

Disregard unconfirmed reports, unknown information: KMA

Ministry of Health condemns deliberate smear campaigns against health personnel

By Marwa Bahrawi
Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 11: The Ministry of Health has condemned the deliberate smear campaigns against health personnel just because they raise awareness and urge everyone to receive vaccines against the COVID-19 virus, and said the ministry supports and appreciates the efforts of medical personnel who have devoted their efforts to protect the community preventively and curatively. In a statement, the ministry urged

everyone not to pay heed or rather ignore unconfirmed and unknown information, pointing to the importance of cooperation and standing as one to protect the society from the deadly virus. The ministry praised all official and voluntary efforts which contrib-



Dr Moussawi

ute to the community awareness and preservation and the efforts devoted to urging others to get vaccinated to help everyone co-exist with this epidemic safely, especially efforts that urge everyone to take the Covid-19 vaccine. The Kuwaiti Medical Association (KMA)



Dr Al-Enezi

has mobilized forces against the attack on doctors by some anti-vaccination activists who are active on the social media who present abnormal and strange ideas and trends, which are of course a blow to health security in light of the great momentum the ministry has gathered both the global and local level.

The KMA stressed that global medical studies and local statistics clearly demonstrated the benefits of vaccination, and the harms of refraining from it, especially that

the number of people who received the Covid-19 vaccination globally amounted is 3 billion and is in line with the benefits of this vaccination.

The KMA President Dr Ahmed Thuwaini Al-Enezi, affirmed that the association is the legitimate representative of doctors in Kuwait and their representative in civil society institutions, and an advocate for community health, as it is the first supporter of the vaccination campaign as a major step in combating the Corona pandemic.

For his part, the KMA Vice-Presi-

dent Dr. Ali Al-Moussawi, indicated the country's senior leaders support the great efforts of medical cadres, and appreciate the great sacrifices made by doctors to save people's lives in the face of this global pandemic.

The KMA Secretary-General Dr. Salem Al-Kandari said the method of attack and bullying that characterizes some of those who oppose vaccination is the biggest evidence of their abnormality and fragility and the level of their behavior and thinking.



KUNA photo
Ferid Belhaj, World Bank Group Vice-President for Middle East and North Africa.

World Bank official in Kuwait

Lack of vision aggravated pandemic impact: Belhaj

By Fawaz Karami

KUWAIT CITY, July 11, (KUNA): Lack of a visionary economic-development forecast by some Middle Eastern states has aggravated repercussions of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in these countries, a senior World Bank official has affirmed.

Negative impact of the pandemic on the world economies has been generally quite strong, however countries of the Middle East and North Africa have taken the brunt of these repercussions, with noticeable rise of poverty and near collapse of the health sectors, said Ferid Belhaj, World Bank Vice-President for Middle East and North Africa, in exclusive interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA).

Belhaj, currently on a visit to Kuwait, affirmed that poverty rates have soared to unprecedented levels since the outbreak. For example, number of people living under the poverty line increased by 56 percent in Lebanon and 21 percent in Tunisia.

Several effects of the pandemic are due to lack of a visionary forecast, namely at the development level, and failure of executing reform schemes on part of some regional countries, Belhaj said.

Belhaj classifies regional countries with respect of interaction with COVID-19 into two categories: Ones that have proven capable of coping with it in "a positive manner," such as GCC states and Morocco where number of citizens who have taken the anti-covid vaccines has hit as high as 10 million.

The second group comprises countries that have wasted too much time in facing the pandemic and have been slack in rising up to the challenge for a slew of reasons, namely political indecision and incapability of taking or activating the decisions.

Elaborating in the interview with KUNA, Belhaj touched on how the WB reacted to the outbreak, pointing out that it had to suspend, amend or re-schedule

many projects, shifting financial allocations to respond to the outbreak and its results at the economic and social levels.

Moreover, the World Bank, in the shadow of the coronavirus crisis, had to focus on means of securing vaccines, after funding programs for infrastructures and increase efforts at the level of combating poverty, Belhaj continued.

The World Bank earmarked more than USD 1.5 billion for vaccination, he elaborated, noting that it was ready to specialize additional funds for immunizing people across the globe against the pathogen. However, the problem lies in securing the vaccines rather than funding, he clarified.

Most regional countries, except for GCC states, received financial aid from the World Bank amid the covid crisis, he added, noting that the allotments were directed to aid to the most vulnerable classes of peoples.

