

Local

Mental health issues linger on even after the pandemic

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The COVID-19 pandemic had a severe impact on the mental health and well-being of people, but it still remains an unresolved issue for many people in Kuwait. Nearly three years have passed since the outbreak of the pandemic, but adults and children of Kuwait have not yet recovered from its psychological effects.

This great transformation has had a great psychological impact, with cases of depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder and other psychological symptoms being seen, which people have been unable to deal with. Even after schools resumed at full capacity, children are still unable to adapt to their surroundings.

Ahmad Abdul Salam told Kuwait Times that his three-year-old son faces a struggle in accepting other children around him, noting that his son is not used to seeing anyone else other than his parents. "He still cries and has anxiety when other children come close to him at the nursery. Teaching him how to communicate is becoming harder and harder with time. We do not blame him - after all, he has not seen anyone else in two years," he said.

Teacher Iman Al-Haddad said: "It seems that higher fees charged by therapists are due to the increase in the number of patients who have suffered from psychological issues and due to the pandemic - being quarantined for long periods under strict health measures, as well as other psychological, social and genetic causes."

She added children were greatly affected. "Students in schools are more isolated these days and are always on their phones. They do not interact with people - only through social media. Students nowadays are living in their own bubbles," Haddad said.

Parents continue to report higher levels of stress than non-parents and are more likely to say that their mental

health has worsened after the pandemic. Um Fahad, a mother of two, was suffering from panic conditions since before the pandemic. The latest solution she opted for was to visit a psychiatrist, but the treatment was not completed due to the high fees charged for psychological consultations.

"In Kuwait, consultation starts at hundreds of dinars in some cases. How can people be in proper mental health shape if we cannot get the proper treatments," she wondered, adding the pandemic did not just impact young people, but also their parents. "We had to deal with the stress of keeping our children's mental health stable while taking care of our financial issues and our depression. The overload was too much to handle. The Kuwaiti government must consider what we went through and give all citizens free mental consultations," Um Fahad added.

Several citizens and residents stressed the need to review the fees charged by psychiatric clinics and take steps to reduce them, as they sometimes are more expensive than airline tickets and hotel accommodations. Saba Al-Essa explained to Kuwait Times that it is cheaper to treat your mental issues in another country than in Kuwait. She suggested that private psychiatric clinics must reduce the cost of consultation, so that everyone can avail their services, calling on relevant institutions to activate their role in this field and open social and psychological service centers at all medical centers to serve Kuwaitis.

Meanwhile, Ali Al-Sultan stressed the importance of the role of specialists and psychological and social consultants to alleviate the suffering of mental patients as well as reduce the pressures experienced by some members of society to achieve a safe and comfortable environment for all. He said young people were more affected than older groups, explaining that some stud-



ies confirmed that the COVID-19 epidemic had destroyed the personalities of young people and led some youngsters to be introverts, while developing symptoms of mental illnesses.

The international medical journal Lancet conducted a study in 204 countries in 2020 that showed cases of depression and anxiety increased worldwide by more

than a quarter. According to UNICEF, children have been directly affected by the pandemic, with some experiencing interruption in education. It is estimated that more than 1 in 7 adolescents aged 10 to 19 have been diagnosed with a mental disorder and 1 in 5 young people between the ages of 15 and 24 often feel depressed or have a lack of desire to do things.

Suad Al-Sabah Publishing House participates in international exhibitions

KUWAIT: Ali Al-Masoudi, Head of the Suad Al-Sabah Publishing House, said that they have received an impressive response for their participation in the publishing exhibitions held in Istanbul and Barcelona.

"We are quite keen to continue to reach more readers in Kuwait and abroad with our books and this has been a priority for us, for nearly half a century."

On the exhibition held in Istanbul, Al-Masoudi said that after the book exhibition which was recently held in Riyadh, he considers the exhibition in Istanbul, as the most important annual book exhibition to be held outside the Arab world.

"Our section at the exhibition was popular and well-received, which gives us the assurance that we are on the right path and we take pride in showcasing our creative published work. These range from contemporary literature works to documents on history, heritage and the sciences. We also display books translated from other countries and languages including the Turkish language which was appreciat-

ed by many of the Arab tourists in Turkey as well as the residents who were interested in the Arabic language," he said.

Al-Masoudi also said that the goals of the publishing house align well with the goals of the exhibition in Istanbul, which functions as a non-profit exhibition aimed at reviving the Arabic language and is also looking at ways to document the historical and literary connection between the Arabs and the Turks. He added that this was also the goal of the Suad Publishing House, as it aims to enrich the creativity of the Arabic language and bridge the gap between the Arab culture and other cultures.

