



EPA officials on tour of Sabah Al-Ahmad area.

KUNA photo

# Maximum KD 5,000 fine for violations of EPA law

EPA, Dive Team ink agreement

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Al-Seyassah Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31:** After the Environment Public Authority (EPA) detected a number of environmental violations in Sabah Al-Ahmad Marine City -- sewage disposal pumped directly into the sea, dumping waste and debris in places other than designated areas, the Director of Public Relations and Media at the EPA,

Sheikha Al-Ibrahim, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that its technical team with the Environmental Police toured the city to monitor the violations, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Al-Ibrahim added that in addition to the violations detected by the team, field tests were carried out to check the quality of the sea water to ensure its compliance with environmental standards.

She explained citations were issued based with Article (18), Article (97) and Article (32) of the EPA laws.

She stated these violations carry fine ranging from 250 dinars to 5,000 dinars depending on the nature of the violations.

In other news, the Environment Public Authority (EPA) and the Kuwait Dive Team have signed a cooperation agreement for the removal of waste and sunken ships and boats that lie at the bottom of the Kuwait Sea.

Chairman and Director General of the EPA Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad said in a statement during the signing ceremony that this agreement aims to limit the destruction of the marine environment and its organisms because many of the items that lie at the bottom contain fuels and oils, in addition to hindering maritime navigation.

## Questions swirl at home

### Dubai 'blamed' for virus cases abroad

DUBAI, Jan 31, (AP) - After opening itself to New Year's revelers, Dubai is now being blamed by several countries for spreading the coronavirus abroad, even as questions swirl about the city-state's ability to handle reported record spikes in virus cases.

The government's Dubai Media Office says the sheikhdom is doing all it can to handle the pandemic, though it has repeatedly declined to answer questions from The Associated Press about its hospital capacity.

"After a year of managing the pandemic, we can confidently say the current situation is under control and we have our plans to surge any capacity in the health care system should a need rise," it said.

However, Nasser al-Shaikh, Dubai's former finance chief, offered a different assessment Thursday on Twitter and asked authorities to take control of a spiraling caseload.

"The leadership bases its decisions on recommendations from the team, the wrong recommendations which put human souls in danger and negatively affect our society," he wrote, adding that "our economy requires accountability."

#### Travel

Dubai, known for its long-haul carrier Emirates, the world's tallest building and its beaches and bars, in July became one of the first travel destinations to describe itself as open for business. The move stanchied the bleeding of its crucial tourism and real estate sectors after lockdowns and curfews cratered its economy.

As tourism restarted, daily reported coronavirus case numbers slowly grew but mostly remained stable through the fall.

But then came New Year's Eve - a major draw for travelers from countries otherwise shut down over the virus who partied without face masks in bars and on yachts. For the last 17 days, the United Arab Emirates as a whole has reported record daily coronavirus case numbers as lines at Dubai testing facilities grow.

In Israel, more than 900 travelers returning from Dubai have been infected with the coronavirus, according to the military, which conducts contact tracing. The returnees created a chain of infections numbering more than 4,000 people, the Israeli military told the AP.

Tens of thousands of Israelis had flocked to the UAE since the two countries normalized relations in September. Israeli Health Ministry expert Dr. Sharon Alroy-Preis was quoted by Channel 13 TV as complaining in a call with other officials that a few weeks of travel had been more deadly than decades of no relations with the Arab nation.

Since late December, Israel has required those coming from the UAE to go into a two-week quarantine. Israel later shut down its main international airport through the end of the month over rising cases.

In the United Kingdom, tabloids have splashed shots of British influencers partying in Dubai while the country struggled through lockdowns trying to control the virus. Britain in mid-January closed a travel corridor to Dubai that had allowed travelers to skip quarantine over what was described as a significant acceleration in the number of imported cases from the UAE.

"International travel, right now, should not be happening unless it's absolutely necessary," Health Secretary Matt Hancock told the BBC this week. "No parties in Paris or weekends in Dubai. That is not on and in most cases, it's against the law."

#### Barring

Meanwhile, mutated strains of the coronavirus have been linked back to Dubai. The U.K. instituted a travel ban Friday barring direct flights to the UAE over the spread of a South African variant of the coronavirus.

Denmark already discovered one traveler coming from Dubai who tested positive for the South African variant, the first such discovery there. Like Britain, Danish celebrities similarly traveled to Dubai for the New Year.

In the Philippines, health authorities say they discovered a British strain infecting a Filipino who made a business trip to Dubai on Dec. 27. He returned to the Philippines on Jan. 7 and tested positive.

He "had no exposure to a confirmed case prior to their departure to Dubai," the Philippines Department of Health said. In the time since, Filipino authorities have discovered at least 16 other cases of the British variant, including two coming from Lebanon.

As daily reported coronavirus cases near 4,000, Dubai has fired the head of its government health agency without explanation. It stopped live entertainment at bars, halted nonessential surgeries, limited wedding sizes and ordered gyms to increase space between those working out. It also now requires coronavirus testing for all those flying into its airport.

The UAE had pinned its hopes on mass vaccinations, with Abu Dhabi distributing a Chinese vaccine by Sinopharm and Dubai offering Pfizer-BioNTech's inoculation. The UAE says it has given 2.8 million doses so far, ranking it among the top countries in the world.

However, people including al-Shaikh now question Dubai's capacity to handle the increasing cases. Hospitals contacted by the AP largely referred questions back to Dubai's government, which repeatedly declined to comment. Dubai's Saudi German Hospital responded saying it was "hoping to read the real news," without elaborating.

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