

Local

Organ transplants conducted by visiting doctors for Kuwaitis only

Proper measures taken to treat prisoner with viral meningitis

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Health Minister Sheikh Dr Bassel Al-Sabah issued a ministerial decision restricting organ transplant surgeries conducted by visiting foreign specialized doctors to Kuwaitis only. In a different concern, the minister said work is currently in progress to increase the number of main medical warehouses and distributing them over various areas around Kuwait to be used during any possible contingencies that may result due to regional circumstances.

In other news, Dr Bassel said that the ministry, in collaboration with the Central Prison authorities, activated the necessary preventive measures after prisoner tested positive for viral meningitis. "The patient, who was rushed from the prison to Al-Farwaniya Hospital upon showing symptoms of the disease, is in a stable condition after taking the proper medication," the minister said on Friday.

Sheikh Dr Bassel said that he is following in person the health condition of the patient, noting that the public

health department and the health unit of the prison shouldered their respective responsibilities properly upon detecting the case. "As a precaution, tests were conducted on all prison inmates who were in contact with the patient but their results came negative," he revealed, adding that he ordered working out a detailed report on the level of healthcare for all prisoners. The minister reaffirmed the commitment of the government to ensuring proper healthcare for everybody without any exceptions.

Health insurance

The parliamentary health affairs committee will meet today to discuss proposals on amending law number 114/2014 pertaining health insurance for retired citizens. The committee invited both Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf and Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeh to attend the meeting.

Strategic payroll

The parliamentary financial affairs committee is due to meet today to resume discussing decree law number 15/1979 pertaining civil services (aka the strategic payroll alternative). Informed sources said the government had urged the parliament to complete discussing its visions on the proposed amendments, adding that the government is eyeing a partial reform of the payroll system divided into nine main professional categories

and involving a new mechanism for assessment, promotions and rewards, plus encouraging citizens to join less attractive jobs.

Meanwhile, MP Safa Al-Hashem renewed her call on the government to expose what she described as 'poisonous assets' in investments of Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), warning that not revealing them would lead to losses worth billions. Hashem added that through KIA, the finance ministry stated that it is about to disclose a list of some valuable assets that she had earlier urged Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf and KIA CEO Farouq Bastaki to disclose. She added that those assets are still 'bleeding losses'.

Power plants

Preventive maintenance of various units has improved the performance of power plants and reduced malfunctions to a total of 280 in 2017, compared to 317 in 2016, acting statistics manager at the Ministry of Electricity and Water Iqbal Al-Tayyar said.

Oil prices

Oil prices have dropped below to the lowest point this year of \$58.9, affected by international stock exchange plunges and a drop in demand, said analysts. Analysts also said Kuwaiti oil prices dropped by \$8 per barrel and that this might lead to a drop in oil revenues during the last quarter of 2017-2018, which might lead to increasing

the deficit to KD 6 billion compared to current predictions of KD 5.2 billion.

Meanwhile, oil sources at KOC said that the company has managed to achieve daily production of 801,000 barrels in the northern operations zone. The sources added that the actual daily production in this area was 732,000 barrels a day and that the highest was 772,000 bpd, until the number of drilling rigs was increased, with the result of increasing productivity to 801,000 bpd.

Low-cost homes

The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) expects offering the first package of the low-cost housing project's infrastructure (with a total cost of KD 600 million) for public bidding by the end of March, said MEED, noting that the average area per unit would be 200 sq m, which is smaller than land plots in most residential areas currently being planned. MEED also expected the project to include 9,600 units. In addition, MEED noted that the housing authority currently has 100,000 pending housing applications with average waiting periods of 7-18 years. It noted that the new housing projects would reduce overcrowding in Kuwait City and help control soaring real estate prices. "Real estate prices have dropped by 30 percent ever since the government started executing the new housing projects," said informed sources.



Health Minister Sheikh Dr Bassel Al-Sabah



Panel discusses strategic payroll alternative

local spotlight

No cigarettes in Kuwait!

By Muna Al-Fuzai
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If you are a smoker or have a smoker in the family or a friend, then they must have complained to you about the disappearance of cigarettes from cooperatives and grocery stores in Kuwait. Why did the cigarettes disappear? How much truth is there in rumors that cigarette traders are refusing to provide stores with cigarettes? Will the prices really rise? What has caused this sudden disappearance?

It has been widely mentioned that cigarette companies in Kuwait have taken preparations to increase cigarette prices, while certain brands of cigarettes have disappeared from markets and grocery stores, and have thus opened up a black market! And prices of most brands of cigarettes have increased by 100 to 200 fils.

Some smokers are complaining that cigarette traders have intentionally blocked the supply of cigarettes since the past 15 days in preparation to raise prices. Is this true? I hope not, because Kuwait has postponed the application of VAT until 2019, and we are only in Feb 2018.

If so, then it's not for the first time. In 2015, a similar thing happened and provoked angry campaigns on social media. At that time, smokers denounced cigarette shops for hoarding large quantities of cigarettes and clearing the shelves in anticipation of an official announcement to raise prices. Some sellers sold cigarettes at higher prices, and this is happening again.

I understand that cigarette prices in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are rising due to the new tax system, but in Kuwait the tax has not been implemented yet. Many smokers see the trend towards higher cigarette prices to the benefit of tobacco traders, because smokers will not stop smoking.

