



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, received yesterday Sheikh Enseyah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, who presented him with a copy of a book on the life and achievements of Sheikh Salem Al-Homoud Al-Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

Public schools to start on Sept 27: Officials

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti government decided late Monday that the start date for public schools that will occur on a gradual basis will begin on Sept 27, Minister of Education Dr. Moudhi Al-Homoud said.

Al-Homoud, who is also Minister of Higher Education, said high-schools will start on Sept 27. Middle schools and grades four and five would follow on Oct 4, and finally grades one through three will begin on Oct 18. Al-Homoud said the government's decision was based on a proposal by a ministerial committee made up of the Ministries of Education and Health.

The committee proposed gradual start dates for all grades as a preventive

measure against swine flu, she said.

The gradual start aims at finalizing preparations of clinics and isolation rooms and the provision of cleaning materials and sterilizers inside schools. It also aims at ensuring teachers and nurses are ready to deal with any swine flu case, said Al-Homoud, in a drive to safeguard the safety of pupils.

The Minister said the gradual start would only apply to public schools, as private schools have already started this month because they were linked with programs from educational institutions abroad.

Al-Homoud said the start of study in colleges and Kuwait University would not change.

Meanwhile, head of the private kindergartens union, Dr. Mohammad Al-Refaei, recently asked that the decision to postpone the start date for kindergartens due to the swine flu threat be reconsidered. He maintained that that postponement be limited to kindergartens that do not abide by precautionary measures.

Al-Refaei issued his statements in a press release where he maintained that all kindergartens were informed about the importance of taking all of these preventive measures against the infection threat in accordance with the regulations of the state and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Furthermore, Al-Refaei commented

on the decision by stating that it not only damaged the educational processes of the children enrolled in the kindergartens, but it also put their parents in bad situations because they seek safe environments for their children while they attend their daily jobs and duties.

In addition, he pointed out that similar action did not take place in other countries, adding that this postponement does not help limit the infection since children can still be infected in public facilities, Al-Qabas reported.

He also criticized the approach by which the ministry announced their decision by opting to send it to the media instead of sending them an official letter.

Ministers' council demands interior minister's answer to accusations

KUWAIT: The ministers' council's investigative committee has reportedly informed interior minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Khalid Al-Sabah of the necessity to provide a prompt response to the accusations made against him by MP Musallam Al-Barrak in June of wasting public funds in pre-election advertising.

The committee has received an application from Al-Barrak to testify against the interior minister, but has postponed issuing a response until it receives Sheikh Jaber Al-Khalid's reply to the accusations.

The committee explained that the minister is legally required to testify against the MP's request. Sheikh Jaber Al-Khalid previously issued a detailed response to a report filed against him and finance minister Mustafa Al-Shamali, which was presented by lawyer Mubarak Al-Mutawwa.

The Public Prosecutor has so far received no reply from the interior minister about Section

One of the previous grilling document, which contains allegations that Sheikh Jaber Al-Khalid favored certain parties, paying them KD 5 million through the pre-election advertising contracts. The Public Prosecutor explained that what he has received to date from the minister is a letter which contained no detailed response to or rebuttal of the accusations.

Sheikh Jaber Al-Khalid said during his grilling that he had submitted some of the grilling questions to the Public Prosecutor for investigation, reported Al-Jarida.

It was subsequently discovered, however, that the letter sent by the minister was not accepted by the Public Prosecutor as it did not comply with the standard conditions for such documents, with the Public Prosecutor asking Sheikh Jaber Al-Khalid to instead submit a clear report naming those individuals who he wished to hold account.

MPs denounce criticism against Al-Homoud

KUWAIT: Officials said a number of MPs recently praised the "efforts and productivity" of Minister of Education Dr. Moudhi Al-Homoud in her handling of the issue of the swine flu virus. They also maintained that she was a "dependable national asset on the political scene." In that regard, the MPs rejected the "continuous and unjustified" attacks that Al-Homoud has been receiving and upheld the importance of giving the Cabinet and ministers their chance to regulate the duties bestowed upon them.

Furthermore, they said that the negative approach used against Al-Homoud could leave harmful effects on her ministry's operation in tackling the swine flu threat. MP Najji Al-Abdulhadi asserted on the importance of MPs cooperating with the minister given the huge efforts and duties that the Ministry of Education has to deal with. Meanwhile, MP Dr. Maasouma Al-Mubarak criticized the attacks that were directed at Al-Homoud, calling the demands for her resignation and threats to grill her as "unjustified and unfortunate."

