



PAM looking forward to resolving over-60s issue

Meeting set

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: A well-informed source in the Public Authority for Manpower revealed the authority is waiting for the scheduled meeting of the Minister of Justice, Counselor Jamal Al-Jalawi with the PAM Board of Directors to put at rest the issue of the non-graduate expatriates 60 years and above, which has been dragging on for several months, reports Al-Anba daily.

This is in addition to other issues that were raised earlier. The source added that one of the issues that the minister is expected to resolve is the issue of increasing the percentage of national labor in the private sector, expressing hope that the beginning of the new year will be the beginning of addressing everything that has been pending for many months.

News watch

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait Civil Service Commission announced Sunday evening that there is no decision on making Monday as an official holiday.

No decision has been made on suspending works at the government bodies and institutions tomorrow, the CSC said in a tweet. (KUNA)

BEIRUT: Bahrain appointed on Thursday its first ambassador to Syria in more than a decade, the island nation's state news agency reported, the latest sign of a stepped-up outreach to Damascus by Gulf Arab countries.

The decree by Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa came as more Arab countries are improving relations with Damascus nearly 11 years since the outbreak of Syria's civil war that has killed hundreds of thousands and destroyed large parts of the country.

Early in the conflict, Arab states like Saudi Arabia and Qatar rushed to back Sunni fighters battling President Bashar Assad's forces. Syria was expelled from the 22-member Arab League in 2011. Arab countries sanctioned Damascus and condemned its use of military force against civilians. (AP)

BAGHDAD: Chanting anti-American slogans, hundreds of people rallied in the Iraqi capital Saturday to mark the anniversary of the killing of a powerful Iranian general and a top Iraqi militia leader in a U.S. drone strike.

The crowd called for the expulsion of remaining American forces from Iraq during the demonstration commemorating the airstrike at Baghdad airport. The strike killed Gen. Qasim Soleimani, who was the head of Iran's elite Quds Force, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy commander of Iran-backed militias in Iraq known as the Popular Mobilization Forces.

"We will not let you stay after today on in the land of the martyrs," some of the placards read. American and Israeli flags were strewn on the ground, with people trampling on them. (AP)

TEHRAN: Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard and an armed criminal gang clashed on Saturday in a restive southeastern province, leaving three Guard members and "at least five bandits" dead, the state-run IRNA news agency reported.

The report said the fighting took place late Saturday evening in the district of Kourin, about 1,120 kilometers (700 miles) southeast of the capital, Tehran, and near the Pakistani border. It also said that at least five other bandits were wounded. There were no further details.

The area is in Sistan and Baluchistan province, has been the scene of occasional clashes between Iranian government forces and various militant groups. The province, bordering Pakistan and Afghanistan, is also where a Sunni separatist group affiliated with al-Qaeda and known as Jesh al-Adl, or Army of Justice, operates. (AP)

JERUSALEM: Egyptian officials Sunday pushed for Israel and Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip to rein in hostilities and adhere to a cease-fire in place since the war in May.

The Egyptian efforts came a day after Hamas militants launched rockets into the Mediterranean Sea off central Israel, prompting Israel to carry out airstrikes on militant positions in Gaza early Sunday. No casualties were reported.

The Israeli military said it struck "a rocket manufacturing site and military posts" belonging to Hamas in the Gaza Strip overnight in response to Saturday's rocket fire. (AP)

Rescues made in raging waters



A bus driver on one of the buses as it was submerged by the rain in Al-Gazali underpass. Inset: The driver being rescued by Kuwait National Guard personnel. Photos by Rizk Tawfik

Schools shut

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2, (KUNA): Kuwait Army firemen are partaking in efforts to re-open roads that have been swamped with torrential rain since Sunday's early hours.

The director of moral guidance at the chairmanship of staff, Colonel Mohammad Al-Awadhi, said in a statement that the army firemen have been pumping water from several public places and roads in the Governorate of Al-Farwaniya and locations opposite Al-Messilah bridge where traffic has been jammed due to the high levels of water.

Kuwait is currently witnessing sporadic heavy rainfalls, cloudy and windy weather.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Fire Forces said in a statement that its teams responded to 103 help calls and rescued up to 106 persons who were stranded amid raging waters on roads and some houses due to the downpour.

The KFF said it had received most of the calls from the Governorates of Hawally and Al-Farwaniya, urging people to abstain from emerging outdoors except for necessities.

