



Day by Day

Hope on course

EVERY day, the local newspapers publish pictures of garbage piled up in street corners, residential areas and even main city squares.

Add to this scenario stray cats and dogs that appear to have invaded us and this means only one thing - no one paying any attention to the environment or cleanliness.

In some instances the mountains of garbage seen in our neighborhoods almost block the roads. No one seems to be in charge or maybe we do not know who is responsible or even if we know the surprising thing is no one responds to our calls.

We wonder what will happen in the new cities that are being built. Will it also be filled with trash? In many countries of the world, the municipalities collect cleaning fees from residents.

... Yet, tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

THE Dubai International Financial Center (DIFC) building (right) lit up in red in anticipation of the UAE Hope probe's expected arrival to Mars on Feb 9.

Called Amal, or Hope in Arabic, the Gulf nation's spacecraft is seeking an especially high orbit - 13,500 by 27,000 miles high (22,000 kilometers by 44,000 kilometers) - all the better to monitor the Martian weather.

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"We are quite excited as engineers and scientists, at the same time quite stressed and happy, worried and scared," said Omran Sharaf, project manager for the UAE venture.

The UAE is especially proud that Amal was designed and built by its own citizens, who partnered with the University of Colorado at Boulder and other US institutions, not simply purchased from abroad.

Photo courtesy of Dubai Media Office



PM 'understands' pain of closures



His Highness the Amir is presented with the coins by CBK Governor Dr Mohammad Yousef Al-Hashel (right).

Amir receives coins

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Monday at Seif Palace, the Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Dr Mohammad Yousef Al-Hashel.

During the meeting, Al-Hashel handed His Highness the Amir three commemorative coins on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Independence of the State of Kuwait, the 30th Liberation Day, and the 60th anniversary of the issuance of the Kuwaiti currency. (KUNA) — See Also Page 6

Newswatch

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has re-affirmed that the security of Egypt and the Gulf are intertwined and constitute one of the pillars of the Egyptian state policy.

Presidential spokesman Bassam Radi said in a statement that el-Sisi re-stated his unwavering commitment to the close relationship with the GCC states in a meeting with the GCC Secretary General Nayef Al-Hajraf.

President el-Sisi affirmed during the meeting his aspiration to develop these ties further in various sectors noting necessity of solidarity to face challenges facing the Arab nation.

For his part, Al-Hajraf underscored the close and brotherly ties between Egypt and the GCC countries hailing Cairo's pivotal role in safeguarding national security. (KUNA)

RIYADH: The Saudi-led Coalition fighting for legitimacy in Yemen said on Sunday it had intercepted and destroyed four armed drones launched by the Iran-allied Houthi movement towards the kingdom.

Coalition forces intercepted and destroyed a total of four armed drones launched by the "terrorist" Houthi group with the aim of targeting "civilians and civilian objects," in southern Saudi Arabia, spokesman Colonel Turki Al-Malki said in a statement.

The coalition would continue to do everything in its power to "neutralize" the Houthis' military capabilities in accordance with established humanitarian laws and conventions, he highlighted. (KUNA)

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader has urged the United States to lift all sanctions if it wants Iran to live up to commitments under its nuclear deal with world powers, state TV reported, but President Joe Biden says the US won't be making the first move.

"If (the US) wants Iran to return to its commitments, it must lift all sanctions in practice, then we will do verification ... then we will return to our commitments," state TV quoted Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as saying, in his first comments on the matter since Biden took office.

Biden rejected the idea in a "CBS Evening News" interview taped Friday and airing Sunday.

He was asked if the US will lift sanctions first in order to get Iran back to the bargaining table.

"No," Biden replied. He was then asked if Iran has to stop enriching uranium first. Biden nodded.

Former President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the US in 2018 from the atomic deal, which saw Iran agree to limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. Biden has said he will seek to revive the deal, but insisted that Iran must first reverse its nuclear steps, creating a contest of wills between the nations.

"This is the definitive and irreversible policy of the Islamic Republic, and all of the country's officials are unanimous on this, and no one will deviate from it," Khamenei added Sunday, reiterating Iranian leaders' previous remarks that the U.S. must ease its sanctions before Iran comes back into compliance.

The supreme leader, 81, has the final say on all matters of state in Iran and approved the efforts at reaching the nuclear deal in 2015.