She then maintained that Al-Homoud and her fellow ministers be given a chance to work unimpeded while holding her accountable if any failure to conduct her duties was detected, Annahar reported.

Al-Mubarak further called for the "overhyping" of the swine flu virus to be stopped. She maintained that there was no need to delay the start of the school year as long as preventive measures were taken.

in the news

Oil workers plan strike

KUWAIT: Khalid Al-Hajeri, the head of the Oil Services Company's workers' syndicate, has warned that if Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, the Minister of Oil and Information, continues to neglect his promises to increase workers' danger allowances and include backdated payments, they will have no choice but to stage a sit-in protest. In a press release issued on Monday, Al-Hajeri called on Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah to take prompt action to rectify the situation, which applies to industrial security staff, coastguard officials and others working with the company. The head and members of the syndicate met with the minister a month ago, the statement revealed, adding that he had promised to pay them additional allowances for the dangers and psychological stresses they face in performing their daily duties, reported Al-Qabas. However, it continued, these allowances have not yet been paid. A number of workers with the coastguard services reportedly decided against taking planned strike action after being informed of the minister's promise to increase the allowances, Al-Hajeri said, warning that if the minister continues to take no action, the workers feel they will have no option but to go ahead with their protest.

EPA's new structure

KUWAIT: Dr. Saleh Al-Moudhi, the head of the Environment Public Authority (EPA) has announced that the authority's new structure has almost been finalized. He explained that in its new form, the EPA will be able to conduct more missions to help protect the environment, as well as carrying out more stringent monitoring of local bodies' procedures and activities in this field. He also asserted that the authority's operations to monitor pollution levels resulting from the breakdown of the Mishref sewage plant and the subsequent pumping of raw sewage into the Gulf were continuing. Al-Moudhi further indicated that the EPA is in the process of submitting an official request to the Civil Service Commission asking that extra payments be made to the investigators working at the polluted sites to detect pollution levels, reported Al-Rai. He said that such incentives could encourage more young people to seek careers in Kuwait's environmental sector.

No charges against TV shows

KUWAIT: Officials said the Ministry of Information suspended a decision to refer a number of TV shows that are aired during Ramadan to the General Prosecution on charges of failing to finalize their licenses. The decision includes 16 locally produced TV shows that range between soap operas and comedy shows, Al-Rai reported. Meanwhile, information revealed that the ministry will summon the production companies that produced those shows in order to issue them warnings.

Asian University for Women opens in Bangladesh

By Rawan Khalid

KUWAIT: In an interview with the Program Manager of the Asian University for Women, Tomoko Saunders told the Kuwait Times about the story of the establishment of the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh. The project aimed to set up a university in Bangladesh for women of different cultural backgrounds who come from different countries of South Asia, South East Asia, and the Middle East.

"The idea is for this university to educate women who did not have the chance to continue their higher education, but who had a lot of potential and academic skills. Today, if we could educate them with a high level education, they will become future leaders for the society because there are many problems in the region, such as poverty and lack of education that they can be trained to address. We hope to graduate women leaders for the society and that they make real changes for the society," she said.

The university is private and independent. Students who are not able to pay tuition costs are provided with scholarships. The university also offers preparation classes in English, mathematics and science to prepare students for university study. The university then offers a three year bachelor's program as well as a master's program.

"We have rented buildings because we don't have enough money to spend on a new campus. At the moment, we are interested in building our own building in Bangladesh. The university aims to offer courses that will tackle issues such as health, hunger, poverty, security, environment, education and civil rights. We have received strong support from the government, including a charter and donated land. Our international partners include Stanford University (USA), Aalborg University (Denmark), and Imperial College (UK). We expect to bring talented leaders who make a difference in society and who will provide aspirations to the young women to



Tomoko Saunders

promote understanding of different cultures and to bring changes to the education system.

"Also our mission is to prepare women of high ability and potential to meet society's challenges and effect positive change through an innovative, rigorous curriculum that encompasses the liberal arts, sciences and professional training while developing thoughtful and ethical leaders. Our goal is to cultivate successive generations of women leaders who possess the skills and resources to address the challenges of social and economic advancement of their communities.