Citing a tangible example of the contributions to the Middle East, Belhaj noted that the WB earmarked USD 246 million for Lebanon, "a country facing collapse with people suffering from poverty."

Regarding small and medium enterprises, Belhaj said the WB group had drawn up a three-level scheme to deal with the pandemic repercussions. Firstly, supporting the health sector and secondly, backing up small and medium projects and thirdly, combating poverty and social fallouts.

Negative impact of the pandemic has been quite strong on private sector of the regional countries, he said, indicating the World Bank is seeking to persuade states to abstain from "hegemony" on the private sector and replace this approach with supervision and follow-up for sake of creating jobs.

According to the WB forecast until 2050, some 300 million young people will join the labor market in the Middle East and North Africa, he said, cautioning that the public sector could not absorb a high number of job seekers in the regional countries.

'Second round of paper exams going well, faced no obstacles'

KUWAIT CITY, July 11, (KUNA): Director of the Religious Institute for Girls Ghalia Al-Azmi confirmed that the exams for the second round at centers and homes at the institute, which began on July 1 and will continue until July 15, are going well and the administration did not face any obstacles to hold paper exams.

Al-Azmi said in a press statement on Sunday that the number of female applicants for the second round test ranges between 47 and 50 students. She stressed the need to implement all health requirements recommended by the Ministry of Health, "which aims to protect our daughters, with the need

to adhere to wearing a mask, sterilizing hands, adhering to social distancing, and measuring temperature before testing."

She pointed out that the building of the Religious Institute in Cordoba for Girls is the main headquarters of the committees on the second floor, which includes the centers of all regions of Kuwait, indicating that the examination committees have been coordinated according to the established mechanism and within the distance set by the Ministries of Health and Education, and the preparation of emergency committees and isolation rooms, wishing the students success.



KUNA photo
Ghalia Al-Azmi, Director of the Religious Institute for Girls.

Efforts

Al-Sultan praised the efforts exerted by everyone in the education field in ensuring the success of the distance learning experience.

He said, "Our teachers have done well and have not failed or neglected their duties despite the difficult health conditions that the country is going through".

In a related matter, Al-Sultan indicated that the high success rate in the twelfth grade exams was achieved because the exams were fair to everyone and did not go beyond the revision questions and question banks as promised by the ministry.

Regarding the 18 students who scored 100 percent in the exams, he clarified that students had previously obtained 100 percent before the pandemic, adding that the ministerial decision to increase the percentage

of continuous assessment work for the year from 30 to 40 percent, which made a difference in the percentage, must be taken into account.

Regarding the vaccination of teachers and students of all educational stages before the start of the new school year, Al-Sultan said, "The teachers and other employees of the ministry are more than 100,000 in number, and a large percentage of them - more than 60 percent - have been vaccinated. As for the vaccination of students whose number ex-

ceeds about 300,000, we hope the Ministry of Health will take into account the urgency of vaccinating students under 16 years of age".

In addition, Al-Sultan denied the circulating report about a "deficit" in preparing teachers.

He said, "We have not faced any obstacle in providing educational bodies in schools. We are fully prepared and continue to meet new teachers. There are no external contracts this year due to which local interviews are conducted daily. The reports about

suspension of interviews are not true. There is also no objection to hiring retirees in a specialty that is actually required".

Al-Sultan also categorically denied reports about showing leniency with cheating during exams.

He stressed that the ministry had taken its administrative measures by applying a heavy-handed cheating regulation on students, highlighting the existence of an assumption among some students that cheating is an acquired right.

MoE lays out three scenarios for full resumption of schools

'Ministry will not risk health of students'

By Abdul Rahman Al-Shammari
Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 11: With the looming cautious optimism towards the "full resumption" of schools in the upcoming academic year, the Assistant Undersecretary of Public Education Affairs at the Ministry of Education Osama Al-Sultan opened the door for a number of options, especially in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of clarity in the epidemiological situation.

He stressed that the ministry "will not risk the health of students in the event the situation is not completely stable".

In an interview with the daily, Al-Sultan explained that the ministry has highlighted in its plans several options for the resumption of schools on the basis of the health situation in the country. The three available scenarios in this regard are traditional education, blended education and distance learning.

Regarding the first scenario, he said, "It includes a complete resumption of schools with the traditional method of education. The current health situation must recede almost completely, and it will be based on the decision of the Ministry of Health. This means extra preparation is needed ... We have readied 306 schools in this regard, and are working on the readiness of the rest of the schools".

