

Local

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian GulfTHE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYANEditor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYANEDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
COMMERCIAL : 24835618P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.com

News in brief

60+ expats visa decision official

KUWAIT: The decision to allow expats aged 60 years and over and who do not hold a university degree to renew their visas has officially become effective after it has been published in today's issue of the state's official gazette 'Kuwait Al-Youm'. The Public Authority for Manpower decided last week to allow expats who are 60 years and over and who hold a secondary degree or lower to renew their residencies by paying an annual fee of KD 250 and a health insurance, ending a problem that continued for well over one year. The children of Kuwaiti women, their husbands and Palestinians holding travel documents are exempted from the decision.

FM calls counterparts

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah received a phone call Friday from Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly. During the call, both sides shed light on the bilateral ties between the two countries and ways to enhance cooperation in various fields. Latest regional and global developments were also touched on during the call. Sheikh Dr Ahmad also held a similar call with Nepal's Foreign Minister Dr Narayan Khadka on Friday. The two sides discussed the latest regional and global developments during the call.

Kuwait's oil at \$90.29 pb

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by 94 cents to reach \$90.29 per barrel on Friday, compared with \$91.23 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Cooperation (KPC) said yesterday. In global markets, the price of Brent crude went down by 69 cents to \$90.03 per barrel, and West Texas Intermediate decreased by 21 cents to \$86.82 pb.

Relief, health, education priorities of Kuwait's humanitarian work

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti authorities continued their humanitarian activity to provide support and assistance in the region and the world, especially in the relief, health and educational sectors. The various actions recently undertaken by Kuwait through its various institutions focused on supporting the deprived and the afflicted in Bangladesh, Iraq and Yemen. Beginning with Bangladesh, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) signed a cooperation agreement with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on Wednesday to support and implement a relief and medical program for the Rohingya displaced in Bangladesh. In a statement after signing the agreement, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of KRCS Dr Hilal Al-Sayer underlined the importance of this step, which meets the urgent needs of the Rohingya displaced in Bangladesh. This agreement comes within KRCS' humanitarian projects and a continuation of the Kuwaiti humanitarian mission, as it aims to deliver and provide relief and health assistance to the Rohingya, he said. The agreement with the ICRC supports the health sector along with the water and sanitation sector, he added, indicating that this agreement provides a broader scope in humanitarian and relief work to alleviate the burden of displacement.

Meanwhile, Head of Regional Delegation for the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries at ICRC Omar Odeh said that the signed agreement is evidence of the essential efforts made by Kuwait-based ICRC, KRCS and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) to support humanitarian work in the world. Through these joint efforts, thousands of people will receive vital humanitarian assistance including health care, clean water and daily necessities to improve their living conditions in Cox's Bazar city, Bangladesh, he added. The agreement also reflects the common aspirations of both ICRC and Kuwait to enhance humanitarian work worldwide, Odeh stated, thanking to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its pivotal role in achieving this strategic partnership.

Health projects

In the meantime, Reconstruction Fund for Areas Affected by Terrorist Operations (REFAATO) in Iraq announced on Tuesday the completion of 18 health sector projects within the framework of the first phase of the Kuwait grant agreement to finance the urgent program for the health sector amounting to KD 4.5 million (about \$15 million). The reconstruction projects that were completed within the framework of the first phase included the rebuilding and

Kuwait, US renew commitment to regional security, joint interest

Commitment to defensive collaboration, cybersecurity, health challenges among others

KUWAIT: Kuwait and the United States renewed their joint commitment to boosting stability and security within the region, as well as bolstering joint interest. This came in joint statement following the fifth round of strategic dialogue between the US and Kuwait, inaugurated by US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, and Kuwait's Foreign Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah on January 26, 2022 in Washington DC.