"The major donors for the

AUW include Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Goldman Sachs Foundation, US Agency for International Development, Open Society Institute, Rockefeller Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, MSST Foundation, and John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

"We also received support from Dr. Rasha Al-Sabah, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Higher Education of Kuwait, and Lulwa Al-Mulla, Secretary General of the Women's Cultural and Social Society.

For more information: www.asian-university.org



KUWAIT: Honey is commonly known for its curative properties; it is useful for schoolchildren, who could come into contact with swine flu sufferers.

Swine flu concerns boosts honey sales

KUWAIT: Growing concerns about a possible outbreak of swine flu in Kuwait has prompted citizens and expatriates in the country to turn to natural methods of strengthening their immune systems, including regular intakes of honey.

The lack of an effective vaccine against the potentially fatal virus has increased public concern, especially on the eve of the beginning of the school year, explained Youssef Al-Faresi, a specialist in traditional medicine, on Monday.

"Honey is commonly known for its stigmatization of the antibodies; it is useful for schoolchildren, who could come into contact with swine flu patients," he said.

Al-Faresi noted an apparent rise in demand for honey in August, saying that 20 percent more honey was sold in August compared to the previous month.

"Recent studies conducted by western scientists confirmed

the traditional concepts of the positive impact of honey on the immune system," he said.

"Honey is an affordable natural way that could help man to lead a healthy life when taken in its raw form on a regular daily basis."

Although honey is recommended in its raw form, there are some lab-tested patented formulas that proved to offer more effective methods for enhancing acquired immunity, he added.

Al-Faresi cautioned against the use of unpatented formulas even if they provide temporary benefits.

Since the first cases were reported in Kuwait in April, the H1N1 (swine flu) virus has infected 1,779 people in the country, including 443 who reportedly contracted the virus in the last week alone.

The Ministry of Health affirmed that 99 percent of the sufferers have recovered completely. — KUNA



KUWAIT: File photo of a classrooms at the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh.

in my view

Our region's view of women

By Fouad Al-Obaid

As Ramadan unveils a series of soap operas specially prepared for the occasion, I can only pause to consider the implications of these shows and the way they shape societies' conception of itself.

As I watch the various shows, it becomes clear that the violence projected is targeted to reinforce the desired status quo, viz. "Women are good for nothing, and are objects to be subjugated for either economical reasons, religious conceptions or social ideals."

If we place women in the context of culture, many will argue that the way many women are treated in our part of the world is justified as being part of our culture - and I'm not talking only about Kuwait, rather about the wider region.

Our region is filled with contradictions, and many issues concerning these are subject to various taboos that are justified by religious edicts or social caste.

If one simply reflects on the notion of culture, what is culture? What is this social norm that we grow into, one which, ironically, we did not create ourselves? Why do we feel obliged to follow culture, and why don't we instead come to shape the culture we want to live in contemporarily? These are a few questions that I believe are worthwhile to consider.

Many in our region believe that the women are inferior to men. A majority believes that women are a source of evil, and it seems that many are lost between the fact that women are a prized blessing that are to be protected behind closed veils and creatures that are to be subjugated and infantilized - in some countries

women by law is inferior to a male child, who has more rights and privileges!

I think that our region needs to start to place itself in the context of a growing international globalizing world that is creating platforms for cultural exchanges and assimilation that force the wise amongst us to re-think both culture and the place of women in it.

At such a point, many will argue that my ideas emanate from the west and that I am putting forward a western agenda; in response to such claims, I believe that we need to stop externalizing things and portraying them as tools of others.

Instead, I believe that we need to start a self-examination process whereby we take a deeper look at our modern contemporary societies and start to fix the many gaps and grey areas that we find today, which I believe should not exist!

If we take the case of Kuwait, a woman can be secluded behind closed doors, veiled from head to toe or she can end up as an MP or minister and is able to dress as lightly as she desires. Despite the right, for instance, to travel alone, she nevertheless still operates in a male-dominated society and is held accountable to it!

If our region is to develop and is to move forward as a viable partner in the context of the ever more global world, we need to begin considering the way our societies function, and how we want them to function in the years to come.

I believe that such a notion should be placed in the context of economic development, more specifically in the context of the future economic society we want to live in. Ultimately, the way women are treated and allowed to evolve will come to shape how our societies will grow and evolve.

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