

Local

Interior deploys security teams to enforce measures around Kuwait

MP questions vaccines, measures and fake PCR tests

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The interior ministry said yesterday it will deploy security teams to assist authorities to implement decisions by the cabinet to close commercial activities to counter the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

The ministries of commerce and municipality will monitor the implementation of the closures of commercial shops and malls from 8:00 pm to 5:00 am and the total shutdown of health clubs, saloons and barber shops.

The interior ministry said in a statement that each governorate has allocated security teams to provide any assistance needed to the two ministries as they oversee the implementation of the new health measures. The statement also said that security men will ban all types of gatherings prohibited by the cabinet decisions.

MPs and representatives of small and medium businesses have strongly opposed the new measures and demanded that the government must either compensate them or allow them to operate. The government is expected to take decisions on this issue soon.

The health ministry yesterday reported 1,002 new coronavirus cases, the largest in several weeks, with six deaths. The ministry said 96 patients are being treated at intensive care unit and the number of active cases rose to 9,310.

Philippine Embassy provides mobile passport extension

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Following a decision by the Kuwaiti building owner for the early termination of the lease agreement with the Philippine Embassy (due to security concerns over a royal palace nearby), effective Jan 17, the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait announced temporary mobile passport validity extension-only consular services at the Kuwait Disabled Club in Hawally. Due to strict health protocols, the mobile consular service will focus only on the extension of passport validity, which started on Feb 5-6 (every Fridays and Saturdays). The next mobile passport extension services will be on Feb 12-13, Feb 19-20 and Feb 26-27.

"This is the primary concern of many Filipinos today because their iqamas will not be renewed (by their employers) if their passports' validity is less than a year. To address this concern, the Philippine Embassy, with the support of some Filipino organizations here in Kuwait, will run a mobile consular service every weekend during the entire month of February, strictly for the extension of passport validity only," said Philippine Vice Consul Adrian Baccay.

"We understand consular services are important to our people in Kuwait. However, these unforeseen circumstances are out of our control.

Absconding maids 'sold' to licensed offices

KUWAIT: Criminal detectives raided a bogus office that encouraged maids to escape from their workplaces or homes of their sponsors in exchange for double their salaries, Al-Anbaa Arabic daily reported yesterday. Seven Nepalis were arrested, along with several maids found at the office. The bogus office used to send the runaway maids to licensed offices, which in turn sent them to other workplaces, provided that mandoubs (representatives) of the licensed offices paid the gang upfront to have priority for the service.

Detectives were tipped about the bogus office that encouraged maids to escape, then made them work by the hour, after hundreds of maids escaped during the past few months. Information revealed that fights took place between mandoubs of licensed offices at the bogus office to compete for the priority to get the maids.

An undercover source was sent to the office, and when the information was confirmed and the office directors were present, the office was raided and the arrests were made. The suspects said that they went to places such as cooperatives in Kuwaiti areas to urge maids to escape, with promises to pay them double what they get and by the hour. They then coordinated with licensed offices to use the services of the runaway maids.

Police raid Kabd brewery

KUWAIT: Three Asians were arrested for running a brewery in Kabd, the Interior Ministry announced yesterday. Tips were received about the illegal activities, so police went to the area and found a large farm closed from all sides. When they entered the place, they found three persons without any IDs running the local brewery, which is considered the largest as far as equipment is concerned. The place had a large hall for distillation and a large pool for bottles. Police found 340 large drums and 12,200 full bottles of liquor. Arrangements were made to demolish the factory, as the suspects were sent to concerned authorities to face legal action.

New measures

In the meantime, MP Hisham Al-Saleh yesterday sent a series of questions to the minister of health about the new measures, vaccines and the vaccination drive in the country. Saleh asked the minister to provide him with the scientific basis he used to order the closure of saloons, barber shops and health clubs and demanded figures of coronavirus cases detected by the ministry in the past six months and related to the operation of these activities.

