

Local

Merkel visits Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad School in Lebanon

Schools provide education hundreds of Syrian refugee students

BEIRUT: Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel paid a visit to Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah School in Ras Beirut neighborhood yesterday and observed Syrian refugee students' involvement in classrooms and sport activities. During her visit, Merkel toured the school facilities, viewed the education methods applied in some grade levels such as kindergarten and the fifth grade, spoke with students, in English, about their situations and needs, and took part in lecturing physics class students. Lebanese Education Minister Marwan Hamadeh, who accompanied Merkel on her visit to the school, said,

The German Chancellor also visited the school's sports arena, where she joined Lebanese and Syrian refugee students in some exercises and trainings. Hamadeh added, noting she presented them with a number of officially certified soccer balls and German national team's jerseys.

She also gathered with some local and refugee families, on one side of the school's soccer field, and spoke with them about their issues, he said, adding Merkel stressed the importance of maintaining a good relationship between citizens and refugees. Merkel expressed her admiration for the school's administration, education staff, students, and learning process, the Lebanese minister said, adding she also lauded the close cooperation



Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel poses with officials during the visit.



BEIRUT: Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel is seen during her visit to Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah School in Ras Beirut neighborhood. — KUNA

between students, teachers, and administrators.

Furthermore, Hamadeh told Merkel about the ministry's plan to observe the education of Lebanese and refugee students via (RACE) project, to be launched in cooperation with UN international agencies and bodies, particularly UNICEF, and with the financial backup of Germany and the international group. He also handed the German Chancellor a detailed report on the accommodation capacity in Lebanese state schools, which highlighted the government's need of financial support to

accommodate more refugee students.

Moreover, Hamadeh explained to Merkel his ministry's plan to employ new refugee teachers in the country's schools, reiterating the ministry's need for financial aid to enable it to bear the burden of educating children and minors without any discrimination. "Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah School is considered as the 'pearl' of Lebanon's education," he said, expressing his appreciation to Kuwait's contribution to boosting education in his country.

"The school is also a source of pride for the Lebanese people; therefore, we strive to hoist Kuwait's name higher through providing the best educational methods and applications for students," affirmed the Lebanese senior official. Meanwhile, Ghadah Azar, Director of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah School, said that the school has been at the forefront of Lebanese state schools, and became a hotspot for officials and visitors. Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah School has working hours in the morning, during which it receives 250

refugee students, and in the evening, receiving 625 refugee students, noted Azar.

In the last few years, the Lebanese education ministry has named several schools in Beirut under Kuwait, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. It has also named some schools after late Amirs Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Motorist killed after vehicle set ablaze following accident

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti man died after his vehicle was set ablaze following a road accident reported at the Third Ring Road Friday night. Three others suffered minor injuries in the accident as well, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) said in a statement. Firemen rushed to the scene as soon as the accident was reported, and they put out the blaze before retrieving the victim's body from inside of his wrecked vehicle. A case was filed to investigate the causes of the accident.



KUWAIT: A vehicle heavily damaged by a fire following an accident reported on the Third Ring Road Friday night.



The inside of the car completely damaged by the fire.

100 firefighters

Meanwhile, a huge fire broke out in a waste dumpster along Wafra highway and near Abdullah Port yesterday, said security sources. Nearly one hundred firefighters from six fire stations (Abdullah Port, Um Al-Haiman, Sabhan, the backup center, Ardhiya and Kuwait City) were dispatched to the scene to control the fire that reached various spots because of the wind speed, the sources noted. Kuwait Municipality were also used to carry sand necessary to put out the fire. No casualties were reported.



Firefighters battle a blaze reported near Abdullah Port yesterday.

Drugs awareness

Chairperson of the National Campaign for Social Solidarity and Drug Awareness Ghanima Habib said she would hold a press conference on Tuesday to announce launching the activities of the national campaign organized by

the National Social Security Syndicate. The campaign is the first of its kind in Kuwait organized with the aim of boosting public awareness regarding the dangers of drugs, Habib explained. The campaign aims at creating purposeful media messages to the public about the importance of fighting

drugs through focusing on youth, she added. "Former health minister Dr Jamal Al-Harbi was selected as the campaign's honorary president," she underlined. Further, Habib said that the campaign would go on field tours in various malls and public facilities to hold a number of specialized workshops.

