

Local

# TIMSS assessment a global indicator of education level

## Kuwait historically among lowest scorers despite improvement

By Khaled Al-Abdullahi

**KUWAIT:** Hundreds of grade 8 and grade 4 students across Kuwait took the TIMSS mathematics and science assessments to measure their performance in the two subjects. The tests, which were conducted by the National Center for Education Development in cooperation with the education ministry, were held in several schools across the country last week, as part of an international study that aims at evaluating the educational level of students in the country.

The 2023 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study is one of the best studies done in Kuwait for this purpose so far, because it evaluates eighth grade students who were included in the same study when they were in the fourth grade during the COVID-19 crisis. Students from 300 schools across the country took the test. "We will see the extent of the impact of the crisis on these students," said Nasser Al-Mutairi, a member of the media committee at the National Center for Education Development.

Conducted every four years since 1995, TIMSS measures how effective countries are in teaching mathematics and science. It's administered by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), headquartered in the Netherlands. Kuwait was one of the first Arab countries to hold this assessment, in 1995.

### Low 2019 scores

The 2019 TIMSS exams were held in over 50 countries and jurisdictions from all continents and tested students of both grades in both subjects and graded them based on their average scale scores. In 2019, Kuwait scored among the lowest grades in the two subjects. The top five scorers for grade 4 mathematics were: Singapore (625), Hong Kong (602), South Korea (600), Taiwan (599) and Japan (593). The coun-

tries topped the list with minor differences. Morocco (383), Kuwait (383), South Africa (374), Pakistan (328) and the Philippines (297) came last on the list.

As for the grade 8 mathematics exams, Singapore (616), Taiwan (612), South Korea (607), Japan (594) and Hong Kong (578) scored the highest. Oman (411), Kuwait (403), Saudi Arabia (394), South Africa (389) and Morocco (388) came last.

Singapore (595) was the top scorer once again in the grade 4 science category, closely followed by South Korea (588), Russia (567), Japan (562) and Taiwan (558). The lowest countries were Kuwait, Morocco, South Africa and the Philippines.

For eighth graders in the science exams, again Singapore, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and Russia topped the list, while Kuwait with 444 points just missed the bottom five countries, placing before Saudi Arabia (431), Morocco (394), Egypt (389), Lebanon (377) and South Africa (370).

### Improving education

The issue of education has been a public matter for years. According to the official document database of the National Assembly, there have been 1,470 MPs' questions addressed to the education minister from Aug 15, 2013 till date, many of which concern the quality of education in the country.

Principal of Abdellatif Al-Shamlan Intermediate School for Boys Bader Al-Shammari said more students participated in this year's test compared to 2019, with 27 students from his school taking part. "The future benefit of the study is to measure quality standards in education in Kuwait," he said. The General Director of the National Center for Education Development Amina Al-Jaber said the outcomes of the evaluation will be studied and used to develop education in Kuwait.

According to the ministry of finance, the budget allocated for the ministry's expenditure was KD



**KUWAIT:** Parents are seen taking their children to school in this file photo. - KUNA

1.843 billion in 2014/15, KD 1.673 billion in 2015/16, KD 1.726 billion in 2016/17, KD 1.864 billion in 2017/18, KD 2.070 billion in 2018/19 and KD 2.136 billion in the 2019/20 fiscal years. The numbers show the education budget has increased over the years.

The big spending seems to have reflected positively on Kuwait's scores in the TIMSS exams. When comparing 2015 to 2019 numbers, Kuwait is one of the participants with the most drastic

improvements across all categories. The results of the 2023 exams won't be out soon, but it is important to track the results of this year's exam in order to understand where we stand, how we compare with countries of the world, and how to improve our standings at the global level. Education is an important element in the future of any country, as countries that fall back in education almost always end up losing their global rankings.



**KUWAIT:** Canadian Ambassador to Kuwait Aliya Mawani meets with KRCS' delegates. — KUNA photos



**Canadian Ambassador to Kuwait Aliya Mawani**

## Canadian envoy commends Kuwait's humanitarian role

**KUWAIT:** Canadian Ambassador to Kuwait Aliya Mawani extolled on Sunday the humanitarian and relief role of Kuwait in helping disaster-affected peo-

ple around the world. Speaking to KUNA, Mawani said, after her meeting with the KRCS Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer, that KRCS contributed to highlighting the civilized aspect of Kuwait, the government and people, and has become known in helping in the humanitarian field, thanking Kuwait's speed in providing support to those in need.

She discussed with Sayer multiple issues in connection to humanitarian and voluntary work and ways to enhance them between both sides, appreciating KRCS' efforts to help the afflicted countries.