Measures

Earlier today, the Ministry of Public Works (MPW) announced reopening several sites of rainwater collection after closing them down for precautionary measures, amongst such sites are the sixth ring road, Al-Ghazali and Al-Mangaf tunnels.

Ministry Spokesperson Abdullah Al-Ajmi stated to KUNA Sunday that the ministry's emergency teams are spread across the country to face and deal with troubles caused by the heavy rainfall.

He indicated that the teams are coordinating with other concerned ministries and authorities. Spokesperson Al-Ajmi also mentioned that the ministry previously distributed water pumps to areas where rainwater was expected to pool in order to avoid road closures.

He also urged road users to avoid being on the road while it is raining as it might cause water pooling and causing traffic jams indicating that they were currently working on a number of roads, and that he was currently on Sixth Ring Road to oversee process of clearing the road.

Kuwait will close schools and universities nationwide for a day due to unstable weather conditions, the country's education minister said on Sunday.

The day off does not include faculty and staff, who are still required to go to work on Monday, added the statement.

All final exams across middle school levels, in addition to grades 10 and 11 students, initially scheduled for Monday will now be held a day later, the education ministry said in a statement.

Unstable

The rearranged schedule comes as unstable weather conditions grip much of Kuwait, where heavy rainfall has triggered floods and disrupted traffic. Education Ministry Undersecretary Dr. Ali Al-Yaqoub told KUNA on Sunday.

He went on to urge strict compliance with exam-day health precautions aiming to halt the spread of COVID-19.

Kuwait's National Guard personnel are giving a hand in the efforts post the latest heavy rainfall that caused difficulties at some public locations and on the roads throughout the country.

Colonel Dr. Jedaan Fadhel, the Guard official spokesman, told KUNA on Sunday that the Guard personnel drained some swamped spots near Kuwait International Airport to facilitate traffic flow and simultaneously, other teams carried out an identical task in Sabah Al-Ahmad district.

Some of the Guard personnel are also helping to remove water accumulation on Al-Ghazali road, rescued an individual who was trapped in the deluge and eased the traffic movement.

Security of Kuwait key

CAIRO, Jan 2, (KUNA): Egypt is committed to preserving the security and stability of Kuwait, President AbdelFattah Al-Sisi said during talks with Kuwait's outgoing ambassador to Cairo Mohammad Al-Thuwaiikh, citing a desire for better bilateral ties.

Conveying his greetings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Al-Sisi attributed the perpetual development in Kuwait to the shrewdness of its political leaders, presidential spokesman Bassam Radhi said in a statement.

The Kuwaiti diplomat said he appreciated the hospitality and support he received in the Arab world's most populous nation, adding he worked tirelessly throughout his tenure towards improving bilateral relations.

He applauded Cairo's pivotal role and efforts to protect the security and stability of the wider Arab region, saying his talks with the Egyptian leader also touched on current developments around the world.

Also:

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait's Foreign Ministry on Sunday expressed in the strongest terms the State of Kuwait condemnation of the Houthis' continuing threats to security of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted in a statement that the latest of these ongoing threats was the targeting of southern Saudi Arabia with three drones.

These hostile actions and the escalation against civilians and civilian regions target not only security of Saudi Arabia but that of the whole region. These attacks constitute flagrant breach of the international laws.

The Kuwaiti ministry urged the international community to intervene in a rapid and decisive manner to deter these threats and bring the culprits to account.

It affirmed the State of Kuwait full standing alongside the kingdom, supporting the measures it may take to preserve its security, stability and sovereignty.

Cases rise in Kuwait

Delay in travel urged amid COVID-19 surge worldwide

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2, (Agencies): The Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry on Saturday asked Kuwaiti nationals wishing to travel abroad to postpone their plans due to growing numbers of Covid-19 infections worldwide.

In a press statement, the ministry said that the surge in virus cases leads to a high risk of infection and forces countries to change health guidelines and measures to fight this increase, including looming lockdown and flight delay or cancellation, thus making it difficult for people to travel.

Kuwait on Sunday said 609 more people tested positive for COVID-19 over the past 24 hours, taking the country's caseload to 418,332, health ministry data showed.

Some 114 more people recovered from the virus to up the number of those to have overcome the disease to 411,902, according to ministry spokesman Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad, adding that the recovery to positive case ratio stands at 98.5 percent.

