

LOCAL

MoH unveils plan to open 50 clinics for quitting smoking – Dr Al-Shatti

'Increasing prices of tobacco products vital'



A photo from the honoring of IDF by the Indian Embassy.

Indian Embassy felicitates IDF Covid-19 warriors

KUWAIT CITY, April 18: The Embassy of India in Kuwait, in association with the Indian Professionals Network (IPN) Kuwait felicitated the Indian Doctors Forum (IDF) Kuwait – a group of Indian doctors who partnered with the embassy in offering free medical tele-consultations to Indians in Kuwait during the peak period of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

The event was held under the title 'Felicitation of Indian Doctors: Covid-19 Warriors' in a largely virtual event on April 17, 2021.

Speaking on the occasion, the Ambassador of India to Kuwait H.E. Sibi George said the event was a really special event as it was to felicitate and honor the Covid-19 warriors, especially the doctors who wholeheartedly served the Indian community during the hour of crisis, going beyond their call of duty.

Referring to the doctors as an embodiment of the indomitable human spirit, ambassador stated that felicitation was just a small gesture from the part of the embassy to express heartfelt gratitude.

The Indian envoy also highlighted that the event was also a brainstorming session on what the embassy, in association with the community could do together to help the community to face the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The ambassador announced the IDF has once again volunteered to provide free medical advice and counseling support via tele-consultations to the Indians living and working in Kuwait. He con-

firmed a new panel of Indian doctors from different specialties has been specifically formed for this purpose.

Further details related to the tele-consultation are expected to be released by the embassy in due course, including general instructions for tele-consultations, timings for these consultations, contact details of panel doctors, Indian languages spoken by the panel doctors and so on. The ambassador encourages the Indians in Kuwait to avail of this facility.

Dr. Amir Ahmed, President of the Indian Doctors Forum, also addressed the audience on this occasion and shed light on the activities of the IDF and how and to what extent the IDF has been serving the Indian community.

The felicitation ceremony was followed by a brainstorming session through which expert insights were drawn from the experiences of medical experts in tackling the current Covid-19 situation and associated repercussions including on mental health.

Medical experts rendered practical suggestions and sound medical advice on how to, individually and/or collectively, effectively deal and fight this pandemic in the coming days. During the course of the event, an on-the-spot quiz competition focusing on Covid-19 was conducted for young student participants.

The event generated a tremendous response with hundreds of people from different walks of life in Kuwait participating virtually.

"We at the embassy will do everything we can to help support the community in this crisis period. Despite all the challenges we continue our consular services. We had a few cases of infections in the embassy, we managed it pretty well, we tested them multiple times, we treated them, we home quarantined them, we did contact tracing, but we made it a point that our consular services and community welfare efforts continue.

"It makes each of my officers and staff in the consular and community welfare wings and every member of the mission a Covid-19 warrior. I thank ICSG for the proactive role they continue to play with our many Indian associations and groups to ensure that no one goes hungry.

"I thank the Indian Doctors' Forum, its President Dr. Amir Ahmed, its immediate past President Dr. Surinder Nayak, who was the president when the tele-consultation group was formed, former presidents, office bearers and senior doctors who joined the event.

"I thank IDF for its humanitarian efforts and its many endeavors in supporting the Indian community, including its efforts to fight the pandemic," the Indian envoy said.

The event provided a unique opportunity for participants to learn about strategies on effective Covid-19 handling coming directly from the medical community.

For more details about the event, please visit the website and social media handles of the embassy.

KUWAIT CITY, April 18: Sabah Specialized Medical District Director and Vice-President of the National Program for Smoking Control Dr Ahmed Al-Shatti has unveiled the Ministry of Health's plan to open 50 clinics for quitting smoking in primary health care centers and hospitals in the next five years -- 10 clinics annually, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Speaking to the daily, Al-Shatti disclosed the country spends about KD 419 million annually due to the direct and indirect effects of smoking -- a huge burden on the State budget. He stressed the importance of increasing the prices of tobacco products through the implementation of selective tax as soon as possible, indicating the rate of diseases caused by smoking in the country is very high. He added the imposition of tax on tobacco products in different countries has been proven to be effective in reducing the number of smokers.

He pointed out that the latest statistical reports on Kuwait, in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), showed that the percentage of adults who are smoking in the Kuwaiti society is 20.5 percent -- 39.2 percent of whom are males and 3.3 percent are females; while 15.4 percent of adolescents in the age group 13 to 15 years old are smoking -- 23.2 percent boys and 8.3 percent girls.

Common

He disclosed that smoking is most common among the age group of 30 to 40 years old, followed by the age group 18 to 29 years old.

He added the number of clinics dedicated for quitting smoking under the ministry currently stands at seven, emphasizing these clinics have strong infrastructure for helping people who want to quit smoking.

He affirmed the ministry recently launched an extensive media campaign on stopping the consumption of all types of tobacco under the slogan, "Commit to quitting tobacco consumption during the Covid-19 pandemic." He said this campaign targets all segments of society with the aim of educating them about the dangers of smoking.

He also revealed that around eight million people die annually due to smoking -- seven million due to direct smoking and one million due to passive smoking or forced smoking, asserting that eliminating smoking is the cornerstone of development in any country.

New schools project in Sabah Al-Nasser remain suspended

By Abdulrahman Al-Shimmari
Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 18: The Ministry of Education has listed several educational construction projects in Sabah Al-Nasser, which is one of the old areas and where the student population is dense.

