

Local

KUWAIT DISPATCHES MORE RELIEF AID TO QUAKE-ROCKED TURKEY

KUWAITI ARMY, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND KRCS JOIN HANDS TO AID THE QUAKE-HIT



KUWAIT: The second air bridge mission by the Kuwait Air Force in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) at its headquarters in Abdullah Al-Mubarak air base on Thursday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: Kuwait has sent two more military planes carrying 80 tons of relief, medical and food supplies to Turkey in the aftermath of a magnitude 7.7 earthquake that struck the country on Monday. This was the second air bridge mission by the Kuwait Air Force which was organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) at its headquarters in Abdullah Al-Mubarak air base on Thursday.

The fresh Kuwaiti aid comes at the behest of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who had instructed creating an air bridge to dispatch humanitarian and relief

aid to Turkey's quake-affected people, said the Ministry of Defense in a statement.

Kuwait on Monday sent two military planes carrying rescuers and eight tons of relief supplies to quake-hit areas in Turkey on the same day the powerful earthquake struck southern Turkey and northern Syria, leaving thousands of people dead or injured.

Kuwait's relief aid is being sent to Turkey as part of cooperation and coordination among the Kuwaiti military, ministries of defense, foreign affairs and health, Kuwait Red Crescent Society and charities, the ministry said.

The commander of the Abdullah Al-Mubarak Air Base, Brigadier General Pilot Abdulaziz Al-Loughani, and a number of senior air force

commanders flagged off relief flights along with volunteers from the Kuwait Red Crescent Society.

Abdulaziz Al-Loughani said: "This morning, two Kuwaiti Air Force planes departed, heading to the friendly Republic of Turkey. These flights are considered the second of the air bridge missions dedicated to transporting emergency needs and relief materials, as an embodiment of the spirit of brotherhood and joint cooperation between the two friendly countries."

"These flights come in cooperation and coordination between the Kuwaiti Army, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Kuwait Red Crescent Society. It is worth noting that the two planes sent on Thursday were loaded with approxi-

mately 80 tons of relief material as well as food and medical supplies," Brigadier General Al-Loughani said.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Community Development has approved applications from 30 charities and agencies to contribute to a nationwide campaign to raise donations for quake-affected people in Turkey. The Social Affairs Ministry has asked the Ministry of Defense to help secure a plane to transport the emergency aid to Turkey, the Ministry spokesperson Ahmad Al-Enezi said in a press statement Tuesday. Al-Enezi added that the Minister Mai Al-Baghlil ordered full cooperation and integration with relevant government agencies to accelerate the aid dispatching.

13 NATIONAL GUARD OFFICERS GRADUATE IN QATAR

DOHA: Major General Hamad Salem Ahmad attended the graduation ceremony of the 18th batch of cadets of Ahmed bin Mohammed Military College, at the College's headquarters in Qatar on Thursday morning. The graduates included 13 Kuwait National Guard officers.

Ahmad, who is also the protection and reinforcement commander at the National Guard, relayed congratulatory messages to the graduates from HH Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, commander of the National Guard, Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, deputy National Guard commander, and Lieutenant General Hashim Abdul Razzaq Al Rifai, the National Guard's undersecretary. He urged the fresh graduates to maintain high academic and technical standards and continue expanding their knowledge to achieve their ambitions.



News in brief

KUWAIT FM REASSESSES KFAED STRATEGY

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said on Thursday that the latest international developments require Kuwait to reassess the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) mechanism to assure interests abroad. This came in a statement on the sidelines of the annual ceremony of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, as he said that the political leadership in Kuwait is keen on maintaining the country's humanitarian heritage, which was built over 60 years. He noted that the strategy must attain two approaches, preserving the humanitarian heritage, and developing new strategies that guarantee Kuwait's interests internationally. —KUNA



FM RECEIVED CAMBODIA ENVOY'S CREDENTIALS

KUWAIT: Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received the credentials of the Cambodian Ambassador to Kuwait Saman Manan during their meeting at the Minister's office on Thursday. Sheikh Salem wished the newly-appointed ambassador success in his mission, hoping to see further elevation of the Kuwait-Cambodia relations. —KUNA

KUWAITI, US OFFICIALS MEET ON DEFENSE COOPERATION

KUWAIT: Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah received at his office on Thursday Gen. Jacqueline Van Ovost, commander of US Joint Operation Command (USTRANSCOM), now leading a delegation on an official visit to Kuwait. They discussed a range of topics relating to the defense cooperation, according to a statement from the General Staff of Kuwait Army.