He asked the minister about the sources of coronavirus tests carried daily and if the cases were for travelers or at hospitals. He also demanded the number of vaccines Kuwait has contracted from each company, the dates of arrival and the number of vaccines that had already arrived.

Saleh also asked about the number of people who registered for vaccinations and the number of who had already been vaccinated, including the number of citizens and expats. The lawmaker asked the minister about how many fake PCR tests had been discovered.

The government communication center meanwhile raised the alarm yesterday after a big increase in the number of cases. It said that in the first nine days of February, 7,739 cases have been reported compared to just 7,949 cases in the month of December and 14,673 cases in January. MP Bader Al-Humaidi asked the government about the number of flights that arrived from Turkey and Dubai since February 3 and the number of expat passengers and their jobs.

But we are thankful to the Kuwait authorities for authorizing us to temporarily conduct mobile consular services at the Kuwait Disabled Club. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kuwait and our Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila were informed about this, so the service is sanctioned by both governments," said Baccay, who is also the official spokesperson of the embassy.

To avoid crowding and strictly follow health protocols, the embassy has sought the support of the Ministry of Interior and some Filipino organizations to man the venue. The embassy also advised Filipinos to come to the venue only if their passports have expired or are near expiry.

"To observe social distancing at the venue, we urge individuals and our clients to please bring all necessary documents including the duly filled-out passport application forms. Bring the original passport and a photocopy of it, plus a photocopy of the civil ID. Also, please have the exact amount of KD 6.500 for payment," Baccay said. "Do not come to the venue if you feel unwell, have a dry cough, high body temperature or loss of taste and smell," he reiterated.

Baccay explained that although they closed the embassy on Jan 17, the Assistance to the Nationals Unit (ATNU) of the embassy continues. "We never stopped working even as we transfer our documents to our new location. We are organizing this temporary service of passport extension validity to help our fellow countrymen as ordered by our Ambassador Noordin Padosina Lomondot," Baccay said. "Our new temporary embassy will be in Sabah Al-Salem. It's ready now, but several formalities have to be tackled," he concluded.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality workers stand outside shops that are closing on 8:00 pm on Monday in compliance with the government's measures to help limit the spread of COVID-19. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Passengers can choose quarantine hotel category

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Starting from Feb 21, 2021, institutional quarantine will be mandatory for all arrivals to Kuwait for seven days, followed by seven days of home quarantine. As the institutional quarantine

is at the passenger's expense, people are interested to know the approximate cost of this requirement.

"The passenger will be able to choose from three categories of hotels - five-star, four-star and three-star. We are working now on the list of hotels that will be included, and it will be announced soon," Director General of Civil Aviation Yousef Al-Fouzan told Kuwait Times.

However, there are no changes yet in the status of the 35 countries from which direct arrivals are banned, as of publication. Passengers from these countries have to stay for 14 days in a third country before arriving to Kuwait.

Indians advised against traveling to Kuwait via UAE

ABU DHABI: The Indian Embassy in Abu Dhabi has advised nationals not to attempt to travel via the United Arab Emirates in order to reach Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. In a notice posted on Twitter on Monday, the Indian government in the UAE warned: "Due to COVID-related restrictions on incoming passengers, currently it is not possible for Indian nationals to transit via Dubai and Abu Dhabi to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait," the tweet from India in UAE account

@IndembAbuDhabi reads. Hundreds of Indians working in Kuwait have been stranded in UAE after Kuwait abruptly announced the closure of its airport to all foreigners. India is among 35 countries banned from direct flights to Kuwait as the emirate battles to limit the spread of the coronavirus.

Thousands of people stranded abroad had been traveling via UAE and other countries like Turkey in order to reach Kuwait after staying in a third country for 14 days and obtaining a negative PCR. But Kuwait has now closed air travel for foreign passengers from February 7 for two weeks and it is possible it may extend the closures.

Indian nationals already in UAE on their way to Kuwait or Saudi Arabia are advised to return home. The Indian Embassy in Kuwait's Twitter account retweeted the notice.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed

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