The death toll from the pandemic remained unchanged at 2,468, while 27 people are hospitalized with the virus, five of whom need intensive care, he told KUNA.

Some 18,767 swab tests were conducted over the last day, out of a total of 6,002,841 so far, added the spokesman.

Vaccination against the coronavirus on Jaber Bridge medical center was halted on Sunday due to stormy and rainy weather, the Ministry of Health declared in a statement.

The immunization was stopped out of keeness on peoples' safety, the MoH said alluding to the stormy weather, distinguished with torrential rain and roaring gale winds.

The makeshift center, established on the bridge, started on December 26, providing the booster shot against COVID-19 without an advance appointment from 10 a.m. until 10 p.m. every day except for Saturdays.

Jaber Bridge, one of Kuwait's lately constructed iconic sites, stretches for many nauti-

cal miles across Kuwait Bay. Kuwait Consulate in Jeddah on Sunday advised its nationals living in the western region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to stick to the health protocols and precautions outlined by the Saudi authorities for their safety.

The consulate called on its nationals who might need help to contact it at any time around the clock via the phone No.: 00966535571133

Kuwait Embassy in Britain calls citizens to postpone travel due to increase of Omicron cases. Kuwait Embassy to the United Kingdom on Sunday called on citizens to stick with Foreign Ministry's recommendations to postpone coming to the UK due to mounting Omicron cases.

In a statement, the embassy advised Kuwaiti citizens in the UK to return home as a result of strong acceleration of Omicron cases' spread daily, which may lead to partial or total lockdown.

The embassy urged the citizens that in case of sudden emergency never hesitate to call the hot line 02075902400.

The U.K. government has been making contingency plans in case hospitals, schools and other workplaces are hit by major staff shortages amid the country's record-breaking spike in coronavirus infections.

Public sector workplaces have been preparing for staff absences ranging from 10% to 25% as COVID-19 sickens more people or forces them to isolate, the Cabinet Office said.

The highly transmissible omicron variant has caused Britain's daily new caseload to soar over Christmas and the New Year, with a new daily high of 189,000 on Dec. 31. About 1 in 25 people in England - or about 2 million people - had COVID-19 in the week before Christmas, the Office of National Statistics estimated. In London, the figure was 1 in 15.

Cabinet Office Minister Stephen Barclay said there had already been "significant" absences and the government was preparing for "every eventuality".

Agenda set for session

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim has invited the MPs and government to the ordinary parliamentary session scheduled for Tuesday.

The agenda of the session consists of the following:

■ Oath taking of new ministers, except the MPs who were appointed as ministers;

■ Grilling motions against His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid and some ministers. Article 142 of the National Assembly Decree states that grilling motions are cancelled once the government resigns.

■ Presentation of the agenda of the new government;

■ Second reading of the bills on amending Audio-Visual Media Law number 61/ 2007, as well as Publishing and Printing Law number 3/ 2006. Both bills were approved in the first reading on March 31, 2021;

■ Bill on amending Boycotting Israel Law number 21/ 1964;

■ Bill on prohibiting any deal with Israel and subsidiary organizations;

■ Bill on amending Penal Code number 17/1960;

■ Bill on amending Civil Service Law number 16/1979, particularly the articles on appointment to public sector jobs;

■ Report of the Business Environment Improvement Committee on the proposed amendment of law number 98/ 2013 about the establishment of National Fund for Developing Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs);

■ Report of the Interior and Defense Affairs Committee on the proposal to amend law number 42/ 2006 about specifying the constituencies;

■ Report of the Budgets and Final Accounts Committee on the final accounts of several public institutions for fiscals 2018/2019 and 2019 / 2020;

■ Proposal to form fact-finding committees that will investigate real estate fraud and suspicious transfer of large amounts to the accounts of some MPs and senior officials;

■ Reports of the State Audit Bureau (SAB) on the expenses during the Covid-19 crisis and Euro fighter aircraft deal.

In another development, MP Mubarak Al-Ajmi said former Public Works Minister Rana Al-Fares is responsible for the condition of the roads after the heavy rainfall on Sunday. He pointed out that Al-Fares was given a chance to carry out comprehensive road maintenance works during the Corona crisis, but she did not do so.

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Fireworks explode at the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, during the New Year's Eve celebration in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Saturday, Jan. 1, 2022. (AP)