



Nod to booster shots for vulnerables



The teaching and administrative staff have been ready across Kuwait with the high school staff resuming work for the schooling year 2021-2022 on Sunday.

Opinion

Shearing wool better than skinning of lambs

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

THE French philosopher and orientalist Constantin Francois de Volney wrote about his trip to Syria and Egypt in the 18th century, describing the critical economic conditions in Damascus due to lack of resources and funds.

To tackle this situation, its governor As'ad Pasha Al-Azm gathered his advisors to discuss the best way for generating revenues that would better the economic conditions of Damascus.

His advisors proposed imposing tax on Christians and small traders. After the governor inquired about the expected returns of such a measure, he was told it will bring about fifty to sixty bags of gold.

As'ad Pasha sympathized with the targeted group, and wondered how they will manage to pay the taxes when their earnings are low and limited.

He instead told his advisors that he has a better way of generating the needed money, but he did not reveal to them about his plan.

The next day, he secretly summoned the state mufti. When he arrived at the palace, As'ad Pasha said, "We have received news that you have been misbehaving for a long time in your home, drinking alcohol, and violating the law."

The mufti trembled in fear, and begged the governor, offering him large sums of money in exchange for concealing his shortcomings. The mufti offered 1,000 pieces of gold, but As'ad Pasha refused. The mufti then offered more and more until it reached 6,000 pieces of gold, and finally the governor agreed.

He summoned the judge next and told him that there is documented information about his bribery, exploitation and betrayal of the trust, as he collected money illegally.

The judge opted to settle the matter quietly in exchange for paying a sum of money. The governor did the same to state officials and big business figures of both Muslim and Christian faiths. They all paid huge sums of money in exchange for their freedom.

After that, As'ad Pasha summoned his advisors and revealed to them that he had managed to collect 200 bags of gold, instead of the 50 that he was going to collect in the way the advisors had suggested.

With admiration, they asked, "How did you do this?" The governor answered them with his well-known eternal anecdote, "Shearing sheep's wool is better than skinning lambs."

In this story, there are indications of what the decision-making authority can do when corruption prevails, and when its ability to follow up people's affairs and meet their needs weakens.

The aforementioned story is applicable in our land of Kuwait. Here, from time to time we encounter warnings of a salary crisis. The state appears to be like a camel in the desert dying of thirst while carrying water on its back.

In contrast, there is a massive looting of financial resources without anyone being apprehended for it. Meanwhile, the government goes on to open old files, such as suspension of projects, more restrictions on the people, and other proposals that do not differ in form and content from the proposal given to As'ad Pasha Al-Azm by his advisors.

About two years ago, the Minister of Finance used to come to us occasionally to address the issue of salaries, and the long talk about the budget deficit, which almost suggests that Kuwait is on the verge of drying up resources. This makes us wonder if it is true, or if there were ways and means to get out of the crisis.

All countries of the world have an arsenal of anti-corruption laws. There are countries in which the presidents of the republic or heads of government have been imprisoned on charges of profiteering or bribery at the expense of public money, while massive projects are implemented in those countries at about ten times less than our costs. This is due to the existence of conscience, sincerity, and also laws that do not compromise. There are no "scratch my back and I scratch yours" and "This is our son" policies, especially the policy prevalent in Kuwait - "Your uncle's money is none of your business."

As for the Gulf, there are several examples of containing looting and cuffing corrupt hands firmly without waiting for trials and advisors' reports. No one is allowed to flee, which was what happened in Saudi Arabia in 2015 when King Salman bin Abdulaziz decided to launch a radical reform movement for the state and the "Vision 2030".

He entrusted the matter to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who opted to open all files, and discovered that about ten percent or more of the state budget since 1980 have been going to the corrupt who over-price the state projects.

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KFH named safest Islamic Bank in GCC for 2021

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UAE President approves new cabinet

ABU DHABI, Sept 26, (KUNA): President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan endorsed Saturday the new government lineup.

The new cabinet included Sheikh Maktoum bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum as a deputy prime minister and minister of finance, Mohamed Al Hussaini as a minister of state for financial affairs; Abdullah Al Nuaimi as a minister of justice; and Abdulrahman Al Awar as a minister of human resources and emiratization.

Moreover, Mariam Almheiri was appointed minister of climate change and environment and Abdullah Al Ketbi was appointed minister of federal supreme council affairs. Other ministers kept their

posts in the new cabinet.

