

Local

Kuwait airport passenger capacity 'quietly' increased to 7,500 a day?

High demand on limited seats puts passengers, airlines in trouble

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The price of return tickets to Kuwait are incredibly high, not only because it's the high season, but mainly due to the limited seat quota set for most airlines, not including local carriers. Passengers are facing a tough situation after many had their tickets canceled although the flight was not, despite their tickets being confirmed months ago.

This situation is the result of the restricted number of arriving passengers set by the Cabinet last year. After the pandemic situation in Kuwait started to improve positively, more businesses reopened, and people expected the airport to be fully operational as well.

The ministerial committee for coronavirus emergencies is in charge of increasing the maximum number of passengers arriving at Kuwait airport. On Aug 4, the committee met and decided to increase the number of arriving passengers from 5,000 to 7,500 daily, starting from Aug 8, 2021. Travel agencies confirmed the quota was increased for most airlines, but some agencies told Kuwait Times they haven't noticed that this decision has been applied yet, as there is still a great shortage of tickets on

flights arriving to Kuwait.

Ahmad from Waseet Agency said the problem of ticket cancellations is only happening with one particular airline. "Most airlines are now flying fully booked or almost fully booked since last week. But we are facing a problem of cancellation with one airline - and I personally had three cases of cancellation this week. These passengers can file a complaint against this airline at the Directorate General for Civil Aviation (DGCA), which issued a statement in this regard last week," he told Kuwait Times.

The government is yet to make an official announcement to increase passenger capacity at Kuwait International Airport; which has been expected ever since Kuwait allowed the entry of residents fully vaccinated against COVID-19 on Aug 1. But according to an official from the DGCA, the decision to increase the number of arriving passengers is already in effect from Aug 8. "The division of this number among various airlines is done according to market demand. Till now no new flights have been added, so the number will mostly be divided among existing flights. This should relieve the pressure and avoid the inconvenience of further cancellations," he explained.



Foul play suspected in Amghara man's death

KUWAIT: Kuwait police opened a criminal investigation in the death of a person whose blood-stained body was found near a factory in Amghara, a local Arabic daily reported yesterday. Police and criminal evidence men headed to the scene in response to an emergency call, and found the body with traces of blood on the head, reported Al-Rai. No identification cards were found on the body, which was taken to the coroner for an autopsy.

The same newspaper had reported earlier that police opened an investigation into a woman's death after her disfigured body was found in her apartment. Preliminary investigations indicate the victim's pet cats had disfigured her face after she died when they were left without food. A relative of the woman, who lived alone in her apartment, had told police that he went to check on her after she failed to respond to his calls for days, only to find that she had died. The body was taken to the forensics department to identify the cause of death, as a case was filed for investigations.

In other news, two Kuwaiti policewomen were injured when a female motorist ran them over after she ignored orders to pull over in Abdullah Al-Salem. Instead of stopping her car, the motorist sped up and hit the cops with her vehicle in an attempt to escape, but was placed under arrest. Al-Rai reported yesterday. One officer sustained a broken leg, while the other was left with a broken hand, it said, noting that they were taken to the hospital for treatment. Meanwhile, the suspect was taken to the proper authorities for further action.

Separately, Al-Rai reported yesterday that a man was rushed to Jahra Hospital with severe injuries following a landmine explosion in Adairia. The Bangladeshi man reportedly lost his left hand as well as a leg in the incident. In another case, a three-year-old Egyptian boy was hospitalized in a critical condition after he consumed kerosene inside his family's apartment in Khaitan. Police escorted his father to the police station for questioning on child negligence charges.

Kuwait Defense Minister, US counterpart discuss bilateral ties

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, received a phone call Friday from the US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin. During the call, both sides discussed bilateral ties between the two countries and the latest political developments globally and locally.

In a press release, the Kuwait Army Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public Relations said that Sheikh Hamad expressed his appreciation to his American counterpart for this gesture, which reflected the keenness of the two countries to strengthen and develop the bilateral cooperation in various fields. — KUNA



Kuwait's Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Al-Sabah (right) and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin.

Kuwait distributes eight tons of baby formula to refugees

BEIRUT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) distributed Friday eight tons of baby formula as part of its efforts to support the Lebanese and Syrian refugees in need. In a statement to the press, KRCS delegation's head Dr. Musa'ed Al-Enezi said that the society team and in cooperation with the Lebanese Red Cross Society started a campaign to distribute baby formula in refugee camps and to the Children's Cancer Center in Lebanon. He also stressed that the KRCS was keen to provide this important product, especially during these difficult times due to the COVID-19 pandemic. — KUNA



In Lebanon, bread too is...

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The Lebanese pound has lost more than 90 percent of its value against the dollar on the black market in less than two years. Many bakeries have already closed down because they cannot afford the rising cost of fuel needed to power private generators as electricity cuts last for around 20 hours a day.

Those that remain open have rationed production to make the subsidized flour they receive from the state last longer, leading to shortages in stores and supermarkets. Hamati arrived at a Beirut bakery early in the morning, bracing for a long wait. "This is the

first time I come to this bakery. There isn't any bread left in stores," he told AFP. "Is there anything left at all in Lebanon?" he asked.

Lebanon has been gripped by a fuel crisis since the start of summer, with importers blaming shortages on a delay by the government in opening credit lines to fund imports. The authorities have accused distributors of hoarding stock to sell it at higher rates on the black market or across the border in Syria. "Bakeries don't have the means to secure fuel oil... and we don't know if we will receive any" from the state, said Ali Ibrahim, who heads the syndicate of bakery owners. "They just give us enough for two days... though bakeries and mills should be receiving enough for a month."