During the meeting, Mawani was briefed on the humanitarian programs implemented by KRCS internationally and locally, and its great role in supporting countries, she noted. In a similar statement to KUNA, Sayer welcomed Mawani's visit to the KRCS headquarters, stressing KRCS' keenness to participate in Kuwait's humanitarian efforts. The meeting mentioned the help provided by KRCS to affected people, as well as its most vital humanitarian actions and movements to provide relief and assistance to the affected areas, Sayer stated. — KUNA

### News in Brief

#### 34,837 traffic violations recorded

**KUWAIT:** The traffic department at the interior ministry recorded 34,837 violations during the period between April 29 until May 5. The ministry issued 41 residency permit violations during the same period, according to the public relations and media department at the interior ministry. "As part of the efforts of the sectors of the Ministry of the Interior to control violators and outlaws, the General Traffic Department issued a weekly statistic of its efforts, which included referring 85 people to the traffic department, referring 80 juveniles to the Juvenile Prosecution, and seizing 25 wanted vehicles during the period," the interior ministry announced. Moreover, 34 cars and 178 motorcycles were towed. The ministry arrested 19 wanted people, towed 25 warranted cars and recorded three seizures and one environmental violation.



**KHARTOUM:** Sudanese Army soldiers walk near armored vehicles stationed on a street in southern Khartoum, on May 6, 2023, amid ongoing fighting against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. — AFP



**KHARTOUM:** Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) delegates are seen standing in front of the fourth aid aircraft sent by Kuwait. — KUNA

## Kuwait sends more aid to crisis-hit Sudan

**KUWAIT:** The State of Kuwait on Sunday dispatched its fourth Air Force plane carrying 10 tons of food supplies to violence-hit Sudan. The aid aircraft is part of the recently announced airlift aiming at helping the Sudanese people amid their country's tough circumstances due to ongoing fighting there, Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Emergency Chief Yusuf Al-Mearaj told KUNA. Variation in Kuwait's relief and humanitarian aid is primarily meant to answer the basic needs of the Sudanese people, he said, elaborating that the country's humanitarian airlift is continuing as per blueprints and programs jointly worked out by the KRCS and

the ministries of foreign affairs, defense, health and finance. The fresh aid is part of Kuwait's humanitarian initiative: "Kuwait is by Your Side", which comes in the context of Kuwaiti-Sudanese relations and reflects the Kuwaiti humanitarian role in offering relief aid to the needy and affected people, he noted. The Kuwaiti cabinet had decided to dispatch urgent relief and medical aid to Sudan at the behest of the country's political leadership.

Multiple truce deals have been declared and quickly violated since fighting erupted between army and paramilitary forces on April 15 in the poverty-stricken country with a history of political instability. Fierce combat since then has killed at least 700 people, most of them civilians, wounded thousands and driven a mass of exodus of Sudanese and foreign nationals.

Envoys from Sudan's warring military factions — the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces — were reportedly in Jeddah for talks on Saturday, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister told

media, as international mediators pressed for an end to the three-week old conflict.

The US-Saudi initiative is the first serious attempt to end fighting that has turned parts of the Sudanese capital Khartoum into war zones and derailed an internationally backed plan to usher in civilian rule following years of unrest and uprisings. Riyadh and Washington earlier welcomed the "pre-negotiation talks" between the army and the RSF, and urged them to actively engage following numerous violated ceasefires.

Kuwait welcomed on Sunday the Saudi-US initiative to start the talks, said Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In a press statement, the ministry praised Saudi-US efforts for urging Sudanese parties to seriously get engaged in talks and dialogue in a bid to de-escalate tensions and halt military operations. The ministry reaffirmed Kuwait's stand based on calling for an immediate cessation of escalation and fighting in order to maintain Sudan's security and stability. — Agencies



#### Fires in Salmiya Mall, Rabiya school

**KUWAIT:** The public relations and media department at the Kuwait Fire Force announced that they received a report regarding a fire in a mall in Salmiya. "The Central Operations Department directed the Salmiya and Al-Bida fire stations to the location of the fire. Upon the arrival of the teams, it was found that the fire was in the kitchen of a restaurant in the basement of the complex. The fire was immediately extinguished and no injuries were reported," the KFF announced. Also, on Saturday, a report was received from the Central Operations Department, stating a fire at a school in Rabiya. The public relations and media department at the Kuwait Fire Force announced: "The firefighting teams were directed from Ardhiya and Farwaniya centers to the site of the incident. When the teams arrived, it was found that there was a fire in the air conditioning unit, which was contained without any injuries."