policy on their use. This aims to open a market for these new nets and bring about competition among manufacturers, leading to lower prices and a sustainable tool for countries.

Unitaid also invests to accelerate access to next-generation insecticides to reestablish indoor spraying as a malaria-control measure, and to vary new spray formulas to prevent mosquito populations from growing resistant to them.

Unitaid's work has also resulted in the delivery of seasonal malaria chemoprevention to over six million children across seven countries in the Sahel, fulfilling more than 25% of the region's need, while monitoring the safety, efficacy, cost, and public health impact of such programmes at scale.

This World Malaria Day, the global health community must reaffirm its commitment to combat malaria by increasing global investments to prevent, control, and ultimately eliminate this disease. COVID-19 has exposed the weaknesses in health systems around the world. Now is the moment to step up efforts against this preventable disease.

About Unitaid:

Unitaid is a global health agency engaged in finding innovative solutions to prevent, diagnose, and treat diseases more quickly, cheaply, and effectively, in low- and middle-income countries. Our work includes funding initiatives to address major diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis, as well as HIV co-infections and co-morbidities such as cervical cancer and hepatitis C, and cross-cutting areas, such as fever management.

Unitaid is now applying its expertise to address challenges in advancing new therapies and diagnostics for the COVID-19 pandemic, serving as a key member of the Access to COVID Tools Accelerator. Unitaid is hosted by the World Health Organization.