In Beirut's Nabaa district, Jacques Al-Khoury looked flustered as he tried to organize a queue of dozens of people waiting outside his bakery for bread. The line started as early as 3:00 am - just as

he started baking for the day. "All the bakeries in this area have closed and the pressure is all on me," he said. Khoury, 60, said he receives 36 tons of state subsidized flour per month - but with demand for bread increasing it only lasts a week.

In the northern city of Tripoli, Lebanon's poorest, many bakeries have been forced to close while supermarkets have stopped selling bread. The few Tripoli bakeries that have remained open are also struggling to keep up with demand. "We are rationing the amount of bread we distribute to stores," an employee at one of the city's largest bakeries said. "We are providing them with half the usual amount." In one bakery in the southern city of Sidon, residents were only allowed to buy one bag of flat white bread each. According to the United Nations, food prices have increased by up to 400 percent. The cost of a basic food basket for a single family is now five times the national minimum wage, the Crisis

Observatory at the American University of Beirut says.

"Once we've paid rent, we have no money left," said Mohammad Abdul Qader, a pastry shop employee who needs to provide for five children. He said food has become so expensive, he can no longer afford meat. "I gaze at the butcher's from a distance, and then go on my way," he said. "Yesterday, I ate stale bread" with onion and tomato, he added.

Lebanon's army seized fuel from gas stations yesterday to curb hoarding amid crippling shortages, as the central bank chief stood firm on his decision to scrap fuel subsidies. Compounding the country's crisis, a top private hospital said it may have to close due to power outages caused by shortages of diesel, warning this could cause hundreds of deaths. Lebanon is grappling with a financial crisis branded by the World Bank as one of the planet's worst since the 1850s. — AFP

Taleban close in on...

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fallen into Taleban hands, Kabul has effectively become the besieged last stand for government forces who have offered little or no resistance elsewhere.

As the Taleban closed in on Kabul, panicked residents formed long lines outside banks, hoping to withdraw their savings. Some branches appeared to have already run of cash. Insurgent fighters are now camped just 50 km away from Kabul, with the United States and other countries scrambling to airlift their nationals out of the Afghan capital ahead of a feared all-out assault.

Heavy fighting was also reported around Mazar-i-Sharif, an isolated holdout in the north where warlord and former vice president Abdul Rashid Dostum had gathered his virulently anti-Taleban militia. The only other cities of any significance not to be taken yet were Jalalabad, and Khost - Pashtun-dominated and unlikely to offer much resistance.

In Kabul, US embassy staff were ordered to begin shredding and burning sensitive material, as the first American troops from a planned 3,000-strong re-deployment started arriving to secure

the airport and oversee evacuations. A host of European countries - including Britain, Germany, Denmark, and Spain - all announced the withdrawal of personnel from their respective embassies on Friday.

For Kabul residents and the tens of thousands who have sought refuge there in recent weeks, the overwhelming mood was one of apprehension and fear. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he was "deeply disturbed" by accounts of poor treatment of women in areas seized by the Taleban, who imposed an ultra-austere brand of Islam on Afghanistan during their 1996-2001 rule.

Days before a final US withdrawal ordered by President Joe Biden, individual Afghan soldiers, units, and even whole divisions have surrendered - handing the Taleban even more vehicles and military hardware for their lightning advance. The Taleban offensive has accelerated in recent days, with the capture of Herat in the north and, just hours later, the seizure of Kandahar - the group's spiritual heartland in the south.

Asadabad, the capital of Kunar in the east, and Gardez, also fell yesterday, as the Taleban tightened their grip. On Ghani's TV speech, Kabul-based analyst Sayed Naser Mosawi said it appeared the president was running out of options. "The president's message was not definitive enough to say he is willing to fight on to the end, but rather to me it sounds that he may be willing to give into some sort of settlement - if that doesn't mean surrender," he added. — AFP

8 die in plane crash as Turkey...

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Television footage showed a column of smoke rising from the remote mountainous zone in the south of the country.

Turkey's defense ministry issued a statement saying the aircraft on loan from Russia had taken off from Adana to help extinguish fires burning at Kahramanmaraş. A surveillance plane and a helicopter had been dispatched to the crash site, the ministry added. Russian consular representatives and a defense ministry commission were reportedly on their way to the area.

Turkey's official disaster agency AFAD said teams were combing through the rubble of dozens of homes that collapsed due to the floods that hit Black Sea regions on Wednesday after heavy rains. In the village of Babacay in the northern province of Sinop, 40 houses and two bridges were completely destroyed by the floods, according to state news agency Anadolu.

The latest official death toll published yesterday by AFAD stood at 44, with nine other people in hospital. Scientists believe such natural disasters are

becoming more intense and frequent because of global warming caused by polluting emissions. Turkey's emergence as a frontline country in the battle against climate change also poses a challenge to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan two years before the next scheduled general election.

As the initial shock of the floods faded, so questions and criticisms arose. Floods survivors accused local authorities of not giving them proper warning about the dangers of incoming storms. Criticism has also been levelled at the fact several buildings were built in flood zones. In Bozkurt in Kastamonu province, one eight-storey building constructed on the banks of the Eyzine river collapsed.

Footage shot by survivors showed furious river waters flooding the streets in just a few minutes, carrying off cars and traffic signs. The government has denied that the sudden rise in water levels was linked to a hydro-electric power station further up the river, after media reported its water-retention dam may have ruptured.

Erdogan sounded both mournful and hopeful as he attended a funeral on Friday for the first victims and led a prayer before a few hundred residents in the inundated city of Kastamonu. "We will do whatever we can as a state as quickly as we can, and rise from the ashes," Erdogan told the crowd. "We can't bring back the citizens we lost, but our state has the means and power to compensate those who lost loved ones." — AFP