'Overcrowded' public schools can't absorb bedoon students: Minister

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Hamed Al-Azmi rejected a parliamentary proposal to register all the children of bedoons (stateless people) in public schools. Justifying his decision, Azmi stressed that ministry regulations only allow the registration of bedoon children of Kuwaiti women, the children and grandchildren of bedoon martyrs, the grandchildren of citizens, the children and grandchildren of some military personnel, the children of expatriate teachers and administrative staff members in public schools, public school social and psychological workers, lab technicians and librarians. "Bedoons not included have access to private schools at the expense of the charity fund," Azmi noted. Further, Azmi explained that public school classes were already overcrowded, while the education ministry's policy was to reduce the number of students per class in order to provide the best learning environment.

Bedoon pilgrims

The supreme Hajj committee is set to meet today with the undersecretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Faeed Emadi to discuss this year's Hajj preparations, Head of Kuwait's Hajj Convoys Union Ahmsd Al-Dowaihi said. He added that pilgrims would be distributed to five convoys including 180 pilgrims in each convoy, in addition to 100 others who would be distributed with their next of kin in various convoys. He added that the maximum pilgrimage cot would be KD 1,300 per pilgrim for category C, adding that 1,000 bedoon pilgrims would be registered with priority given to the elderly and families. He added that registration was still open in various convoys.

Oil sector

Expatriates nominated to work in Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) are interviewed without being subjected to exams because all of them are well-expe-



Dr Hamed Al-Azmi

rienced, Oil Minister Bakheet Al-Rasheed explained. He also denied that KPC or any of its subsidiaries had published ads about vacancies in India. Furthermore, he stressed that article number 51 of the private sector law (law 6/2010) applies for non-Kuwaiti oil sector employees.

KPC and its subsidiaries have an annual plan to recruit both experienced and new graduated citizens, Rasheed further explained, adding that expats are only employed in positions where qualified Kuwaiti specialists are rare, whereas special training programs for national staff members are currently being prepared. "Kuwaitis currently make up 85 percent of oil sector employees, and this percentage is projected to increase to 89 percent after a number of expat employees at Ahmadi hospital are laid off," he underlined.

27 percent

Domestic helpers form 27 percent of the total manpower in Kuwait with 625,829 out of the total of 2,672,428, Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) statistics have shown. Furthermore, the statistics showed that Indians came first among the domestic helpers' community with 45.9 percent: 287,421 of whom (78.6 percent) are males. The statistics also showed that Filipinos came second with 22 percent, of whom 99 percent are women.

Bangladeshis came third with 12.9 percent of the total domestic helpers' population, of whom 98.8 are men. Sri Lankans came fourth with a total number of 60,930, of whom 7.7 percent are women. Nepalese only formed 2.6 percent of domestic helpers, and 90.3 of them are women. Meanwhile, Ethiopians came fifth with a total number of 167, 43, of whom 93.4 are women, while other African nationalities formed only 0.6 percent, whereas Indonesians formed 0.5 percent.

Foreign loans

MP Khalil Al-Saleh criticized the parliament's foreign affairs committee for rejecting a proposal he had submitted to impose some restrictions and regulations on the grants and loans given by Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development. "My proposal conditioned the parliament's approval to any grant or loan," he stressed. Kuwait usually offers loans to brotherly, friendly or developing countries with the aim of promoting its relations and cooperation with them and to improve Kuwait's image worldwide.

Most converts motivated by good treatment: IPC

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Most of those who convert to Islam in Kuwait were motivated by the outstanding ethics and good treatment they received from people living in the country, Islam Presentation Committee (IPC) General Manager Faeed Al-Awadhi stressed. He also noted that there are over three million expatriates in Kuwait belonging to various citizenships including Muslims and non-Muslims.

