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markets

OMICRON DETECTED IN 12 ARRIVALS FROM EUROPE

Stricter adherence to precautions key



Meeting of the main committee for observing adherence to anti-COVID precautions.

KUNA photo

Opinion

Formation of government ... 'flea market'

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

THE current situation in Kuwait is distressing due to the disruption that has reached the two authorities. The legislative authority is sitting on the sidewalk waiting for the new Cabinet, whereas the executive authority is comfortable to handle business and stay away from "headache" even if this is at the expense of crippling the constitution as a result of the irregular work in the two most important authorities.

Indeed, the issue related to the delay in forming the new Cabinet has exceeded the limits of logic and become a dark comedy. What is painful is that His Highness the Prime Minister, despite watching the country go from bad to worse, is not taking a rescue initiative. The loss of its national immunity is increasing by prolonging the life of the caretaker government. This raises many question marks about the treatment of this problem, which must be quickly resolved.

The wait for the new government seems like a miracle next to impossible. Kuwaitis are incurring more damages per day, especially the scientific, commercial and economic competencies who believe immigration to neighboring countries would be more beneficial than staying in a country that is almost suffocating due to absurd closure because of the unhealthy relationship between the two authorities that work on the principle of "Your uncle's money is not yours".

Hence, the departure of the two authorities has become the ideal solution, similar to what happened in 1987, for a "reflection period" of four or five years during which the political, economic and social tracks must be re-corrected, and the constitution must be amended as the basis for any treatment. This would be necessary so that the executive-legislative stalemate does not become the usual character in Kuwait, and the powers and limits of each authority will be more clearer.

There is no shame in admitting that this abnormal constitutional situation caused the country to lack realistic practical visions. With all appreciation and respect for most of the prime ministers of the past fifty years, they did not put this in mind, but relied on compromises and passing deals. They forgot about planning and studying, making it seem as if Kuwait is a temporary state.

This inherited political behavior of governments has aggravated sectarian division. We only have to look at the recent student union elections to realize where the absence of a bold national executive decision has led us. We will also see the rapid acquiescence of tribal forces and political components that are still seeking to seize everything, even if this leads to the loss of Kuwait.

What the country has gone through in the past two years and what it is facing today is much worse than the crises it witnessed throughout its 400 years of existence. This calls for alertness at all levels and the immediate start of surgical procedures to get out of the destructive waiting cycle. The atmosphere of the region is overcast with many dark clouds. The need for a capable and effective government has turned the issue of its formation into a "flea market" where even "brokers" resent to present their goods.

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Other Voices

Selective fundamentalism!

By Ali Ahmed Al-Baghli

Former Minister of Oil

Our fundamentalist brothers are still having fun in our society -- East and West, South and North. They prohibited the circulation of any merchandise or toy with a rainbow under the pretext that this is the slogan of homosexuals. The rationalist obeyed them and closed some shops selling such commodities. Then, the atmosphere became pleasant for the fundamentalists; prompting them to keep on forbidding and giving orders.

The latest of their orders was the removal of a beautiful Christmas tree from one of the famous complexes under the pretext that it contradicts their customs and traditions!

We do not know the contents of such customs, traditions and heritage that are hostile to everything beautiful. What is the harm in seeing a tree with colorful lights that delights the psyche of those who look at it -- whether a child, a young man or a young woman, man or woman?



Al-Baghli

We used to see Christmas trees in the oil city of Ahmadi, in front of Jashannal Store in Safat Square, and in churches whenever we go to greet our brothers in humanity who belong to the Christian faith; that is, before God afflicted us with the likes of our puritanical, eclectic and hateful fundamentalists.

Those who belong to the Christian religion invented electricity, cars, air conditioning, fixed and mobile phones, and thousands of goods that no fundamentalist or anyone else can live without. Why did they not ban their use, or is it because these and other commodities are not in conflict with their customs or traditions?!

Here, we have the right to ask: Why the thefts of public money, which we hear about daily, do not contradict the customs and traditions of the fundamentalists?

What I fear most is that these fundamentalists believe in a principle I heard more than once from their affiliates -- theft of public money is not considered a crime within their principles and the jurisprudence of some, rather they think that whoever steals public money owns part of it.

That is, every Kuwaiti has the right to even a small portion of the public money.

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Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Wednesday sent a condolences cable to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, expressing his sorrow over the demise of Prince Nahar bin Saud bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir prayed to Almighty Allah to bestow mercy upon his soul.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: The figures issued by the Ministry of Finance show a significant decrease in the budget deficit of about 755 million dinars during the last eight months of fiscal 2021/2022, compared to a deficit of 4.7 billion dinars during the corresponding period last year, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The daily quoting sources said the total budget revenues from April to last November was about 11.3 billion dinars, of which 10.1 billion dinars are from oil and about 1.2 billion dinars from non-oil revenues in the form of taxes, fees and others, while the budget expenditures were about 12 billion dinars.

