

Local

# Pandemic, food price increases blamed for rising wedding costs

## Clients cut guestlists to reduce financial burden

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** After almost two years of banning wedding parties in Kuwait due to the COVID-19 pandemic, prices of wedding halls, especially hotel ballrooms, have increased by around 15 percent. The reason for this is a result of a global rise in food prices, according to wedding hall managers at hotels.



**Up to KD 4,500 without photography, other requirements**

But price hikes have not only affected food services at weddings, as hotels have increased the total cost of hosting weddings. Ahmad Khaled, a 5-star hotel wedding hall manager, told Kuwait Times the cost for reserving a wedding hall is KD 1,350 without added services, while the cheapest wedding party costs KD 3,000 including food service but without additional services such as DJ, photography and decor.

Some hotels charge by the number of guests at the wedding, while others set their prices by combining the ballroom rent and cost per person. Sameh Ali, a 4-star wedding hall manager, said prices at his hotel have increased from KD 13 to KD 17 per person. Due to these price increases, most clients have reduced the number of their guests in order to reduce the financial burden. The average number of guests at an expat wedding is around 250 persons, so at KD 18 per person, the cost will be around KD 4,500, not to mention other wedding requirements, such as photography, which costs around KD 600, while makeup and hairstyling can easily cross KD 300.

Shereen Al-Nather, a 5-star wedding hall manager, told Kuwait Times the Kuwaiti clients have reduced their number of guests as well. While previously they were inviting around 600 people for wedding receptions attended only by women, recently the number of guests does not exceed 400, pointing out the price increase for hotel wedding halls as the reason.

Dima Al-Jallad, a 5-star hotel wedding hall manager, said the price per guest at her hotel has risen to KD 33 per person, while before the pandemic it was KD 28. Wedding hall clients believe hotels are trying to compensate for their losses due to the closures during the pandemic, stressing the price hikes are exaggerated at some hotels.

A bride, Nadeen Mahmoud, told Kuwait Times she paid KD 3,000 for a wedding hall at a 4-star



hotel without any added services other than food for guests and one night free stay at the hotel, which does not have any facilities. She believes prices have not increased after the pandemic due to the discounted packages offered by hotels to attract clients.

Meanwhile, Hanan Omar said some hotels obligate their clients to take a full wedding package, which impacts the budget of the client due to the high prices. "Some of them set a minimum number of guests, which prevents us from reserving the hall," she said.

## Duwaween Games launches new application system in preparation for next growth phase

**KUWAIT:** Duwaween Games announced the launch of its updated mobile application system in the presence of the Charge d'Affairs of the US Embassy in Kuwait, James Holtznider, and a number of officials, initiators, and application owners, as well as representatives of prestigious American technology companies.

The launch represents an important step in the context of the strategic transformations of "Duwaween Games" and the efforts at raising the quality of games it offers. This aligns with their aim of developing mobile game applications as a fresh addition to the entertainment industry. These updates also state their development steps regarding the growth strategy set by the shareholders, which aims to move the "Duwaween Games" to a new stage of expansion.

The introduction of the new updated system comes after their partnership with "VO", the first integrated platform in Kuwait to offer young talents an influential share in the application, during the month of January. While the telecommunication company Zain entered as the main yearly sponsor of the "Duwaween Games" applications.

### Rapid developments

The launch of this updated version of the "Duwaween Games" application is the result of its cooperation with a group of prestigious American technology companies, including:

- Google: which developed the Flutter programming language for developing application interfaces across all major mobile operating systems (Apple/Google/Huawei) and even Web which will be launched soon. This allows players to play depending on their gaming preferences.

- Amazon (AWS): is a web services company responsible for the cloud computing infrastructure. Noting that the giant American company is represented in Kuwait by "KUWAITNET" company.

- Docker: an OS-level virtualization to deliver software in packages called containers (Microservices).

### Update Highlights

On the technical side, the new system is more secure, reliable, and scalable, as it

allows direct updates to be completed without disturbing users. It has been designed keeping in mind the requirements and needs of the users. It was also designed using the latest technologies, as these updates can be used across all major operating systems. This system represents the new generation of card games that provide all possible options for virtual diwanias (chat, voice, and video).

### The main updates made to the application are:

- 1- Updated UI/UX for both portrait and landscape modes.
- 2- Shortcuts for Language - Modes - Sound and more games.
- 3- Introducing New Points System and Leaderboard. (Stats, Badges, Details).
- 4- Profile Update (Bezah, Rank, Level).
- 5- Notifications Service (Requests and Tournament invitations).
- 6- Chat Lobbies Service (Main, Waiting).
- 7- Chatting Service (lobby live chatting).
- 8- Live Tournament Service (view and share games, track live scores, round status throughout).
- 9- Invite Contacts instead of friends only.
- 10- Save created diwanias options for a smooth experience.
- 11- Updated card designs to enhance visibility.
- 12- Information guide for Points, Rank, Level, Badges and Bezah.
- 13- Updated end-match pop-ups to view earned points and bezah rewards.
- 14- Tournament end results, earned points, and bezah reward.