The two parties reiterated commitment to defensive collaboration, cybersecurity, bilateral trade and investment as well as health challenges, climate change, travel facilitation, cultural educational partnership and the improvement of human rights and women empowerment. It also indicated that the two officials discussed the strong bilateral relations, recalling the 30th anniversary of Kuwait's liberation beginning with desert storm operation. The two top diplomats also handled issues of international and regional priorities; especially that Kuwait is president of Arab league on ministerial level, as well as developmental collaboration in terms of global financial priorities via Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED). They commended the advanced technical discussions held between the US agency for international development and KFAED in regards to proposal of collaboration to support economic rejuvenation in Yemen.

Regional affairs

On Iraq, the statement stressed the importance of a stable Iraqi government, devoid of foreign interference, expressing support to making progress in solving maritime border issues. The statement also praised Kuwait's generous support to connecting Iraq to the GCC electric grid. On Syria, the two affirmed the need to execute Security Council resolution number 2254 for the year 2015 in regards to ending Syrian conflict and achieving complete and lasting stability. The United States and Kuwait reiterated their commitment to defeating the so-called Islamic State (IS) and their stance against Iran's destabilizing influ-

ence, as they are key partners in the global coalition against IS.

Regarding Yemen, both governments asserted the necessity of bringing peace into the country and ensuring free influx of humanitarian aid to the Yemeni people. When it came to the Afghani matter, the US lauded Kuwait's valuable contribution to the transportation of American citizens and others from Afghanistan. The two countries expressed appreciation for the bilateral defensive partnership and Kuwait's long-lasting hosting of American forces, adding that both governments aspire for a safer and more secure future for the region, through continuous updating of Kuwaiti armed forces, and the sturdy partnership with the US. The two sides looked into threats facing the region, and ways to bolster defensive partnership through improvements, training, drills and operations, clarifying that the two reaffirmed importance of collaborating to counter terrorism.

The statement also added that the US expressed its appreciation for Kuwait's ongoing commitment to bolstering anti-money laundering practices, as well as countering terrorism through data exchange and negotiations with the US Justice Department, while also boosting joint work against financiers of terrorism via several congregations including Terrorist Financing Targeting Center. The two countries voiced support for increasing data exchange to enhance passengers and cargo search, in an effort to face global threats, following the signing of a letter of intent on cooperation in cybersecurity in 2018.

The statement indicated that the two sides would continue to work on boosting electronic defense mechanisms in Kuwait, specifically for financial establishments and vital infrastructure, adding that both look forward to lay plans for cybersecurity with Kuwait National Security Bureau. They commended the exchange and skill building workshops led by US Justice Department to assist Kuwaiti investigators and public prosecutors to prevent and monitor criminal activity within the cyberspace. On that

Joint vision on countering climate change



WASHINGTON: Secretary of State Anthony Blinken (right) and Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah attend a press conference following the fifth round of strategic dialogue between the US and Kuwait in Washington, DC on Wednesday. —KUNA

note, Kuwait asserted its determination to join international experts' networks to preserve electronic evidence in relation to legal investigation and monitoring of criminal activity. The state of Kuwait also affirmed its commitment to strengthening the international institute for justice and its activities through donating EUR 200,000 to support the establishment.

The two sides also asserted the importance of protecting freedoms and expanding workers' rights, saying they were looking forward to Kuwait's continuous efforts in advancing women's rights, including the launch of Kuwait's shelter for domestic violence (Fanan center). Moreover, Kuwait welcomed the election of the US for membership of the UN's human rights council, looking forward to working together especially that Kuwait is a candidate for the council's membership for the years 2024-2026. The United States praised Kuwait's efforts in protecting intellectual property, as the two parties affirmed commitment to working together on global health security and facing the pandemic. The two signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) regarding the prevention, discovery and limiting of biological threats.