Earlier, UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum announced the new government strategic approach that will lay the foundations of work for the next 50 years.

"The new government strategic approach comes after we achieved plans laid out in the UAE Vision 2021 for the last 10 years. Today, the UAE is in leading rankings globally across 100 development indicators and regionally in 470 indicators. We usher into the next 50 years with high ambitions," Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid said.

Details by text

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 26, (KUNA): Kuwait will be rolling out booster shots of COVID-19 vaccines to three groups of the population as part of efforts aiming to provide maximum protection to more vulnerable people.

People aged over 60, healthcare workers and those with weakened immune systems will be the recipients of a third dose of a COVID vaccine at least six months after they had their second shot, said a health ministry statement, citing relevant data.

Those eligible for the booster will get their appointment details via text messages, the statement highlighted, adding that COVID booster shots will be made available to other groups shortly.

NewsWatch

BERLIN: Germany's center-left Social Democrats were locked in a very close race Sunday with outgoing German Chancellor Angela Merkel's center-right bloc, which is heading toward its worst-ever result in the country's parliamentary election, projections showed.

Top officials from both parties said they hope to lead Germany's next government and have their candidates succeed Merkel, who has been in power since 2005.

Projections for ARD public television, based on exit polls and early counting, put voters' support at 24.9% for the Social Democrats - which is putting forth outgoing Vice Chancellor Olaf Scholz for chancellor - and 24.7% for Merkel's Union bloc under would-be successor state governor Armin Laschet. (AP)

KUWAIT CITY: The current government will hold 3 regular meetings before announcing the Cabinet reshuffle, which is expected in less than a month to help it effectively participate in the opening session of the second term of the sixteenth legislative term on October 26, reports Al-Anba daily.

Sources told the daily, the HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled is will look into and complete several files during the next three meetings, which will be interspersed with field visits to various entities and move forward to the fifth stage.

KUWAIT CITY: The committee that has been set up to re-examine the types of subsidies has decided to raise the price of Ultra-98 octane gasoline by 5 fils per liter, reports Al-Anba daily quoting oil sources.

The daily added, from Oct 1, 2021, the price of one liter of Ultra-98 will be 180 fils instead of 175. The sources said the price of Gasoline 91 (Premium) and Gasoline 95 (Super) will remain the same 85 fils and 105 fils respectively.

JEDDAH: The Saudi-led coalition to support the legitimate Yemeni government said Saturday it shot down an explosive drone launched by the Houthi militia in Saudi Arabia's civilian-populated southern city of Najran.

The coalition described the foiled attempt as "deliberate" in a statement quoted by Saudi state news agency, SPA.

It comes after Houthi militants launched two drones targeting Saudi residential areas earlier in the day. (KUNA)

ABU DHABI: UAE announced on Sunday one COVID-19 death and 298 infections in the past 24 hours, with a total of 734,894 sickened, along with 360 fresh recoveries.

Total number of recoveries amounted to about 727,166 healed, as the death toll hit 2,090, UAE Ministry of Health and Protection revealed in a press statement. (KUNA)

JEDDAH: Saudi Arabia announced on Sunday five deaths and 44 infections of coronavirus (Covid-19).

The Saudi Ministry of Health stated in a statement that the total number of deaths rose up to 8,699, while overall infections went up to 546,926 cases.

Moreover, 58 people were cured of the virus in the past 24 hours, raising the number to 535,950 cured cases, according to the statement. (KUNA)



Shiite pilgrims march to the holy shrine of Imam Hussein for the Arbaeen ritual, outside Karbala, Iraq, Sunday, Sept. 26, 2021. The holiday marks the end of the forty-day mourning period after the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) grandson in the 7th century. (AP)

Bill seeks to recover stolen funds

Talks set new political foundation

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh, Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 26: A four-day conference titled, 'Partners in Reformation and Construction,' was launched Sunday at the National Assembly theater in the presence of the organizers - MPs Hassan Jawhar, Hamad Rouhaldeen, Muhammad Al-Sayer, Mehalhal Al-Mudaf, Abdullah Al-Mudaf and Bader Al-Mullah, in addition to representatives of public profit societies and students union, along with a number of public figures.

The conference aims to lay down the political foundation for achieving progress at different levels.