### US-Kuwaiti cooperation

Commenting on this important event, the Charge d'Affairs of the US Embassy in Kuwait James Holtznider, expressed his happiness with the rapid developments taking place at the level of Kuwaiti applications and the successes they have achieved over the past years. These applications are rich in unique opportunities for cooperation with American technology companies, which reflects the special relations between the United States of America and the State of Kuwait.

He pointed out that the successes



Dawood Marafie

achieved by Kuwaiti applications, and the innovative ideas they contain, reflect Kuwait's youth with their distinctive ideas and visions.

### New stage of growth

Entrepreneur and Partner in "Duwaween Games", Dawood Marafie said: "This event is part of our commitment to the comprehensive development and modernization plan, which aims to make the application a major platform in the world of digital games and the entertainment industry at the level of Kuwait and the region."

The application is facing a new stage of growth, expansion and development, in light of the remarkable demand for its basic games and the trend towards expanding new markets in the region. Marafie expressed the commitment of all those responsible for the application and its shareholders to continue the growth strategy through a clear operational plan aimed at using more users and geographical expansion, ahead of all concerned parties, led by the "VO" platform, "KUWAITNET" and American technology companies, thanks for what they provided. They made an effort to make the new update system a success.

### Most advanced applications

As for the founder and CEO of the technology sector at "KUWAITNET" Bashar Al-Abdulhadi, he pointed out that the company's presence in this event comes from being an agent for Amazon Cloud Computing Company in Kuwait (Amazon AWS), explaining that "KUWAITNET" is keen to cooperate with the largest and best technology companies around the world in order to keep pace with the needs of Kuwaiti and Gulf companies, entrepreneurs, business and application owners by providing technological infrastructure, cloud computing services and others.

Abdulhadi praised the qualitative devel-



KUWAIT: A group photo during a ceremony to celebrate the launch of Duwaween Games' new application system.



Charge d'Affairs of the US Embassy in Kuwait James Holtznider is seen during the event.

opments achieved by the "Duwaween Games" application, which is clearly reflected in the updates included in the new system and the update for its mobile phones, which reinforces its role as one of the most advanced applications in the world of digital games and the entertainment industry in Kuwait and the region.

### Zain's Sponsorship

The CEO of Relations and Communications at Zain Kuwait, Waleed Al-Khashti, explained that Zain's sponsorship of the "Duwaween Games" is a reflection of Zain's strategy in the social and economic areas to support initiatives dedicated to youth and entrepreneurs, which have been incorporated over the past years through several specialized programs and partner-

ships with vital initiatives, noting that Zain is counting on these partnerships to take advantage of innovative ideas in the digital world and the rapid developments it is witnessing.

Khashti added: "The application of "Duwaween Games" is an embodiment of the model that Zain is looking to cooperate with, especially in light of the vital developments that it has witnessed during the past few years. In addition to the success of its organizers in dedicating it as an important application in the world of digital entertainment, pointing to the latter occupies an important space in online gaming and represents a stand-alone industry, as it is on the cusp of a new phase of growth in the region in light of the new investments that are being pumped into it."

## Two Kuwaiti doctors win new medical patent

**KUWAIT:** Assistant Professor of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Dr Muhammad Kamal from Kuwait University, and Ear, Nose and Throat consultant Dr Abdulmohsen Al-Turki, from the Ministry of Health, obtained a patent from the United States of America for an alternative medical splint for nasal wicks. In a press statement, Kuwait University said that the invention came as a result of a joint cooperation between the College of Dentistry and the Ministry of Health, with the support of Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity. According to the statement, Dr Muhammad Kamal explained that the invented splint will dispense the use of nasal wicks that cause difficulty in breathing, and severe pain when removed after surgical intervention. It will allow adding medical materials directly on the surgery and to the nasal septum



KUWAIT: Assistant Professor of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Dr Muhammad Kamal (left) and Ear, Nose and Throat consultant Dr Abdulmohsen Al-Turki. — KUNA

without any pain or obstruction for the patient's breathing. — KUNA

## Kuwait ophthalmologist shows innovative techniques at Milan conference

**ROME:** Dr Khalid Al-Sabti, a well-known Kuwaiti ophthalmologist, conducted a successful critical surgery via video at an international conference in Milan City in Italy, to become the first Arab surgeon to do so. The Kuwaiti doctor was among 16 surgeons from different countries partaking in the vitrectomy conference in Milan to display up-to-date retina treatment techniques. Dr Sabti conducted a critical surgery using an innovative technique in a video call on the first day of the international conference held this week. Speaking to the press, Sabti said he was so proud as a Kuwaiti and Arab surgeon to join an elite of international retina specialists participating in this biennial world conference. He elaborated that this conference is a significant scientific and medical event where doctors display their up-to-date surgery techniques. He added that the event focuses on innovative vitrectomy techniques and progress made in robot surgery and artificial intelligence, attracting experts from the US, South America, Europe, Africa and Middle East. He added that he had conducted a



ROME: Dr Khalid Al-Sabti (center) with fellow surgeons in Rome. — KUNA

complicated surgery for a myopia patient during the international conference, using a live innovative technique. He boasted that his presence in this medical event, together with other international conferences, reflect Kuwait's progress and advancement in the ophthalmological field. — KUNA