KUWAIT CITY: The Public Authority for Manpower those who arrived on commercial visit visas issued before Nov 24, 2021 will be allowed to change to work visa before Dec 31, 2021, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The PAM sources told the daily said this is done in line with the Administrative Circular No. 20 of 2021, to regulate the issuing of work permits for those who entered the country on commercial visit visas.

JERUSALEM: The United States and Israel need a "common strategy" as world powers negotiate a new nuclear

deal with Iran, the White House's national security adviser said Wednesday.

Jake Sullivan spoke ahead of a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and other Israeli security officials in Jerusalem. He said the meeting came at a "critical juncture for both of our countries on a major set of security issues."

World powers and IRAN renewed negotiations in Vienna last month to restore an agreement to curb IRAN's nuclear program. Negotiations took a pause last week to allow Iran's negotiator to return to Tehran for consultations. Bennett said that "what happens in Vienna has profound ramifications for the stability of the Middle East and the security of Israel for the upcoming years."

The original deal, struck in 2015, offered Iran relief from sanctions in exchange for restrictions on its nuclear program. The agreement unraveled after the United States unilaterally withdrew in 2018 and re-imposed crippling sanctions on Iran.

Since then, Iran has resumed its nuclear program, enriching uranium and operating centrifuges beyond the limits of the deal.

Israel has been critical of the attempts to reach a new deal with Iran, saying the international community is giving in to "nuclear blackmail." It says any new agreement must make improvements over the original deal, and that the talks must be accompanied by a "credible" threat by the U.S. to use military force against IRAN if necessary.

Israel considers Iran its regional arch-enemy, and says it will take any steps needed to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. Iran insists its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes.

On Wednesday, Hebrew daily Yedioth Ahronoth published an interview with the incoming Israeli Air Force commander, who said Israel was capable of attacking IRAN tomorrow and destroying its nuclear facilities. (AP)

WHO warns of Europe storm

Drop in South Africa cases hints omicron peak passed

JOHANNESBURG, Dec 22, (AP) - South Africa's noticeable drop in new COVID-19 cases in recent days may signal that the country's dramatic omicron-driven surge has passed its peak, medical experts say.

Daily virus case counts are notoriously unreliable, as they can be affected by uneven testing, reporting delays and other fluctuations. But they are offering one tantalizing hint - far from conclusive yet - that omicron infections may recede quickly after a ferocious spike.

South Africa has been at the forefront of the omicron wave and the world is watching for any signs of how it may play out there to try to understand what may be in store.

After hitting a high of nearly 27,000 new cases nationwide on Thursday, the numbers dropped to about 15,424 on Tuesday. In Gauteng province - South Africa's most populous with 16 million people, including the largest city, Johannesburg, and the capital, Pretoria - the decrease started earlier and has continued.

"The drop in new cases nationally combined with the sustained drop in new cases seen here in Gauteng province, which for weeks has been the center of this wave, indicates that we are past the peak," Marta Nunes, senior researcher at the Vaccines and Infectious Diseases Analytics department of the University of Witwatersrand, told The Associated Press.

"It was a short wave ... and the good news is that it was not very severe in terms of hospitalizations and deaths," she said. It is "not unexpected in epidemiology that a very steep increase, like what we saw in November, is followed by a steep decrease."

Gauteng province saw its numbers start sharply rising in mid-November. Scientists doing genetic sequencing quickly identified the new, highly mutated omicron variant that was announced to the world on Nov. 25.

Significantly more transmissible, omicron quickly achieved dominance in South Africa. An estimated 90% of COVID-19 cases in Gauteng province since mid-November have been omicron, according to tests.

Also:

VIENNA: The World Health Organization's top official in Europe urged governments on Tuesday to prepare for a "significant surge" in coronavirus cases across the continent due to the Omicron variant, which is already dominant in several countries.

"We can see another storm coming," WHO Europe regional director Dr. Hans Kluge said at a press conference in Vienna. "Within weeks, Omicron will dominate in more countries of the region, pushing already stretched health systems further to the brink."

Local specialists complete viral early warning system

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22: Kuwaiti researchers have completed the first integrated and effective early warning system for viral epidemics for effective monitoring, prevention and control, as part of the study conducted by the two principal investigators from the Medical Sciences Center at Kuwait University Dr. Salman Al-Sabah from the College of Medicine and Dr. Muhammad Al-Khamis from the College of Health with the assistance of researchers, Dr. Muhammad Khaja from the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, Noor Bin Haider from the College of Public Health, Dr. Ahmed Nabil and Dr. Suleiman Al Mazedzi from the Ministry of Health, Dr. Sarah Al-Youha from the College of Medicine and the Ministry of Health, reports Al-Rai daily.

The daily said the research which is funded by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, is vital particularly when the world is traumatized by the Covid-19 virus and its mutations.

The daily added, the researchers were able to demonstrate the ability of the prototype system to identify and estimate the evolution of the Covid-19 epidemic, its community transmission, temporal and spatial clusters, geographical risk distribution, and associated risk factors, in addition to the rate of genetic mutations and evolutionary and geographical origins.