DIASPORAS MOURN LOSSES FOLLOWING DEVASTATING QUAKE

By Nebal Snan

KUWAIT: Ameer Al-Samman is used to waking up to messages from his siblings and cousins on their family's WhatsApp group. But the conversation on Monday morning was unlike any he's ever seen - the comforting "good morning" the family exchanged was replaced with "Thank Allah you're safe." A few seconds of scrolling later, Samman was shocked to hear that a 7.8-magnitude earthquake had struck Syria and Turkey, bringing down whole apartment buildings and leaving thousands injured or homeless. As of Thursday, nearly 20,000 people have died from the catastrophic earthquake. Many still remain missing. "I was so anxious to the point that I couldn't work. I'd check on them every minute and ask them to keep me updated whatever happens," he said. "My heart was there with them."

'They saw death'

At first, Samman didn't expect the extent of the damage to be so huge, especially that smaller earthquakes have struck the region over the years. But that quickly changed as the day went by and news trickled in. Buildings in Hama, where his family lived, were destroyed. Syria's Directorate-General for Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) reported on Facebook the destruction of some of the city's historical buildings and mosques, such as the partial collapse of the minaret of the Imam Ismail Mosque. "My immediate family is safe, thanks to Allah. But they're very nervous and exhausted. They all say that they saw death with their own eyes." Samman's family evacuated their apartment and waited outside in the freezing cold, afraid the building might collapse. Rumors of aftershocks circulating on social media, he said, kept people on edge. "The rumors were so detailed, specifying the magnitude and time of the expected tremors. The situation was extremely nerve-wrecking and people unfortunately couldn't help but believe everything they heard."

Search ongoing

Hulya and her husband, a Turkish couple living in Kuwait, were on vacation in Turkey when the earthquake first hit on Monday. The couple wasn't directly affected because they stayed far from the center of the earthquake, some of their family and friends, however, weren't as fortunate. "They were so afraid ... Some of them just took a few clothes and escaped from Kahramanmaraş ... and went to other cities." Others have passed away or are still missing. Turkey has deployed more than 63,000 search-and-rescue personnel to the quake area, including about 3,000 personnel who arrived from all over the world over the past couple of days, according to Turkish state-media TRT. But there are two main obstacles the teams are facing: the cold and snowy weather and the devastat-



Turkish and Syrian communities in Kuwait are checking on loved ones after a devastating earthquake struck the two countries on Monday. — AFP

ing aftermath, which led Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to declare a three-month state of emergency in the 10 quake-hit provinces. Aid from about 20 countries, added Hulya, couldn't reach some areas earlier this week "because of the destruction of the roads by earthquake." Hatay, one of the hardest-hit cities, was rendered completely inaccessible, with the airport runway split into two. The Istanbul Airport operator IGA has dispatched teams to repair the runway and building in order restore traffic, reported the Daily Sabah Wednesday.

'Disaster after disaster'

Rasha Mohamed was getting her daughter ready for school when she first heard the news. She immediately thought of her sister, who left Syria to live in Gaziantep with her husband and kids. One of southern Turkey's major cities, Gaziantep has a population of almost two million people and between one-quarter and one-third of them are Syrian. "I really want to cry,

My heart is crying," said Mohamed. The UN refugee agency, UNHCR, said the quake was an "absolute hammer blow" for displaced Syrians. Philippe Leclerc, UNHCR's representative in Turkey, told AFP that most Syrians in Turkey are living among local populations "in the same buildings which have collapsed. They are participating in the rescue as volunteers." Mohamed said her sister's apartment was severely damaged. She joined thousands of others taking refuge in shelters set up by local authorities inside mosques. Her husband, who was on a business trip in Istanbul, hasn't been able to reunite with his family, yet. "The roads are dangerous and many are closed. It's safer to stay in Istanbul and (my sister) doesn't want to put his life at risk." Mohamed is full of hope that the crisis "will encourage the world to speak up and help Syria so that the people, who have no fault in this, would be able to live." "It's been disaster after disaster. Those who passed away were barely surviving ... from the war to the economic crisis that has only harmed the people."

DISASTER COULD LEAD TO PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA, ANXIETY

By Nebal Snan

KUWAIT: Clinical Psychologist Hassan Al-Mousawi said the earthquake could have adverse mental health effects not only on those who lived through the earthquake but also on anyone following the crisis. People with family in hard-hit areas are among the worst-affected, he expects, because they are only hearing about the earthquake second-hand.

"The experience of living through the earth-

quake will be difficult to digest and could lead to post-traumatic stress and a relentless feeling of helplessness. There's also the fear of an aftershock," he said. Such a catastrophic natural disaster could also lead to anxiety and a persistent fear of getting hit by an earthquake any second. "It's also natural for anyone hearing of the news, regardless of whether they have ties to the devastated areas or not, to feel compassion for the victims, and feel a strong urge to help in any way they can," he said.

For those outside the affected areas, such as the residents of Kuwait, one way to alleviate the sense of helplessness is to contribute to the aid efforts, if possible. Praying for the victims and connecting with Syrian and Turkish diasporas and offering them support could also help.