Sufficient

When asked if the remaining time is sufficient to complete the required preparations for this scenario, Al-Sultan expressed his belief that a period of two months may be sufficient if all sectors of the ministry secure the requirements of the school year.

He revealed that the total resumption of the schools is what he desires.

Regarding the second scenario, which is blended education, Al-Sultan said, "It was set in order to deal with the possibility of the continuity of the health situation but to a lesser degree, as the return to schools will be partial and blended between traditional education and distance learning. The school week will be divided - one day for the student at school and another for those at home as per the stages. A complete schedule will be drawn up with the number of classes and teachers' shares".

Regarding the third and final scenario, which is distance learning, Al-Sultan clarified that it includes a return to the online education system, and will only be applied in the event the epidemiological situation worsens so that no student is allowed in the schools.

He highlighted the fact that distance learning is a new experience from which the ministry has gained experience, adding, "The complete return to traditional education does not mean putting an end to the online experience, but it can be used in other circumstances that are not related to the pandemic, such as bad weather. Therefore, the presence of the online education system is important, and we can allocate students to study remotely one day a week".

Commitment

He stressed his commitment and all sectors and departments in education to serve the ministry's employees and parents with accuracy and transparency through a qualified and experienced specialist who uses all kinds of technology to facilitate procedures and speed up the completion of transactions on time.

He added, "within the framework of the Ministry of Education's endeavor to develop its services and work method, we have received auditors to listen to them and provide the best services in a manner that reflects development and good organization, so that the general objective of the Ministry is achieved through practicing various specializations and providing the best services to the auditors."

He affirmed his commitment to follow up on the various sectors concerns in the ministry with the topics submitted by the auditors to ensure that they are not delayed, in addition to informing the applicant of the procedures taken regarding his request and the result it reached immediately, as well as submitting a periodic report to the responsible sector on the issues related to the auditors and making statistical tables after counting, sorting and classifying them.



KUNA photo
The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education receives employees from the educational, administrative staff and auditors.

Dr Al-Yaqoub committed to follow up concerns

Education keen to activate channels with auditors

KUWAIT CITY, July 11, (KUNA): Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, Dr. Ali Al-Yaqoub, affirmed his keenness to activate the communication channels with the auditors, whether in person or electronically, through which various inquiries about the ministry and its services are answered.

Al-Yaqoub said in a press statement Sunday, after receiving a number of Ministry of Education employees from members of the educational and administrative staff and auditors, that his reception of the ministry's employees in its entire spectrum is a link between the competent authorities within the various sectors in the ministry and the beneficiaries of its services.

He expressed his aspiration to "receive the requests of all auditors and implement them as a matter of urgency, because the competent authorities are among us in the reception center to follow up and benefit directly and to finalize the procedures for the issues raised."

Some 2,600 families to benefit

UNHCR and Kuwaiti charity sign grant deal to aid Syrian refugees

KUWAIT CITY, July 11, (KUNA): The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Kuwaiti Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity inked on Sunday an accord to grant financial aid to the UNHCR for securing vital assistance for some 2,600 Syrian refugee families in Jordan.

The UNHCR said in a statement that the agreement would help in improving living conditions for the most impoverished refugees, namely cases of special needs, indicating that the sum would secure dwelling,

health utensils and monthly financial support.

The accord was inked by the UNHCR bureau representative in Kuwait Dr. Samer Haddadeen and the association chairman, Jamal Abdulkhaleq Al-Nouri.

The agreement is the first of its kind to be worked out between the two parties and the first such initiative on part of the Kuwaiti association in coordination with the UNHCR in Jordan.

According to the World Food Programme, many Syrian refugees in Jordan are deprived of food.

per day."

He pointed out that the step taken by the Education would touch the concerns of the auditors in the light of which the transaction is carried out in a clear and transparent manner and work to solve all problems.

Regarding the most prominent transactions received on the first day, Al-Yaqoub said, "most of them are related to the administrative and public education sectors, especially the stranded teachers, the return to schools, and grievances about the pro-

motion of supervisory positions and students' exams."

He explained that the number of transactions dealt with is 37, including 24 for public education, 11 for administration, and two for the educational development sector.

Al-Yaqoub praised the efforts of the existing work team that organized the process of receiving the auditors from the leaders, supervisors and employees of the Ministry of Education, who were present today at the Ministry's building since the early morning.