

Local

Expats recount experience of living with COVID-19 in Kuwait

Up to 829 people infected in the past 24 hours, take total to 96,301

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Derek, 45, was about to leave Kuwait for Manila on a chartered flight, but a day before the flight, he was pronounced COVID-19 positive by the Ministry of Health and was not allowed to leave. His employer relocated him to a secluded housing in Shuwaikh away from the crowded company accommodation in Riggae. But he was left there without enough food, he claims. Derek shared his circumstances with a friend, and within a few hours, he received aid from his church and from the Filipino community.

"I was terminated in March and was prepared to fly back to Manila immediately, but I was caught in the lockdown. So I stayed and waited for the opening of the airport again," Derek told Kuwait Times. "This time, I was booked for September 10, but the airline requires a PCR test before the flight. So I went to a private clinic and tested positive."

So far Derek is asymptomatic. "I don't feel anything at all. I was okay before and am okay now. I don't have any fever, any headache, any sore throat, no shortness of breath, nothing. I am definitely fine. I don't have any underlying conditions of any sort, so I am okay, and would like to leave this place now," Derek said.

"Thank God for the supplies from friends who are giving me things that I need here and also from the Filipino community. I got some fruits and vitamins from friends, and a rice cooker and a kettle from other friends. I got supplies from everyone who knows I tested positive," he said.

Waiting it out

Derek is among a growing handful of expatriates currently living with the coronavirus.

They may or may not have symptoms but are not sick enough to be in hospital. Some of them are waiting out their quarantine in order to go back to their home countries, while others are hoping to continue working in Kuwait.

Bruno, 33, and his 27-year-old pregnant wife are both quarantining at their home in Farwaniya. Bruno tested positive for COVID-19, while his wife has tested negative. "I received a message from the ministry of health saying I was COVID-19 positive. It said I have to follow home isolation instructions and download an app - that's it," Bruno said.

Bruno has high blood pressure and is also a chain smoker. But he is still young and very concerned about the fate of his wife. "My concern is that my wife is pregnant and she brings food to my room every now and then. We sleep separately, but she is the only one I have in Kuwait. She wears a facemask and at least until now she is okay. But we live under one roof, so there's no escape. I only have headache and body pain - other than that I am fine," he said.

Jane, 45, works and lives in a Kuwaiti house in Abdullah Salem. Three of the people in her sponsor's household of eight members have COVID-19, including her. "I cannot breathe properly, because I have asthma. I have a bad cough and feel very sick. I feel pain in my body and cannot sleep. I feel very tired. I am fighting and hoping to survive this pandemic

because I have family in the Philippines. I have four kids and I want to see them grow up. This is the reason why I am working hard," she told Kuwait Times.

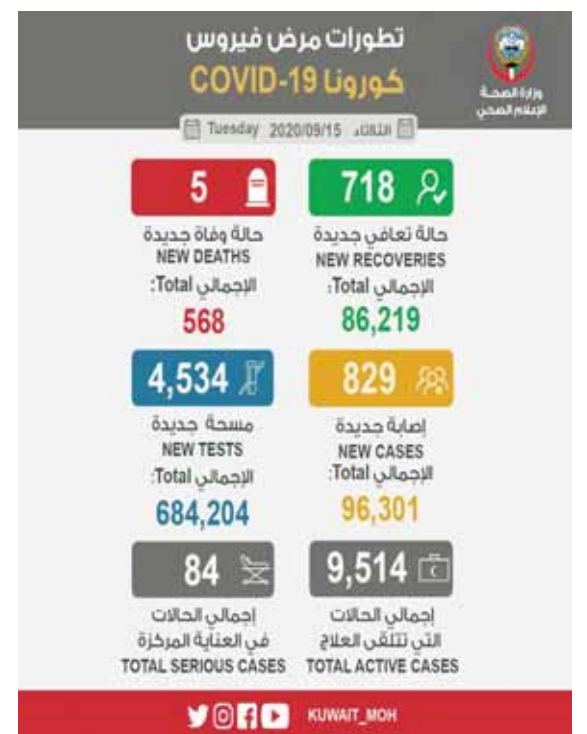
Her male employer was the first to catch the virus in April. "He used to go out of the house almost every day. He got it in April and overcame it. In September, he caught COVID again, and transferred it to me and his five year old son. I am being cared for by my lady employer - they are very kind people. She always asks about me and comes and visits me in my room. I am praying to survive this - hopefully some medicine will work to kill the virus inside me. I will be okay and overcome this COVID and will live long," said Jane, who asked that her real name be withheld.



Five new fatalities, take total to 568

New infections
Up to 829 people contracted the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Kuwait in the past 24 hours, raising the total to 96,301, official spokesman of the Ministry of Health Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad announced yesterday. Meanwhile, five COVID-19 patients died in the same period, raising the total number of fatalities to 568. Dr Sanad, in a statement to the press, said the new batch of infected cases included a number of persons who contracted the virus due to mingling with people sickened with COVID-19, adding that infection circumstances of others were still to be determined.

