

Local

Kuwait sends much-needed aid to refugees afflicted by snowstorm

Relief supplies sent to thousands in Syria and Lebanon

KUWAIT: In shadow of the winter peak marked with biting cold, heavy snow and rains in the Levant, Kuwait has hurriedly sent convoys of relief supplies to thousands of relocated Syrians and refugees in Syria and Lebanon. A convoy of 20 large trucks packed with food, heating materials, mattresses and beddings has recently headed to Syria to deliver the supplies to more than 2,000 families, some 10,000 people, suffering from the heavy rains and floods; as well as to impoverished Syrians.

Walid Al-Suwailem, the head of Syria and Turkey bureau of Al-Rahma International Charity, said that the relief supplies were dispatched, with support by Kuwaiti charities, donors and 'diwaniyahs' and in cooperation with four Syrian relief and welfare associations. 'Warmness of the winter' was the motto of Al-Rahma's relief convoy for the needy to the Levant and Turkey, where many regions hosting thousands of Syrian refugees have been blanketed with snow, witnessed floods and damage related to the severe and stormy weather. Suwailem expressed gratitude to Kuwait's leader His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and various departments and associations that lent support for such ongoing humanitarian activities-name-

ly the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Simultaneously, Al-Rahma organized its first relief operation in Lebanon as part of its winter campaign there, themed 'below zero.' Teams distributed food, heating fuel to 300 Syrian families in a number of shanty towns in the Bekaa valley, a lush plain in eastern Lebanon recently shrouded with heavy snow

Gale winds, snow ravage refugees' tents

resulting from the notorious 'Norma' storm, as branded by the local media. Chairman of the International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq said in a statement that the IICO has mobilized all available resources and volunteers to relieve Syrian refugees who have taken brunt of the snow storm in Syria's neighboring coun-

tries, namely Lebanon, where snow has ravaged the tent camps and made warming for the refugees difficult to attain. The first relief trip to Lebanon aimed at delivering food parcels to 300 Syrian families and heating fuel, in addition to food supplies. Some of the 1.5 million Syrians who have fled war in their country live in rag-tag tents in the Bekaa plain. The storm, he says, has ravaged some of the camps and has taken lives. Gale winds have uprooted tents leaving scores of refugees without a roof over their heads, amid swamping rain water that



BEIRUT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society members help distribute aid material to Syrian refugees in Lebanon. —KUNA

seeped into tents. Maatouq appealed to the international community to intervene to relieve the refugees in Lebanon, including the eastern region of Ersal, noting that the inflowing aid supplies have remained largely insufficient for the large number of refugees.

In Ersal, a town in the border region, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society distributed aid materials to

600 Syrian families, the society General Secretary Maha Al-Barjas said, noting that the hard weather had aggravated the refugees' hardships. In Ghana, a \$327,000, given by donors in Kuwait, was delivered to support low-income families and orphans. In Gaza, Kuwait gave a grant to establish a birth ward in Al-Shifaa Hospital. Kuwait has donated up to \$200 million to help rebuild Gaza. — KUNA

Kuwait delivers aid to Syrian refugees in East Lebanon

BEIRUT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), upon instructions of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, delivered yesterday relief aid to some 600 Syrian refugee families residing in Bekaa, east of Lebanon. Secretary General of KRCS Maha Al-Barjas said that necessities and relief aid were delivered to the refugees in six camps in Saadnayel town. She added that the main goal of the campaign - in coordination with the Lebanese Red Cross and the



BEIRUT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) workers deliver relief aid to Syrian refugee families residing in Bekaa, east of Lebanon. — KUNA

Kuwaiti Embassy - was to lesser the suffering of the refugees facing the harsh winter conditions. Last Wednesday, KRCS Chairman of the Board Dr Hilal Al-Sayer announced that His

Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah ordered an urgent relief aid campaign worth \$1.5 million aimed at alleviating the suffering of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon. — KUNA

Kuwait spearheading Gaza desalination project

BRUSSELS: Kuwait is playing a dominant role to push for construction of a desalination plant in Gaza aimed at alleviating the water hardships being faced by two million Gazans. "We want to send a message to the people in Gaza that this project is not dead. It is alive and the actual construction has already started," said Dr Mohammed Sadeqi, engineering advisor in the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED).

Sadeqi made his statement after participating in the one-day Coordination Meeting on the Gaza Central Desalination Program hosted by the European Commission in Brussels which ended Friday evening. He noted that Kuwait's overall contribution to the reconstruction of Gaza is \$200 million as a grant administered by the KFAED. From this amount, \$60 million is designated for the Gaza desalination plant.

The project consists of building a desalination plant and water conveyors that take the produced water to northern and central Gaza. More than two million people will benefit from the project, he noted. The project is in the phase of completing the financial plan. Fifty percent of the total cost of the project valued at over 500 million euro (\$568 million) will come from Arab countries and the other fifty percent from international donors.