In response to Trump's so-called "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran, the country began to gradually violate its atomic commitments, and threatened further provocations in a bid to increase its leverage and get Biden to prioritize a return to the deal as he moves to dismantle Trump's legacy. (AP)

Opinion

Neither the Levant nor Yemen for Iran

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah
Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

IRAN'S illusions have begun to fall in front of a storm of reality that the leaders of the Mullah regime had tried to falsify with colors of revolutionary slogans and divine victory.

As for "Yemen's grapes" and its missed season, the answer to the Iranian missiles launched by the Houthis against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia came from the new American administration, which vowed to Tehran that it would be different from its predecessor.

However, President Joe Biden expressed more keenness than Donald Trump concerning the relations with the Gulf states. He openly demanded an immediate cessation of the Iranian intervention in Yemen, and made a clear pledge to continue to cooperate and support the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in confronting threats and protecting its sovereignty and lands.

This American stance was quickly met by the Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif when he said, "We (Iran) extend our hand to Riyadh and invite it to reach out to us."

Before him, there was a clearer message from the Deputy Parliament Speaker Hussein Amir Abd Al-Lahyan through a statement in which he said, "Iran is the most important neighbor of Saudi Arabia and it can count on us during bad circumstances."

This talk, which was wrapped in the usual Persian arrogance, is nothing more than a political show, in which the Mullah regime rips its clothes off piece by piece. Each time it does so, its ugliness and its weakness become more evident to such an extent that it has become like a cat stuck in a corner and unable to even meow. When it meows, it is the meow of an empty drum that makes a lot of noise.

During the 42-year rule, the Mullahs spent hundreds of billions of dollars on their military and nuclear projects, and supported terrorism in Arab, African and Western countries, but the result was zero benefit.

All efforts exerted by Iran in various expansionism projects have failed, either in Lebanon where the Hezbollah has not managed to tighten its grip on Lebanon but it is in fact now killing its peaceful opponents because it is afraid of their bold word, or in Iraq where the pawns of Tehran have been able to extend their control over the nation, which revolts daily against them.

Their operations turned to sabotage Bahrain and their disasters, and their terrorist cells in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia increased their international and regional isolation.

In front of this picture, the threats that the Iranian supreme leadership make about destroying American forces in the Gulf, or striking Saudi Arabia and annihilating Israel are nothing more than cosmetics for the media directed at home.

They are well aware that any bullet their forces fire at Saudi Arabia, the American forces, or Israel will be met with a tsunami so fiery that Iran will not be able to withstand the fury.

This is after the Mullah regime pushed the country into the core of the storm, and it is then that it will realize what calamity it has brought upon itself.

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Kuwait lists 996 new COVID cases

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8, (Agencies): Kuwait Ministry of Health (MoH) on Monday listed 996 new coronavirus (COVID-19) cases bringing caseload of contaminations with the contagion to 171,994 since eruption of the pandemic locally months ago.

MoH official spokesperson Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad said in a statement to KUNA that there also three new fatalities due to infection with the contagious virus, registered during the same period, thus mortalities' toll rose to 969.

Dr. Al-Sanad added that the number of people who are receiving treatment at intensive care units has amounted to 90, thus the whole count of the confirmed infection cases and remained under medical care has stood at 8,905.

He pointed out that 8,864 swab tests were conducted in the past 24 hours, bringing the total number of such examinations to 1,608,305.

Proportion of the infections as compared to the number of swab tests, during the last 24 hours, stood at 11.2 percent.

He re-appealed to the people of Kuwait to remain on guard against the dreaded virus, maintain social distancing and avert crowds.

National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanim said on Sunday that His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Hamad Al-Sabah expressed his understanding of the suffering of entrepreneurs, owners of small and medium enterprises and activities affected by lockdown decision to confront the spread of coronavirus (Covid 19).

In a statement, Al-Ghanim, said that he met the premier and he was "cooperative and understanding, and he is working to resolve issues related to health precautionary measures and to alleviate the suffering of business owners and activities."

Al-Ghanim expressed optimism that the premier would be "able to take steps that alleviate the suffering of entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium businesses affected by these decisions."

The Speaker also said he believed that violations committed by some store owners should not be generalized, as the matter calls for tougher punishment for the violator and not punish those who adhere to regulations.

Al-Ghanim stressed that he "hopes from His Highness the Prime Minister and those concerned in the government would listen to the suffering of small business leaders, today or tomorrow at the latest, in order to provide solutions to quickly take measures and help owners from going bankrupt."

With regard to sports activity, Al-Ghanim said, "it is true that there are some violations that must be stopped, especially attendance by fans for some matches," indicating at the same time that "when violations occur, they must be met with conditions, penalties and procedures towards those who violate, and not to stop sports activity as a whole."

