

Local

Heavy dust storm hits Kuwait; schools, air traffic not affected

Low horizontal visibility dropped to 1,000 meters in some areas



KUWAIT: Several photos taken from different areas around Kuwait, showing the effect of a heavy dust storm that hit the country yesterday. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat, Joseph Shagra and Fouad Al-Shalkh



KUWAIT: Kuwait was affected by a heavy dust storm yesterday caused by strong south and northwestern winds with speeds ranging between 20 and 55 kilometers per hour, lead meteorologist at the Directorate General of Civil Aviation's (DGCA) Meteorological Department Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi said. The dust storm caused low horizontal visibility reaching 1,000 meters in some areas.

Air traffic at Kuwait International Airport was normal despite the dust storm, as flights to and from the airport were not affected, Assistant Director of DGCA Khaled Al-Shuaibi said. He pointed out that visibility level permitted takeoffs and landings in compliance with the airport standards.

Meanwhile, schools continued to operate while only students and schools staff with medical conditions exempted from completing the day, said an official at the Ministry of Education. Education Ministry's

Undersecretary Dr Haitham Al-Athari said that outdoor activities at schools were suspended.

"Though the country is experiencing a dust storm, the current weather condition did not necessitate schools' closure," said the official, adding that schools headmasters and educational areas throughout the country have the authority to assess the situation and take a decision to end the school day if necessary.

In the meantime, the Interior Ministry advised road users to take extra precaution during the dust storm. The ministry's public relations department said that low visibility might result in

traffic accidents, indicating that drivers should take care and help protect themselves and others while on the road. Furthermore, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFS) warned against the unstable weather conditions in the country, urging sea-goers and desert campers to take extra precaution. —KUNA

Road users advised to take extra precaution



Kuwaiti pharmacists needed to run 73 co-op drugstores

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Head of Kuwait Pharmacists Society (KPS) Waleed Al-Shemmari announced that 70 Kuwaiti pharmacists were needed to run 73 drugstores in various co-operative societies. Speaking at a seminar organized by KPS to discuss the developments of law number 30/2016, Shemmari stressed the significance of the law in investing in co-op pharmacies and mandating various co-ops to restrict such investments to Kuwaitis. He added that the law also mandates exempted pharmacies to hire at least 3 percent citizens. MPs Saleh Ashour and Osama Al-Shaheen attended the seminar, in addition to former MP and former minister Ahmed Baqer and a number of pharmacists working in the public and the private sector.

Ashour called for combining efforts to implement the law and set strict penalties for violating it. He also urged the health and labor ministers to put the law into practice, as dozens of pharmacists are waiting for real job opportunities. He urged fellow lawmakers to amend the law and not give in to the demands of influential companies.

Shaheen stressed that calls to amend the law were initial attempts. He added that thanks to KPS, the law has topped the parliamentary health affairs committee's priorities. "Each pharmacy's licensee should be Kuwaiti and every pharmacy should hire a Kuwaiti pharmacist," he underlined, noting that the situation was dangerous and needs a serious stance.

Baqer said various five-year development plans had failed because laws were not enforced. "I witnessed the five-year plans during my governmental and parliamentary career calling on citizens to join the private sector. They all failed," he underlined, noting that recent statistics showed that 2.4 million licenses had been issued, with only 4.3 percent of them for Kuwaitis.

KPS Secretary General Ali Hadi stressed that the number of Kuwaiti pharmacists had grown remarkably in recent years to reach 1,066, compared to only 53 in 1966. KPS Treasurer Ahmed Shasuddin said that the law aims at regulating licensing new pharmacies to protect the profession and encourage Kuwaiti pharmacists. Finally, Mof's official spokesperson Dr Ahmed Al-Shatti promised to brief Sheikh Basel about the topics discussed in the symposium so that he could make proper decisions concerning the law.

Meetings

Meanwhile, Health Minister Sheikh Dr Bassel Al-Sabah allocated Mondays for his undersecretary and assistant undersecretaries to receive citizens' suggestions and complaints, and Tuesdays for health zone directors to do the same from 9:00 am till 1:00 pm. Sheikh Dr Bassel explained that this decision was made to avoid centralization in decision making.