According to Al-Sayer, legislative reform is possible only in an environment that is suitable for enforcing laws; indicating there is no such environment at present. He disclosed the MPs decided to hold this conference due to the lack of initiative on the part of the government. He said the lawmakers will present programs and bills whose implementation necessitates the cooperation of the government. He added the country will soon celebrate the return of exiled citizens, emphasizing that he and his five colleagues support the Amiri initiatives regarding amnesty. He also stressed that political disputes usually disrupt the legislative process.

Jawhar confirmed the conference is a way of opening a new page with the government, clarifying that he and his five colleagues are not crises-makers. He said they will submit important bills on several issues like the economy, housing, freedom, Bedouns and amnesty.

Al-Mullah pointed out the conference includes the presentation of ways to develop non-oil sources of national income, adding the conference reflects public opinion.

MP Mehalhal Al-Mudaf stated that popular legislative demands are colliding with the attitude of the executive authority. He asserted the MPs have proven their willingness to cooperate with the government through the submission of several pro-reform bills in a bid to address a number of problems.

MP Abdullah Al-Mudaf said political reform is the main entrance towards the ratification of vital laws, affirming the ideas discussed in the conference will be turned into laws which meet the demands of citizens. Rouhaldeen underscored the need for

the coordinated efforts of the legislative and executive authorities in ratifying important laws. He said the issues included in the agenda of the conference are part of the tasks of the government, but the latter's lack of action has prompted the MPs to organize the conference.

Meanwhile, MP Abdulkareem Al-Kandari has submitted a bill on the establishment of an institution, which will be affiliated to the Ministry of Justice, to track and recover stolen or laundered public funds.

He proposed naming the institution as the 'Public Institution for Tracking and Recovery of Public Funds' to be headed by a judge; while the members shall include the director general of the Public Prosecution for Public Funds and representatives of the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), Legal Advice and Legislation Department, and State Audit Bureau (SAB).

The institution's tasks are: follow up verdicts issued by Kuwaiti and foreign courts regarding public fund cases, recover stolen money along with the interest and fines, coordinate with the concerned ministries in taking the necessary steps to track down those involved in stealing public funds who escaped and then bring them back to Kuwait through legal and diplomatic channels, and sign contracts with detective offices or companies to help in arresting the criminals inside or outside the country.

The Ministry of Justice will issue the organizing decree for the institution within six months after the ratification of this bill.

MP Ali Al-Qattan submitted a proposal to cancel the decisions and administrative decrees issued by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) on preventing public sector employees from continuing their studies while working. He suggested granting these employees 30 days unpaid leave without the need to get the approval of their workplaces to take the exams in or outside the country. He said these employees must submit documents proving their enrollment in institutes or universities and their exams schedule. He added the Ministry of Higher Education must accredit the academic certificates obtained by these employees provided they meet the academic accreditation and education quality criteria.

Kuwait Vision 2035 could attract 'FDI'

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 26: According to City Monitor website, Kuwait may not aspire to emulate the glitz of regional rivals, but through the plan of the New Kuwait 2035 Vision, it is hoping to compete in attracting Foreign Direct Investments (FDI), reports Al-Qabas daily.

The website explained that Kuwait has a long history of foreign investment, as the Kuwait Investment Authority was established in 1953. It is therefore the oldest sovereign wealth fund in the world and one of the largest, with assets worth \$700 billion.

Kuwait has developed the New Kuwait 2035 Vision to define its plans for diversifying its economy in order to reduce dependence on oil, and restore balance to the labor market with a shift towards the private sector. This is aimed at turning the country into a financial and commercial center that attracts investors.

Kuwait considers foreign direct investment as one of the pillars of its development vision, and it aims to increase its flows by 300 percent and raise \$1.3 billion annually.

On the contrary, the total foreign direct investment coming into the country before the COVID-19 pandemic witnessed a decline in relation to the gross domestic product during 2018 and 2019, reaching levels lower than what it was in the previous three years.

Foreign direct investment flows to Kuwait reached their historical peak in 2011 at \$3.26 billion, compared to only \$104 million in 2019. The country registered 695 new investment projects that year, compared to 1,051 projects that Bahrain, for example, attracted.

According to Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Agency (KDIPA), the value of the investment projects being implemented in the country is \$200 billion. They are distributed in the sectors of construction, energy, water, transportation, electricity, industrial and chemical projects, information and communication technology, biodiversity and pharmaceuticals.

The KDIPA spokesperson said Kuwait has specific features that make it a promising investment location for investors such as high per capita income, prudent monetary policy, sound banking system, strong stock market, and educated youth.