



Photo shows Hajj pilgrims in Makkah

Local Spotlight

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TOPNOTCH SERVICES FOR KUWAIT PILGRIMS

AWQAF GRANTS KD 200,000 TO ILLEGAL RESIDENTS

JEDDAH: Kuwait's Hajj mission is fully prepared to provide topnotch medical services to its pilgrims, said a Kuwaiti official yesterday. The delegation's team is currently distributing medicine and equipment to Kuwaiti Hajj groups in Makkah, head of the Kuwaiti delegation's medical services Mubarak Al-Ajmi said yesterday. Al-Ajmi, meanwhile, called on Kuwaiti missions to follow Saudi Arabia's health regulations for the safety of pilgrims.

On his part, head of Kuwait's Hajj delegation Khulaif Al-Othaina affirmed that Kuwaiti Hajj groups are strictly following the rules and regulations of the Hajj and Omra law. The delegation is well concerned about the wellbeing of Kuwaiti pilgrims and it will exert all efforts to meet their needs, said Al-Othaina in a press statement

during his tour among Kuwaiti Hajj groups. He called on the group to abide by Saudi laws regarding Hajj to ensure a safe and trouble-free trip for the pilgrims.

Meanwhile, Awqaf General Secretariat announced yesterday that it granted KD 200,000 (\$600,000) to illegal residents planning to perform the hajj, said the Acting Deputy General Secretary Musaed Al-Rakhis. The sum, which was delivered to the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, would be given for pilgrimage expeditions to help this segment of the faithful cope with the hajj expenses, he said in a statement.

The secretariat, in the past, donated KD 100,000 (\$300,000) to this segment of the society to cover DNA print costs. Up to 9,580 had benefited from this financial aid.

It has also aided students of limited income families to pay school fees, he said, indicating that illegal residents received some of this assistance too. Al-Rakhis urged citizens willing to contribute to the donation to contact the secretariat. Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, Mohammad Al-Jabri, has recently declared that the secretariat and Al-Zakat House together earmarked KD 300,000 (some USD 900,000) to pilgrims from the illegal residents' community.

No health threat

Iranian pilgrims in Makkah in Saudi Arabia are all right and not facing any health threat during this year's hajj season, an Iranian medical official said. The health conditions of Iranian pilgrims are very appropriate, and there is not any health problem whatsoever, the official said in a press release yesterday. However, five Iranian pilgrims have died due to heart attack in Makkah so far, he said, noting that 48 Iranian pilgrims are now at hospital for medical treatment. The number of Iranian pilgrims has notably dropped this year, compared with previous years. A total 86,500 Iranian pilgrims are expected to attend Hajj this year.

Pilgrims increase

The number of Hajj pilgrims increased in the last four decades due to the continuous expansions in ritualistic sites and multifaceted services in Makkah and elsewhere, said a Saudi ministerial report. According to a report by the Saudi Ministry of Information and Culture, the main reason for this increase was due to the develop-



Acting Deputy General Secretary of Awqaf General Secretariat Musaed Al-Rakhis

ment of infrastructure and vital services, noting that the number of pilgrims within the past 48 years have increased from around half a million annually to around three million pilgrims.

Providing his input on the report, head of operations at the ministry Abdulhaleq Al-Zahrani said that development projects in Makkah, Al-Madina, and other regions have considerably increased number of pilgrims both from abroad and within Saudi Arabia. The new train project linking Makkah, Al-Madina, and Jeddah will help ease transportation for Hajj pilgrims, said Al-Zahrani, adding that the expansion projects in the Haram (holy sanctuary) in Makkah and other sites have helped to protect the well-being of Hajj pilgrims and enabled them to perform rituals more smoothly. — Agencies



Head of Kuwait's Hajj delegation Khulaif Al-Othaina seen during his tour with Kuwaiti Hajj groups. — KUNA photos