The number of ailed people that continue to receive intensive medical care has amounted to



84, Dr Sanad said, noting that the whole count of proven cases that remain under treatment has reached 9,514. Medical staff conducted, during the past 24 hours, up to 4,534 swab tests, he said, putting the tally of such examinations, so far, at 684,204. The health ministry declared earlier that 718 of COVID-19 patients recovered during the same period, and revealed that the total figure of the recuperated stood at 86,219. Dr Al-Sanad appealed upon the public to remain vigilant and continue to heed the calls for protective measures against the highly contagious pathogen.

Healthcare workers sacrifice lives for safety of patients

KUWAIT: The world is joining forces against the coronavirus pandemic which has emerged as one of the major challenges facing health sectors, while frontline health care workers are sacrificing their lives trying to preserve safety of patients. As the globe celebrates the World Patient Safety Day tomorrow, the world is attempting to include the public in maintaining safety of patients by abiding by medical principles aimed at preserving wellbeing of people. Kuwait's Ministry of Health (MoH) "remembers with pride its heroes at the frontlines regardless of their positions and specialties," Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti, Director of Ahmadi Medical Area, said. The MoH also remembers members of medical teams who lost their lives while doing

their utmost best to provide care for COVID-19 patients, he added.

Highlighting an important factor, Dr Shatti said the safety principle applied to health care workers and patients. "The safety of health care workers and patients is equally important because it is an integral part of the quality of the service the society seeks," he added. Risks facing health care workers are "many and very complicated than many can imagine," he said. It is more than wearing a stethoscope, he added. There are professional risks like exposure to radiation or chemicals like (inhaling) anesthetic gas, or motion-related risks like back pain or falling on the floor, or psychological risks like depression, professional anxiety and excessive working hours, in addition to biological risks and recently COVID-19," said Dr Shatti who also mentioned AIDS, tuberculosis, hepatitis and meningitis. "All these factors affect health service and practice," he said.

The MoH, added Dr Shatti, celebrates the occasion every year and has the 'Safety Star' award which aimed at promoting quality and

safety of health services. The MoH marks this year's event with a slogan 'Safety health service provider means safe patient,' he said. The World Health Organization (WHO) decided, in a document, to focus on patients' safety for the next 10 years with aim of addressing shortcomings related to health care and clinical practices. WHO, said Dr Shatti, advised health authorities around the world to further promote safety of health care workers particularly amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The working environment is crucial, he said, and it risks infections amidst limited availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other protective means. The WHO document, he noted, aimed at reducing risks against patients to zero as well as clinical measures' safety, establish more connections with patients and their families, knowledge and research. "Patients and their families are partners in health care," he said.

WHO said the overall objectives of World Patient Safety Day were to enhance global understanding of patient safety, increase public

engagement in the safety of health care and promote global actions to enhance patient safety and reduce patient harm. The origin of the occasion is firmly grounded in the fundamental principle of medicine - First, do no harm. The COVID-19 pandemic is presently among the biggest challenges and threats to face the world and humanity, and health care is living its greatest crisis in patient safety ever. The pandemic has exerted unprecedented pressure on health systems worldwide. Health systems can only function with health workers, and a knowledgeable, skilled and motivated health workforce is critical for the provision of safe care to patients. —KUNA



Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti

News in brief

Kuwait still in first wave

KUWAIT: Health Ministry official Spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said that Kuwait is still in the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and the second wave is not necessarily connected to winter season. The rise in infection cases is expected in this time period due to daily activities and poor social distancing measures, Dr Sanad said on Monday. He added that ICU cases rose by five percent last week, calling on people to stick to health measures to avoid a second wave. He stressed on the importance of maintaining social distancing, wash hands regularly, wear a mask everywhere, while advising people with terminal diseases, pregnant women and elderly to avoid leaving the house unless it's necessary.

Land borders reopen

KUWAIT: The Nuwaiseeb border checkpoint is open for GCC nationals carrying negative PCR test certificates to enter Kuwait from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm, and the Salmi checkpoint is open only for people to leave Kuwait as per Saudi Arabia's request, local border authorities said. Exceptions for people to enter from Al-Salmi border is given to first-degree relatives of Kuwaiti citizens, provided that they produce a negative PCR test certificate.

Oil price drops

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil dropped 36 cents during Monday's trading to end the day at \$39.59 per barrel (pb) compared with \$39.95 pb last Friday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. The price of benchmark Brent crude went down by 22 cents to \$39.61 pb and the West Texas Intermediate lost seven cents to \$37.26 pb.

CBK issues bonds

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced Monday issuing KD 290 million (\$957 million) worth of bonds and tawarruk. In a statement to the press, CBK said that the maturity period is three months with a rate of 1.250 percent. Late July, CBK issued bonds and tawarruk valued KD 200 mln (\$660) with three months validity.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in the Arabian Gulf

KuwaitTimes [Facebook] [Twitter] [Instagram] [WhatsApp] 94488888