Decisions

Meanwhile, Fahd Abdul-Rahman Al-Mujil says the Kuwaiti Diwans reject what he called the ill-considered decisions related to economic, social and living aspects, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Speaking on behalf of the Kuwaiti Diwans, Al-Mujil said, "Because of the Corona pandemic, we and the world are still living in an exceptional and delicate circumstances that requires the highest levels of awareness and national commitment ... at a time when the government of the State of Kuwait is trying to make efforts to control this epidemic."

He added, "But there are some decisions issued by the Council of Ministers on the recommendation of the health authorities, which we believe are not studied especially those related to the economic, social and living aspects of many small and medium-sized enterprises owners of all kinds. We are not against closure, but against cutting off livelihoods."

He pointed out that: "On the other hand, we see many people coming to Kuwait from abroad some without respecting the requirements of the hour, at a time when more stringent measures are being imposed locally."

He went on to say, from the position of national and social responsibility, the Kuwaiti Diwans gathering stresses the need for commitment and strictness in applying the law for those who do not adhere to health and preventive requirements, but in return the government must deal with this crisis with more transparency and discipline to ensure any decisions don't affect the citizen and his livelihood.

Al-Mojil stressed in his statement, "We support measures to confront the Corona pandemic, but in return the government must take clear measures to support those affected by these measures, and it must be taken into account that the economic crisis faced by young and medium-sized business owners in particular and the rest of society in general is no less important and dangerous than the health crisis, therefore, addressing it and taking it into consideration and importance is an absolute duty and necessity."

He expressed his sincere thanks and gratitude to all frontline workers who work to combat the spread of this epidemic, including health, security, monitoring cadres and others, Kuwaiti male and female volunteers and others.

With the ban on the activities of health establishments and salons taking effect on Sunday, the owners of these establishments adhered to the closure decision while the Health Regulations Committee formed by the Council of Ministers intensified its inspection efforts to ensure strict compliance with the decision, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Assured

Tariq Asad, head of the Barbershops Union, assured the daily that "everyone is committed to the decisions issued by the government agencies" noting that the only objection is the implementation mechanism.

"We will submit the recommendations of the union and its reports on ensuring that work is in accordance with the health regulations without harming the owners of enterprises and the workers," Asad revealed.

A parliamentary-ministerial committee consisting of the health minister, state minister for Cabinet affairs and two members of the Parliament will meet soon to discuss the resumption of the abovementioned activities.

The committee tasked to follow up the implementation of health regulations has started inspecting the concerned establishments. The committee members are from Kuwait Municipality, Ministry of Interior, Public Authority for Manpower and Ministry of Commerce. The committee met recently to lay down a mechanism to uncover violations.

Official sources said the committee divided its teams among the governorates, indicating the recommendation is for the committee to issue warnings to whoever violates the decision within the first four days of implementation to ascertain that the concerned establishments remain closed. After issuing warnings, the committee will move to the next stage - more severe steps such as withdrawing and canceling the licenses if the violation is repeated, canceling the residency permits of workers and referring them for deportation.

At a time when the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Federation of Tourism and Travel Offices, Muhammad Al-Mutairi, disclosed the average operating losses suffered by the 450 travel offices operating inside Kuwait was 88 million dinars during the Corona pandemic lockdown of the country, at a rate of 8 million dinars per month, today, the Kuwait International Airport (KIA) began implementing the Cabinet's decision to prevent the entry of non-Kuwaitis into Kuwait for two weeks, with the exception of first-degree relatives and domestic workers who are registered on the 'Balsalama' platform, medical staff and personnel working in diplomatic missions, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The airport is in a state of relative calm as passengers who landed at the airport were 'ushered' in by technical and health officials who are on duty to ensure all precautionary measures are taken from the moment they disembark from the plane until they leave the airport gates.

An airport source said, a total of 65 flights operated from the KIA - 33 departures and 32 arrivals, including 5 from Dubai, 4 from Istanbul, 2 flights from Doha, and a flight each from Abu Dhabi and Sharjah.

Al-Mutairi told Al-Qabas daily there is no increase of virus because of arrivals or departures and there is no need to close it, especially in light of the strictly adhering to the tests for incoming passengers who have to take two PCR tests, in addition to a third scan after a compulsory quarantine for a period of seven days in a hotel.

And, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) said no decision has yet been taken to reduce the percentage of workers in government institutions, contrary to what has been rumored because of the increasing number of infections, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting reliable CSC sources.