Education ministry told to terminate expats by July

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has given the Ministry of Education (MoE) until the beginning of July to terminate the contracts of non-Kuwaiti employees included in the 2018-2019 replacement plan, noting that it would cancel their payrolls in the next financial year's budget.

Expenses cuts

In its recent meeting, the Cabinet stressed that ministers should take all needed measures to activate rationalization plans and cut expenses. The resolution limited ministries' maximum spending over the next three years to KD 20 billion in the fiscal years 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, and KD 21 billion for the fiscal year 2020-2021. The Cabinet also listened to detailed explanations presented by the finance minister and his undersecretary on assess-

ing revenues and expenses as well as the measures to be followed to cut expenses.

Roads authority

Meanwhile, the road and land transport authority is waiting for CSC's approval of its new functional structure, well informed sources said. CSC is currently studying all legal and technical aspects so that the new structure can match the authority's nature of work in the coming period. The authority is expected to have 1,700 employees, the sources added.

Fourth Ring Road

Separately, Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Hossam Al-Roumi said the roads and land transport authority has prioritized improving all road networks and infrastructure, including the Fourth Ring Road (Hussein bin Ali Al-Roumi Road) with the aim of increasing their capacity, reduce traffic accidents, improve safety and security, public transport efficiency and environmental quality, besides solving the current traffic congestion problem.

Roumi added that the 17-km long project was offered for international consultancy bureaus to study, design and supervise its construction and maintenance. Roumi said the latest traffic models at Kuwait Municipality were taken into consideration and that all offers made were studied and an

international consultant won the tender. He also expected the project to commence in 2020 to be concluded within 24 months.

Roumi said that the Ministry of Public Works had considered developing the Fourth Ring Road into a motorway with a 120 kph speed limit in 2005, but this was rejected by the municipality because of a lack of space and the many entrances and exits to various areas surrounding it. He added that a further meeting held in 2009 ended by adapting the development plan to change the road into an 'arterial urban highway' with an 80 kph speed limit.

Israel's boycott

Kuwait Customs Director Jamal Al-Jallawi said the customs directorate is an official government body concerned with implementing law number 21/1994 pertaining boycotting Israel. Jallawi added that the directorate and all its departments, including the Israel Boycott Bureau, are fully active in monitoring all Israeli products, those of Israeli origin or those carrying Israeli flags, and banning their import in all GCC states. Separately, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Development Hind Al-Sabeeh stressed that implementing national legislations against the Zionist occupation of the Palestinian territories was one of MSAL's priorities, and stressed that MSAL has full control over various co-ops, clubs and NGOs as per article number 6 of law 24/1962 and law number 21/1964 pertaining boycotting Israel.

Stereotype linking Kuwait charity to terrorism void: Official

KUWAIT: Stereotypes linking Kuwait's charity works with terrorism no longer exist in shadow of tight regulations and planned new legislations, according to senior officials. Banal claim about involvement of the Kuwaiti philanthropic work as to supporting or funding terrorism is no longer attestable, stated Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq, Chairman of the International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO). Dr Maatouq was speaking during a ceremony with Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh, inking an agreement between her department and the association for training volunteers and personnel in welfare societies, called "Tamkeen."

"Good intentions are not sufficient to safeguard charitable work thus regulating laws have been enacted to place terms and restrictions," Dr Maatouq said, as Minister Sabeeh disclosed that a bill regulating the sector further had reached the National Assembly, noting that representatives of charities and welfare societies would be invited to the parliament headquarters to closely partake in examining the draft law. The law regulating charitable activities has been enacted, upon an initiative by the philanthropic associations, with intention "of sparing ourselves international problems," Minister Sabeeh said.



KUWAIT: Chairman of the IICO Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq (center right) and Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh (center left) pose for a picture after signing the agreement yesterday. —KUNA

The legislation was amended and the modified copy had reached the parliament. This modified law has special merits, the minister said, revealing that representatives of the associations would be called to the parliament to take part in deliberating the document. Charitable work in Kuwait has developed in recent

years due to good regulations and organization, she re-stressed. In turn, Dr Maatouq praised the minister for shouldering the responsibility of developing and protecting the charitable actions through the enactment of a new law designed to preserve workers' rights and the sector image. —KUNA