I do not smoke, but I follow the subject as my son is a smoker and his friends are too. They have been making futile rounds of grocery stores all around the country in search of cigarettes. I too have made some rounds to find that cigarettes have really disappeared. I wonder why? It is said the reasons for the scarcity of cigarettes in the country is due to mass purchases by citizens of other Gulf countries, because prices here are cheaper compared to their countries. So they have created a cigarette crisis.

I have read reports that the borders between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have witnessed the confiscation of thousands of cigarette cartons. In November 2017, Al-Rai daily published a report showing images of large quantities of cigarettes smuggled by Saudis that were confiscated because the prices of tobacco increased there.

Many Kuwaitis are suffering in the search of their favorite brands, which have become so rare that some markets have banned the sale of more than two packs per person. Customs authorities have also stepped up inspection campaigns. The director of the Kuwaiti land customs assured that coordination with Saudi customs is ongoing to prevent smuggling at ports, except within the limits of personal use.

I think this disappearance of cigarettes in Kuwait has reflected negatively on the Kuwaiti market, and prompted the General Administration of Customs to tighten control over land ports and the airport, where instructions were issued to prevent the exit of more than one small carton with each car.

The fact is that the majority of shops are empty of cigarette packs. The owners think that discussions between the Ministry of Commerce and cigarette agents are currently underway, and may end soon. I think this is a temporary crisis, but I cannot find a justification for the rise in prices at some stores, even if it is only 100 fils. I hope that the commerce ministry will intervene to end this crisis now and for good and prevent its recurrence by controlling prices and punishing those who disregard the ministry's regulations, or such incidents will recur.

Society urges public to protect environment during celebrations

By Meshal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait Society for Environmental Protection (KEPS) urged the public to protect the environment during the national celebrations later this month. The society's secretary general Jenan Bahzad called for 'environmental discipline' and avoiding violations during this period. Bahzad added that seawater pollution by plastic and other non-decomposable materials will take long years to be dissolved. She added that 30 percent of the world's sea turtles and 90 percent of marine birds have been affected by such waste.

Bahzad added that desert camping also has negative environmental impacts. She said a single individual in Kuwait produces around 1.4 kg of waste daily, which usually increases during festive periods, costing the state budget around \$255 million annually.

In addition, Bahzad noted that overgrazing, random movement of vehicles and heavy military equipment and spring camps had caused the disappearance of highly valuable plants from the wild, stressing that camping in a way that affects the soil is punishable by a fine of up to KD 5,000, plus mandatory removal of the waste. She added that plastic waste has a dangerous impact on desert life, as plastic bags take around 20 years to decompose. Bahzad added that revellers every year waste a day's freshwater supply to 14 housing units on the national anniversaries.

The administrative court had issued a verdict last December giving the cabinet the authority to ban the usage of water guns in National and Liberation Days' celebrations. The verdict was made in response to a case filed by lawyer Mona Al-Arbash demanding the ban for public interest, on

grounds that thousands of water gallons are wasted every year during national celebrations, costing the country - which is already poor on natural water resources - a lot of money. Use of water guns and water cannons during national celebrations have become very popular in recent years after the government banned the use of spray foam for environmental reasons.

Mosques' charter

Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Fahd Al-Afasi issued a ministerial decision regulating mosques' work and enabling them to play their part in delivering awareness messages about moderation. Afasi added that the new charter came to help imams, preachers and muezzins do their jobs professionally on addressing and guiding the public. He added that the new charter includes four main parts addressing nature of work of imams, preachers and muezzins, the relations between them, their rights and responsibilities. He also noted that the charter includes penal measures to be taken in case of violations.

No injuries in Jleeb house fire



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Firemen from five different fire stations battled a blaze reported Friday evening in a Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh house. The place contained woodwork and foam, so the house was evacuated, and the flames were contained after spreading to a neighboring house. No injuries were reported and investigations are underway to determine the cause of the fire.

New fire stations

Director of the facilities and maintenance department Col Abdelmohsen Al-Enezi inspected the buildings of the new fire stations on Sheikh Jaber causeway that are being built according to Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) specifications. The stations on the roads that stretch from Shuwaikh to Subbiya contain fire engines and fireboats. Enezi was accompanied by Acting Marine Fire Department Lt Col Ahmad Al-Ansari and Head of the Backup Center Maj Hamad Al-Rasheed.

Bedoons issued 9,521 documents in 2017

KUWAIT: The central agency addressing the status of illegal residents issued 9,521 governmental and non-governmental transactions and documents for bedoons in 2017, the agency announced yesterday. Director General of Information Department in the agency Abdullah Al-Farhan said that 14,397 of bedoons benefited from the process. A sum of 4,468 of transactions were addressed to the Ministry of Health while 625 health insurance papers were issued since January 1 until the end of December in 2017, he added.

The agency sent 2,356 papers to the sharia documentation department at the Ministry of Justice and 111 documents were sent to the Ministry of Interior, he said. A total of 94 papers were delivered to the Ministry of Defense and 575 transactions to other bodies, he said.

The agency approved 745 cases in the Civil Service (CSC) Commission database after studying their cases as they offered the needed documentations for their registration, he said. Farhan called on the newly graduates of holders of diplomats and higher certificates of whom are eligible to the conditions of employment in the governmental bodies to update their information. —KUNA

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