

Local

Omicron and fear of the unknown in Kuwait



JUST KIDDIN', SERIOUSLY

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We are living in the age of uncertainty, where every day a new sickness, virus or threat appears - first COVID-19, then the Delta and now Omicron variants, and God knows what is next. We are living in the time of coronavirus, where we are lost and not sure what is going on or what will happen in the future. Many people died and lost loved ones. Many people took their vaccines, and many did not.

The World Health Organization (WHO) classified the new variant of SARS-CoV-2, which emerged in some southern African countries, as a 'variant of concern' - it also named it Omicron. People infected with Omicron so far seem to show milder symptoms than those in Delta patients. Many are asymptomatic; others suffer from coughs, fatigue, body aches and headaches.

There are many questions on people's minds nowadays. Are we going to live in constant fear? Are we going to wait for a new variant to mutate every few months? Is there going to be another lockdown worldwide? Will I lose my job or my life if I was not lucky enough? Is this how we are going to live from now on? Is this the new normal?

World leaders are getting paranoid, shutting their borders and airports against travelers coming from South Africa and nearby countries. Scientists are wondering, is there a need to change the existing vaccines or can it fight the new variant? So many questions and too many speculations. This virus became the new monster that is threatening the chain of life in every aspect - economically, mentally, physically and psychologically.

Although Kuwait has announced that it has no plans to shut down the airport or close land or sea borders, and that the health situation in Kuwait is "super excellent", people still did not get over the first coronavirus wave that hit the country and paralyzed almost everything. People are still trying to stand back on their shaky feet, struggling to catch up on what they have missed. They are still trying to overcome the mental and psychological strains that they went through since the start of the pandemic in February 2020.

Nowadays, as we are constantly in a state of high alert, this monster is affecting the new generation - the so called "coronavirus children" who were born and raised seeing people wearing masks, keeping social distancing, being remotely educated and locked up in their homes; sadly thinking that this is a normal life, which in my opinion goes against their nature.

I hope that we are not going back to square one because the world cannot bare another relapse, lockdown or a new virus. If that happens, we are more likely to be expecting more depression, suicides, as well as psychological and financial issues in society. However, within this extremely difficult situation, we must stay positive and adapt for the sake of our children so they will not stop dreaming of a better future.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: This handout photo provided by the Central Bank of Kuwait on Wednesday shows the bank's headquarter building lit up with the United Arab Emirates' flag colors in celebration of the UAE's 50th national day.

Winter seems to have skipped Kuwait this year



KAFFEKLATSCH

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By this time every year, there's a chill in the air, heaters have been brought out from storage, and everyone is in their winter best, with nary a white dishdasha in sight. Usually, rains in November are a harbinger of colder days ahead, but this year there has been no rainfall and no sign of wintry weather. Sure, the climate is pleasant these days - even a bit cold in the mornings - but air-conditioning is still needed inside homes, offices and cars, particularly in the afternoon, when the temperature rises above 30 degrees Celsius (in some parts of Europe, 30 C is heatwave conditions).

Leading Kuwaiti meteorologist Adel Al-Saadoun said last week the rainy Wasm season - which begins on Oct 16 and ends on Dec 6 - has been delayed this year, adding this may be an indication of an especially cold winter. A few days ago, Saadoun predicted the weather will start getting colder with the arrival of the frigid Marbaniya season - which starts on Dec 7 and lasts until Jan 14. But until now, the weather is temperate and skies clear.

Is this due to global warming? Is climate change to blame? Surely this is not a one-off, as everyone agrees that winters in Kuwait have been getting shorter and milder. I still remember my childhood years in the '80s, when the season was longer and colder. Getting ready for school in the morning was a fraught task. That kind of chilly weather is becoming rarer in Kuwait, as in recent

years, it's really cold for only a few days during winter - the weather then goes back to normal, and gradually starts getting warmer.

Kuwait has also been witnessing record summer temperatures in the past few years, with the mercury crossing the 50 C mark for weeks on end. This has led to desertification and rising sea levels, even as the population has been increasing steadily - notwithstanding a dip due to an exodus of expats during the coronavirus pandemic - placing increased pressure on infrastructure and services and resulting in more vehicles on the roads. It doesn't help that nearly the entire production of electricity and desalination of seawater in Kuwait is realized by burning oil, generating greenhouse emissions.

So, after all the heat and dust and a balmy winter, one is tempted to fly out to cooler climes and frolic in the snow. But repeated waves of coronavirus variants have put a dampener on these plans. The authorities have also cautioned people against travelling unnecessarily. Also, for many people, especially expats, it's a huge risk to travel now, with memories of prolonged airport closures and lockdowns of last year and this year fresh on everyone's minds.

Amid all this uncertainty, lovers of cold weather and desert campfires can only hope the temperature drops in the coming days. Until then, they will have to suffice with cynical 'Winter is Coming' memes.