Climate change

As for climate change, the two sides articulated their adherence to countering climate change following the UN's Paris agreement, aiming to curb the rise of temperature and keeping it at 1.5 centigrade via accelerating work called on by

Glasgow climate summit, as well as ambitious national contributions. The two countries also decided upon furthering collaboration in field of food security. They also affirmed their commitment to the safety, security, leisure and fair treatment according to the law, of their citizens, in Kuwait, the United States and across the globe. The statement welcomed the advancements achieved by the two nations in providing consular notification and arriving to detained citizens, indicating the cooperation to prevent international cases of kidnapped children by parents and solving the issue according to the rules and regulations of each country.

The United States also welcomed Kuwait's commitment to the European council agreement on prisoners' transfer. The two countries highlighted the thousands of Kuwaiti citizens studying abroad in the US, the bilateral efforts in bettering the quality of English language teaching in Kuwait, as well as expanding college counseling and increasing communication between American universities and Kuwaiti students. The two sides praised the increase of visitors' numbers and cultural programs including the most recent collaboration between New York's Arabic orchestra and Loyac's academy for performing arts. The two nations renewed their commitment to furthering collaboration in all fields that could benefit their governments and people, and aspiring to more advancements in upcoming round of dialogue hosted by the state of Kuwait. —KUNA

KIB launches FIKRA to enhance culture of innovation, collaboration

KUWAIT: In a unique internal staff initiative to create an engaging work culture among its employees and support the delivery of KIB's enhanced digital banking experience, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) launched its latest interactive platform, the FIKRA program. The initiative encourages employees to submit new ideas to develop KIB's products, services, and banking operations - with staff being rewarded for ideas that are successfully chosen and implemented.

Speaking about the program, Abdullah Al-Awadhi, the FIKRA Program Internal Sponsor at the bank, said, "By launching this new initiative, we seek to create an engaging and transparent culture between staff and the Bank's management, and to come up with constructive ideas aimed at improving the overall productivity and efficiency of our business operations. This is also part of our ongoing efforts to deliver a digital evolution at KIB, enhancing our experience and elevating our modern banking solutions. Moreover, this incubation of innovation and creativity will enhance our employees' confidence in themselves and their organization, and will serve to further motivate them to innovate, expand, and develop in their fields."

Pointing to the various areas that can be explored through the FIKRA initiative, Awadhi noted that

employees can share ideas to launch new banking products or services, develop existing services and products, launch new operations, or improve the performance of any current banking processes. Awadhi also explained that successful ideas will be rewarded if they reach the final round and will be adopted as part of KIB's operations and its range of banking products and services.

Moreover, Awadhi highlighted that the bank is open to receiving all ideas presented by its team members from across all departments. This reflects the message that KIB wants to spread as part of its values and work culture, where KIB is willing to listen to its employees and welcome all their ideas, whether they are right or wrong. This contributes to developing their skills, while refining their work experience through research processes, idea development, and allowing employees to learn from their mistakes.

Awadhi concluded his statement by reaffirming KIB's commitment to investing in its employees and continuously developing the work culture among them. He further stressed KIB's aspiration to enhance the bank's internal company culture and encourage greater interaction, transparency, and innovation within departments. This contributes to improving the bank's overall employee performance and the services it provides to all its customers.

Abdullah Al-Awadhi

IWG delegation visits Bayan Palace's Botanical Garden



KUWAIT: A delegation of members of the International Women's Group recently visited the Botanical Garden at Bayan Palace, which is well known to be one of Bayan Palace's outstanding creative projects. The delegation was received by Alia Al-Muhanna and a number of Bayan Palace employees.

In order to follow social distancing procedures, the delegation was divided into two groups. Each group was taken separately on a tour through the magnificent garden. While enjoying the beauty of the garden, the

visiting members were delighted with the explanations given about the nature of the garden, detailing the various trees, plants and flowers that were brought from tropical, desert and Mediterranean regions.

At the end of the visit, the President of the International Women's Group, the wife of the Ambassador of the Republic of Italy Cristiana Balducci, thanked Muhanna and the ladies of her team, and through them also extended IWG's grateful thanks and appreciation to Bayan Palace.