The ministry says it has given this area priority in establishing new schools given the density of school-going children.

The projects that were included in the Education Ministry construction plan for the 2015/2016, 2019/2020 included the construction of new schools in the Sabah Al-Nasser, and the establishment of two middle schools for boys and girls was offered in one tender and the ministry is still awaiting approval from the Audit Bureau to start implementation of the project, and that the procedures for floating a tender for the establishment of a primary school for boys have been completed.

The ministry also included in its construction plan for 2020/2021 and 2024/2025 the establishment of two Kindergartens in the Sabah Al-Nasser.

However, the new Municipality's requirements related to car parking inside has led to insufficient spaces available for pre-prepared models so they have to be re-designed accordingly proportional to the designated land area.

However, a new tender has to be floated through the Central Agency for Public Tenders, but all this is subject to the availability of budgets.



HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad.



National Assembly Speaker Al-Ghanim.

KUNA photos

Audiences of HH the Amir

His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, received at Bayan Palace this morning, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir also received, at Bayan Palace, Speaker of the National Assembly, Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanim.

His Highness also received at Bayan Palace His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Integrity Promotion Affairs Abdullah Yusef Al-Roumi. (KUNA)

Amir congratulates president of Zimbabwe on National Day

KUWAIT CITY, April 18, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to President of Zimbabwe Emmerson Mnangagwa on the occasion of his country's National Day, wishing him good health and for the Republic further

progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to President Mnangagwa.

'Six teams work round the clock'

Co-ops being continuously 'monitored' in holy month

KUWAIT CITY, April 18: The Assistant Undersecretary for Cooperative Society Affairs at the Ministry of Social Affairs Salem Al-Rashidi says the mechanism adopted to follow up the activities of cooperative societies during the month of Ramadan intensely monitors the purchasing policy, so that there is no pile up of goods in the market, and to ensure all commodities are provided as much as possible to the public, reports Al-Anba daily.

In an exclusive press statement, he indicated that there are six inspection teams -- one in each governorate -- that work round the clock and continuously conduct inspection campaigns.

Meanwhile, Al-Rashidi explained that the vaccination campaign in the cooperative societies has started, and some supermarkets have started receiving the auditoriums designated for that purpose.

The Mishref Cooperative Society was the first to vaccinate its employees

at the Mishref Auditorium, followed by Khaldiya Cooperative Society, Rawda and Hawally Cooperative Society will be allocated as the Capital Governorate's auditorium as well as Riqqa Cooperative Society.

The rest of the cooperative societies will be allocated auditoriums soon in order to carry out the vaccination campaign.

Regarding the initiative of some cooperative societies to distribute more than one Ramadan basket to the shareholders, Al-Rashidi affirmed that the distribution of the baskets, either Ramadan or others, is based on the financial ability of the cooperative societies in this regard.

He stressed that the cooperative societies have the right to distribute such baskets if it has financial capability to do so, and the ministry does not interfere in that, adding that the cooperative law allows this through a budget approved by the general assembly.

Experts mission concludes

'IMF experts praise efforts of CBK in enhancing banking, financial sector'

KUWAIT CITY, April 18: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the conclusion of the mission of experts from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which carried out their work online from April 4-8 within the framework of the preliminary periodic consultations for the year 2021 in accordance with Article Four of the agreement on establishing the fund.

The Central Bank issued a press statement in which it revealed that it coordinated with the IMF and the concerned local authorities in making the necessary arrangements; such as collecting data and scheduling meetings with senior officials in governmental and non-governmental agencies to discuss the economic conditions, financial policy, monetary policy, and strength of the banking and financial sector.

The IMF experts praised the efforts of CBK in strengthening the banking and financial sector. Governor of the Central Bank Dr Muhammad Al-Hashel disclosed the IMF experts commended CBK for its continuous monitoring of credit risks, as well as fortifying the regulatory and supervisory frameworks aimed at ensuring financial stability.

The IMF experts pointed out that even if the Kuwaiti banking sector experienced shocks in 2020, it remains resilient and enjoys a good level of capitalization and liquidity; thanks to the prudent supervisory role of CBK.

The CBK governor revealed the IMF experts highlighted the nature of the structural challenges the Kuwaiti economy is facing and ways to address

them, while noting the Kuwaiti authorities' rapid and decisive action to address the health and economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic despite the grave challenges posed by the pandemic.

Like other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, Kuwait suffered from the repercussions of the pandemic; in addition to the oil price decline and reduction of oil production under the OPEC Plus Agreement which imposed heavy burdens on economic activity and financial balances in 2020.

Commenting on the economic performance in 2020, the IMF experts said the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Kuwait shrank by about eight percent (six percent for non-oil sectors) last year; while the overall budget balance decreased remarkably compared to the previous year.

The IMF experts expect gradual recovery in 2021 considering the revival of domestic and external demands as vaccination operations continue. Nevertheless, they pointed out that a great deal of uncertainty surrounds such expectations for various reasons; including the continuation of the pandemic, and global and local measures to curb the spread of the virus.

In conclusion, the IMF experts emphasized the importance of continuing to prioritize the fight against corona and mitigate its effects, especially on the most vulnerable groups, until the recovery is stabilized on a steady path; followed by the need to control public finances and implement strong structural reforms to maintain fiscal buffers and enhance economic growth.

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