The Arab donors are managed by the Islamic Development Bank, while KFAED is managing its own contribution which is \$60 million. The Arab countries have already committed the fifty percent. "There is some deficiency on the part of international donors. So this meeting was aimed at coordinating our efforts so that we can attract other donors to participate in this important project," said the Kuwaiti representative.

The total commitment by the Arab side and the international

donors has reached to about 80 to 85 percent, he clarified. "We are here to attract new donors to fill the gap. It is always encouraging to have these kind of meetings to have new ideas to press ahead with the project. KFAED is taking the lead in starting the actual implementation of the project," said Sadeqi. "We started by building the conveyors that will take the water when it is produced by the desalination plant. We started in July 2018," he said. "We think the whole project will take another three-and-a-half years or so to complete, and by 2023 all the components of the project will be finished," he stated. Sadeqi described the situation in Gaza as "very dire and very difficult." "There is scarcity of water resources. The underground water is salty. There is sea water intrusion in the aquifer that they rely on to get their water supply," said the Kuwaiti engineer.

The desalination plant that currently exists in Gaza are very small and that is why they are looking forward to this big 150,000 cubic meters of desalination plant, he explained. The desalination project also consists of power generation so that it can supplement the current capacity of electricity they have. "If we do not have clean water this will lead to diseases, to anarchy and to so many bad things. We want stability in that region so that people can focus on development," said Sadeqi. "This is our message, to work together, cooperate together with international donors to try to eliminate the suffering of the people," he said.

Besides the EU, representative from the World bank, the Islamic Development bank, the European Investment bank, the KFAED as well as other international donors attended the Brussels meeting. The EU on 20 March 2018 had hosted a pledging conference on the Gaza Central Desalination Plant and Associated Works Project in Brussels. — KUNA



Dr Mohammed Sadeqi

Kuwait funds UN programs in Syria

NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi, handed over financial contributions from Kuwait to a number of UN specialized agencies to complement Kuwait's efforts to fund the UN programs in Syria. Ambassador Otaibi presented a donation of \$5 million from Kuwait to UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore and another \$4 million to the

Director of WFP's New York office Koko Yoshiyama. He also made a Kuwaiti contribution of \$100,000 to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

In a statement to the press, Otaibi noted that this package of Kuwaiti contributions of \$9.1 million, which was delivered to the UN specialized agencies in New York, aim to alleviate the human suffering in Syria and improve the humanitarian and living conditions of Syrian refugees through specialized programs of the UN. He affirmed that Kuwait plays a pivotal role in the international humanitarian work, especially through UN specialized agencies, stressing in that regard that the partnership between Kuwait and the UN is solid and historic. — KUNA



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi hands over financial contributions from Kuwait to support ICRC's programs. — KUNA

Kuwait FM sends letter to ICRC chief

GENEVA: Kuwait's permanent representative at the UN and other international organizations Jamal Al-Ghuneim on Friday handed a letter from Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) President Peter Maurer. The letter

has something to do with the mechanisms of tackling worldwide humanitarian crises, along with preparations for Kuwait-ICRC strategic dialogue, the Kuwaiti diplomat said. He added that he had also delivered a cheque worth \$3 million to the ICRC chief in order to support his organization's programs for Syrian refugees amid severe cold weather conditions in the region. Meanwhile, the ICRC chief said following the meeting with the Kuwaiti diplomat that the imminent strategic dialogue between the ICRC and Kuwait is of paramount significance to humanitarian cooperation in the region's countries. — KUNA



GENEVA: Kuwait's permanent representative at the UN Jamal Al-Ghuneim meets with International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) President Peter Maurer. — KUNA

Kuwait delivers 8 tons of food in northern Iraq

IRBIL: Kuwait's Consulate General in Irbil has delivered some eight tons of food to internally displaced persons in Ashti camp in Sulaymaniyah governorate of Iraqi Kurdistan. The food is provided by Kuwait Society for Relief as part of 'Kuwait is by Your Side' campaign, and as an implementation of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's generous humanitarian initiative. Kuwait's Consul General in Irbil Dr Omar Al-Kandari said on Friday. Kuwait will continue to support Iraqi internally displaced persons (IDPs) in all around the country, particularly during winter season, Kandari said, noting the Ashti IDP Camp houses a large number of displaced families. He also pointed out that his meeting with Sulaymaniyah Governor Dr Hafal Abu Baker, earlier, addressed ways to



IRBIL: Food aid delivered by Kuwait to internally displaced persons in northern Iraq. — KUNA

secure the delivery of Kuwaiti aid to IDPs in the province. Furthermore, Kandari wished the displaced ones safe and swift return to their homelands. — KUNA