KUWAITI BANKS SET UP 62 BRANCHES TO HELP PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti banks have set up 62 branches to serve people with special needs since the beginning of 2017, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK). In a statement published yesterday, CBK noted that it is monitoring the commitment of banks in terms and procedures issued by CBK itself on providing services to people with special needs. CBK's procedures state that each bank must set a branch for disabled people in each governorate, while also providing special ATM machines equipped with voice service system and a braille keyboard for blind people, it added. Moreover, banks are required to train their employees on sign language to deal with this category of society, provide electronic fingerprint and print their clients' account statement using braille method, CBK said. — KUNA



In the past, Kuwait had an exceptional role and distinguished status with regards to freedom of expression, expats, fighting corruption, a strong parliament, key public figures and an influential press that defended the rights and freedoms of citizens and Arab causes and conflicts in general. Today, after half a century, some of us are wondering whether we are still holding the same position in front of the world, and what have we lost in the past 30 years. What has happened to us?

Mistakes happen, and this is normal for any government, but correcting them sometimes is hard, if not impossible. For example, the government committed a vital mistake in recent years when it granted citizenship to persons who don't deserve it, while many bedoons and Arabs sacrificed their lives in old Arab wars or for the liberation of Kuwait, but did not receive the same privilege. This is not something minor, because social injustice leads to negative feelings of insecurity and a lack of sense of belonging and loyalty. It could badly affect the society in the long term.

The demographic imbalance and granting of citizenship to non-eligible people have inserted people and families from other countries with different cultural and intellectual backgrounds as well as customs and traditions in the Kuwaiti environment. Now the government is trying to face this issue, but it seems to be out of control, because the key people who were involved in this issue have died and their children are innocent, as they have constitutional rights that can't be ignored. So we have to bear the consequences of this illegal act as a community and society.

The other thing here is that many Kuwaiti citizens have allowed the spread of corruption at all levels. I know that many accuse the government of waste and corruption as well as appointment of expatriates without restriction, but who allowed all this chaos? The citizen - who should be a good model for his community and in front of expats.

I have a good example. When a citizen hands a luxury car to his Asian driver, he tells him if he has a problem or an accident on the road, he must contact his Kuwaiti sponsor at once. Not for legal actions, but to find wasta to bear the least cost of getting him out for free and possibly let others take the blame. If this is not corruption, I have no other title for it. This citizen is encouraging corruption and creating an idea in the mind of his Asian driver to not worry about the police and punishment because the Kuwaiti will always back him up. Eventually, this driver will not respect traffic laws or anyone because he has the Kuwaiti's wasta...

The same applies when we bring expatriates to Kuwait on work contracts and good promises of a life like in heaven, and then do not fulfill our promises and agreements or try to circumvent them because corruption allows us to do so. They naturally will start complaining and may turn into corrupt people themselves, exploit the law or even threaten to sue us in courts.

Another issue that affects the society and people is related to the imprisonment of young people who express their views on social media according to what they see is a matter of freedom of expression in accordance with the law and the constitution granted to them as Kuwaiti citizens. But they end up in prison for many years as murderers and drug dealers. We end up losing a young soul without benefiting anyone or the society. How about teaching these kids some responsibility away from prison? How about creating social and community service?

Therefore, what some say about protecting the society should not only be words, but actually visible to the public. Things may seem small and ineffectual, but for a small society, it is important. We have a constitution that was written by thinkers, patriots and preachers who preceded us in thoughts and time. We were given the opportunity to preserve it and to affirm its rules through modern laws that strengthen the status of our country and citizens and maintain the dignity of expatriates, so everyone will be equal before the law and offer no protection for corruption.

Citizens are best ambassadors of their countries. But when we travel, we don't abide by the laws of host countries, do not respect other Arab visitors and assume we have the right to insult others and break the laws because we have an embassy that should rush to rescue us. We are only insulting our country and ourselves. A country is not about new buildings, restaurants and malls. It is about ethics, values, good education and enforcement of laws. A sustainable country should preserve the past and consider about the future in order to maintain the rights and dignity of all.



KUWAIT: Hawally Municipality inspectors recently conducted a wide scale inspection operation on various restaurants and stores. Kuwait Municipality Services Follow-Up and Auditing Director Faleh Al-Otaibi said that the campaign resulted in filing 102 citations and destroying 24 kilograms of expired foodstuff items.