The early warning system is based on the modeling and prediction of the temporal, spatio-logical and evolutionary dynamics of the Covid-19 epidemic in Kuwait, through the use of modern epidemiological tools such as temporal and spatial mathematical models, artificial intelligence, and biological evolution models that provide new and deeper insights into the dynamics of emerging diseases such as COVID-19.

An initial early warning system that can be used in a sustainable and easy way, in depicting, analyzing, and communicating results almost immediately, would help in assessing the strategies of surveillance, prevention and containment of the emerging epidemic to the decision makers.



People check their rapid COVID-19 test results outside of a testing site on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, Tuesday, Dec. 21, 2021, in New York. (AP)

Day by day

WHAT has been leaked to us about formation of the new government shows it will not be a technocrat Cabinet but 'political' meaning a return to the quota system.

The 'writing on the wall' says portfolios will be distributed to different components of the society like what is happening in Lebanon and Iraq.

If this happens, it will be a misfortune. What is happening to us, Prime Minister?

I hope you will turn a new page, if not the government will return to its old habits and we will return to where we started from.

... Yet, tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Rush for booster

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 22, (Agencies): The main committee for observing adherence to anti-covid precautions on Wednesday called for firm compliance with the measures against the virus in Kuwait.

There was some slackness in applying the measures against COVID-19 over the past days, leading to mounting casualties due to infection with the contagion, said Dr. Ahmad Al-Mutawaa, a commission member and director of epidemic prevention at the Ministry of Health (MoH).

He was speaking to KUNA as he emerged from a meeting of the committee, headed by the deputy chairperson and Kuwait Municipality Director General Ahmad Al-Manfouhi.

Participants in the meeting affirmed necessity that the commission-affiliated field teams carry out tighter inspection of the shopping malls, stores and various other businesses, Dr. Al-Mutawaa said.

He said unvaccinated people must not be allowed to enter the malls, called for putting on the protective masks correctly, covering the mouth and the nose, in closed places, sterilizing the hands and maintaining social distancing.

Dr. Al-Mutawaa re-affirmed that arriving travellers must operate the application "shlonik," quarantine themselves at home for 72 hours, noting that the quarantined can relieve themselves of the isolation once they get a negative-result PCR.

The official spokesman for the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health, Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad, announced on Wednesday the detection of 12 new cases of the Omicron mutant of the Coronavirus in Kuwait, coming from several European destinations.

Isolation

Dr. Al-Sanad said in a press statement that all cases have been subjected to sanitary isolation, all preventive and health measures and all epidemiological investigation measures have been taken.

He stressed the need for the application of quarantine for those coming from outside the country to preserve the health and safety of the citizens and residents in Kuwait.

Dr. Al-Sanad also stressed the need to postpone travel at present and limit it to cases of necessity to ensure the highest level of protection and prevention, wishing safety for all.

Kuwait's Health Ministry on Tuesday said that 92 people tested positive for COVID-19, taking the total to 414,270.

The recoveries rose by 27 to 411,145, while death toll from the pandemic remained unchanged at 2,466, the Ministry's Spokesman Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad told KUNA.

There are five ICU cases, while 659 others are being treated, in addition to 17 patients at COVID-19 wards, he noted.

Medical swabs conducted over the same period hit 19,679, raising the total to 5,758,322, Al-Sanad made clear.

The health-related decisions taken by the government in an extraordinary meeting held recently raised questions on what might happen if the new variant of Coronavirus -- Omicron -- spreads in the country, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Speaking to the daily, sources from the government affirmed there is no plan to close commercial facilities in case the new variant spreads due to the availability of vaccines, high vaccination rate and strict enforcement of health regulations.

Sources also clarified that measures will be taken if Omicron spreads, most notably reducing the number of employees reporting for work or implement the remote work system and online education once again; while no one will be allowed to enter closed places without a mask.

Discovery

Sources added it is possible that Omicron will spread in Kuwait, considering the discovery of such cases in neighboring countries; so everyone must fully abide by the health regulations and take the booster dose of the Corona vaccine as it has been proven that it provides 98 percent protection from the virus.

Kuwait Medical Association (KMA) has asked the Cabinet and Ministerial Committee for Corona Emergencies to exclude the medical personnel from the required 72-hour quarantine before taking the PCR test for those returning to the country, taking into consideration their important work in health facilities, reports Al-Rai daily.

KMA argued that requiring returning medical staff to undergo quarantine will increase the burden on the health system and affect the quality of medical care.

It then expressed gratitude to the Cabinet and committee for their relentless efforts in dealing with the pandemic as an urgent matter.

The Cabinet's decision, according to which those who have not taken the booster shot will not be considered as fully immunized especially after completing nine months since taking the two basic doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, has resulted in a boost in the turnout of the public to vaccination centers, especially the main vaccination center in the Mishref fairgrounds, reports Al-Qabas daily.