IPC's goal lies in presenting true Islam to non-Muslims and enhance the principle of fraternity and integration amongst Muslims, Awadhi added. "The great treatment they receive from Muslims in Kuwait made tens of thousands of people eager to learn more about Islam," he underlined.

Further, Awadhi urged citizens who have domestic helpers to play an effective role in this regard and treat their workers well as representatives of Muslims. He added that IPC had made remarkable achievements over the past few years, noting that its activities would continue after Ramadan to present Islam as a clement and moderate religion to non-Muslims.

Bachelors' housing

Municipal Council member Mohammed Al-Raqeeb recently expressed dissatisfaction with the efforts exerted by relevant bodies in various municipalities to fight the residence of bachelors in private residential areas. It is illegal in Kuwait to offer rooms or apartments for rent to single expatriate men in areas where government houses are built: areas officially classified as 'private residential areas'.

"Most private residential areas are now suffering from an increase in the presence of bachelors: a phenomena that has negative impacts on families living there," he added, noting that the phenomena has both security and social threats.

Further, Raqeeb mentioned Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Rabiya and Omariya as examples for areas that he believes had turned into "bachelors' cities in light of the lack of any action from relevant authorities to stop this problem." He held various governmental bodies responsible in delaying the construction of labor cities that can house bachelor workers. "Previous municipal councils have already allocated several locations to build those cities," he remarked, calling for law enforcement on violators in the form of disconnecting electricity supply to houses rented to bachelors in private residential areas.

local spotlight

Refugees Day



By Muna Al-Fuzal

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The world marked the International Day of Refugees on June 20. On that particular day, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reminds the world, especially leaders and decision makers, of two main things. The first is that there are millions of innocent people who were forced due to compelling circumstances to search for an alternative homeland and better future. This hope sometimes collapses because of unexpected difficulties and challenges. The second point is the need to provide support to refugees until the adoption of a global charter for refugees, which is due to be issued by this year.

The United Nations said that the number of refugees and displaced people in the world jumped to 68.5 million last year, marking a new rise for the fifth consecutive year. The number rose by 4.6 percent in 2017 compared to the previous year.

According to UNHCR, about 70 percent of the world's 68.5 million refugees have fled from only five countries: Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and Somalia. The commission's annual report says that the conflict in Syria had led to the displacement of more than 6.3 million people from their country by the end of 2017. Afghanistan ranked second in terms of the number of refugees last year. The report also highlighted large-scale displacements in Iraq, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and others. There is a need to analyze the report in a way that will provide solutions to the refugees and the host countries.

For example, Turkey ranks first among recipient countries of refugees with an absolute refugee population of 3.5 million refugees, mostly from Syria, while Lebanon receives the largest number of refugees when its small population, capacity and resources are put into consideration. The UNHCR believes that the time has come to bring the world's leaders to face the fact that the international community stands with the refugees.

I believe that the issue of refugees is a humanitarian subject that has turned to become an issue involving political considerations and sometimes extremism.

I think it is natural for every refugee family to dream about having a safe place to live, and that every refugee should receive decent work and be ensured that his children will receive adequate education and health care. The issue of integration into society is also important because it depends on the nature of the person and his ability and readiness to accept the new society, not just on paper; otherwise, he would feel alienation, loneliness and isolation which I think is harmful especially for children and young people. I think one of the key challenges that refugees face is learning a new foreign language for adults or those with limited culture and education back home, especially for those who do not know any language other than their mother tongue. This could present a problem in finding jobs, especially if the refugee is not sure that he or she will be allowed to stay in the new country where refugees might feel that they are outsiders or perhaps unwanted people at any time. I do not think the issue of refugees has been handled as one component that requires solutions.

Whether the agreement mentioned above is passed or not, I think the issue of refugees will remain one of the world's main concerns as long as wars, especially civil and sectarian conflicts, exist. If bloody conflicts end, it is natural that the numbers of war refugees will diminish.

There are many demands to discuss the issue of refugees from a realistic perspective, away from the considerations of security and politics. This is a humanitarian crisis that cannot afford the long wait and speculations, especially with regards to providing food and basic needs of families, as well as employment opportunities to ensure refugees' right to a decent and safe life.