"Our publishing house's participation in the exhibition comes at a time when we are displaying translated works of Suad Al-Sabah's works from Arabic to the Turkish language called 'And flowers know anger', which was published a few days ago and was quite popular among the Turks and Arabs as well."

He also added that the exhibition was a great opportunity for publishers in the region, as it saw the



Ali Al-Masoudi

participation of more than 30 countries, with around 100 events being held in the form of lectures, book signing sessions and other events.

Meanwhile, speaking with regards to the publishing house's participation at the book exhibition held in Barcelona, Al-Masoudi said that he hoped that the exhibition would serve as a good opportunity to showcase the Arabic and Islamic heritage and also be a meeting point for many cultures.

He also said that Dr Suad Al-Sabah hoped that the participation of the publishing house in exhibitions held at home, in the region and abroad would help to highlight the publishing house's initiatives globally.

"The books displayed at the exhibition are not just in Arabic, but also include many Arabic books translated to around 20 different languages from several categories," Al-Masoudi added.

He also said that Dr Suad Al-Sabah's ambitions were as per the instructions of her late husband Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, to support Arabic creativity in the Arab world, especially among the younger generations and to reward their creative talents.

Al-Masoudi said that, "Our publishing house aims to achieve the aspirations of Dr Suad Al-Sabah, in showcasing Arabic culture in the region and abroad and in giving a prominent position for Kuwait in all the international cultural events that we participate in."



Suad Al-Sabah Publishing House's booth in Istanbul.

KFAS announces winners of the Kuwait 2021 Prize

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) announced Thursday winners of the Kuwait 2021 Prize. The Prize is given annually to distinguished Arab scientists who have made outstanding achievements and contributions. In a statement, KFAS Director General Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel said the Award amounts to KD 40,000 (about \$132,000) for each of the four fields. The statement added that the 'Condensed Matter Physics' prize was equally awarded to Saudi scientist Dr Othman Bakr and Egyptian scientist Dr Omar Abdulsabour, who worked together at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia, as their research focused on the use of perovskite material in solar energy appli-

cations and high-energy radiation sensors.

The prize for 'Applied Medical Sciences' went to Egyptian scientist Dr. Nabil Sidah and his Lebanese peer Ali Taher, on their research and treatment experiments on Thalassemia and high cholesterol. The prize for 'Educational Sciences' went to Lebanese Dr Fuad Abdulkhalq on researching STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) in classrooms to enhance students' skills. The prize for 'Linguistics' went to Lebanese scholar Dr Ramzi Baalbaki. The Kuwait Prize was established in 1979 in accordance with the objectives of KFAS to support scientific research, innovation and creativity. — KUNA



Khaled Al-Fadhel



KUWAIT: Dr Khaled Al-Saeed with representatives from the areas declared as healthy cities.

Abdullah Al-Salem, Shamiya declared healthy cities

KUWAIT: The Patients Helping Fund Society (PHFS), represented by the Department of Social

Development participated in a celebration to confirm Abdullah Al-Salem and Shamiya as healthy cities, an event which was hosted by the Office of Healthy Cities.

Acting Health Minister Dr Khaled Al-Saeed, representatives from the healthy cities' as well as members from the WHO and governors of Capital and Hawally governorates were present. Representatives also honored the PHFS for their cooperation and support for the initiative.

KFF puts out fire in truck, Faiha co-op

KUWAIT: A fire broke out in a truck travelling on the 6th ring road. Fire stations from Mishref and

Qurain responded to the call and put out the fire with no human casualties.

Meanwhile, another fire broke out in a warehouse in Faiha cooperative and fire stations from Shuwaikh and Shuhada responded to the call and put out the fire. The store suffered some material damage but no casualties.



MONTREAL: Officials and civil aviation representatives from Kuwait and Maldives at the signing of the MoU.

Kuwait, Maldives sign civil aviation MoU

MONTREAL: Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation signed on Wednesday, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Maldives' Civil Aviation Authority to achieve flexibility in air services for the economic benefit of

both countries. This came during the General Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), being held in Montreal, Canada, between Sept 27 and Oct 7. Head of Kuwait's Civil Aviation Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah said in a statement to KUNA that this MoU helps strengthen the bilateral air relations, as well as facilitate the operation of commercial and cargo airlines. He also added that it aims to link Kuwait's International Airport with other international airports to enhance air transport, as well as encourage trade exchange between Kuwait and Maldives. — KUNA

