

## Local

# Health measure non-compliance, family visits behind COVID-19 spike in Kuwait

## Hawally emerges out of lockdown; curfew hours reduced

**KUWAIT:** Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah said Thursday failure to adhere to precautionary measures and over-indulgence in family visits during lockdown has led to further spread of coronavirus, warning the situation might "get out of hand." Based on state figures, the Cabinet decided to maintain the current first phase of the five-phase restart plan with a continuous reassessment of the health situation, until health standards required to move on safely to the second stage are reached, he said. The minister was speaking to reporters in a remote press conference, following a Cabinet meeting chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, aimed at discussing the health ministry report on the situation.

"Today we are able to control (the pandemic) and we do not want to reach a stage where the pandemic controls us," he said. Many fathers and mothers were tested positive and admitted to the intensive care unit in spite of staying at home, he said. They caught the virus after hosting gatherings and not adhering to social distancing rules or washing their hands, he added. He urged the public to cooperate with authorities in order to proceed to the next phase, quoting His Highness the Prime Minister, who said that "we are at a crossroads." The criteria for moving from one stage to the other are the rate of infection transmission, the stability of patients' numbers for a sufficient period, low levels

of family occupancy at ICUs and hospitals and low infection rates.

Meanwhile, the lifting of the isolation of some areas in the country came after a drop in infection rates there, he explained. Despite having recorded "very good" improvements in four criteria, the rate of transmission remained 1.07 (the normal being one), the minister said, adding this necessitated the continuation of this phase, which will be reassessed over the coming days. He went on to urge the importance of wearing masks, social distancing and washing hands, leaving home only for extreme necessity.

### Eased restrictions

Asked about the application of dexamethasone in Kuwait after its success in limiting coronavirus-related deaths in the UK, he said the drug was available and abundant throughout Kuwaiti hospitals; however, the amount and timing of administering the drug has not yet been determined. He commended the study, saying it has "very good" results amongst coronavirus patients, suffering from acute respiratory problems.

The Kuwaiti government decided Thursday to

ease restrictions imposed due to curb spread of coronavirus as of today but would not allow public sector's workers to return to their offices this week. The government decided to extend the first phase of a plan to restore normal life because of the high number of infections among the Kuwaiti citizens, government spokesman Tareq Al-Mezrem told the online news conference. He said the Ministry of Health would be assessing the health situation of the virus and would refer the assessment to the Cabinet this week. He added the Cabinet assigned the ministers to provide services for the public as of today.

Mezrem said the government also decided to change curfew hours to start at 7:00 pm until 5:00 am starting today morning. He said the government decided to lift a lockdown on areas of Hawally, Nuqra, Maidan restaurants, restaurants and shops to host a maximum of five people at a time and in case there are lines, the distance must be at least one meter between people. The Ministry of Commerce launched a website ([www.moci.shop](http://www.moci.shop)) to enable people to book appointments to shop at co-operative societies in their areas. The Public Authority for Industry also announced that companies can apply to evacuate their workers from Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Mahboula. To do so, they must fill a 'workers evacuation form' available on [www.pai.gov.kw](http://www.pai.gov.kw), and send the form via email to: [Jasiri@moh.gov.kw](mailto:Jasiri@moh.gov.kw).



### 'Limited' air travel for citizens

Hawally and some blocks in Khaitan as of today. The government, said Mezrem, also allowed limited air travel for citizens with critical health conditions who should travel at their own expense. Students who must travel to attend their tests will be allowed to do so, he said, as well as citizens who have foreign wife or husband abroad and the trip should be for



Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah

30 days minimum.

Any person who wants to travel should submit a request for the Ministry of Interior 10 days before the trip, he said, and citizens should pay for their treatment in case of contraction of the virus. The government compels passengers wishing to come to Kuwait to provide a copy of a certificate in Arabic that they conducted a PCR test four days before the trip, providing they are clean of the virus, said Mezrem. —KUNA

### In my view

## Beware of rumors



By Abdellatif Sharaa

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There are circumstances and events that produce different reactions from the same people, yet there are those whose specialty is spreading rumors, most of which are negative, baseless and even destructive, in addition to rumors that are spread by enemies to cause confusion and create rifts in a society's unity.

We have seen in different places and countries unidentified people appearing all of a sudden on social media and taking advantage of certain events or crises and use them to serve their own personal interests, while claiming they are close to decision makers, although they lack any knowledge about what they claim.

Rumors can produce major social problems due to creating illusions and raising false expectations, nothing of which will materialize. Some rumors may cause psychological issues among certain classes of people as they worry about uncertainty about the future, including their livelihood.

They may create rifts among members of the same family, as each member formulates their own opinion and insists on it, to the point that some families may break up because of a false claim, and we all know that family rifts are very hard to mend and leave bitter memories that will not be erased for years and years.

Rumors may compromise national security, as one may not realize that their rumor will expose their country to foreign danger, especially when it contains contradicting information about an issue, which in turn creates confusion in the society and allows for many to start doubting statements of authorities. They may even spread fears and scare the entire population.

I noticed in some countries that rumors have put tremendous pressure on their governments, because they were widespread and gave people high expectations, so decisions and legislations were made in a hasty fashion, only to be revoked or significantly amended later.

Rumors, when they are spread deliberately by officials of some countries against others, may affect the trust between governments and the economic components in them, especially in the private sector, as one institution doubts the other and this may continue for a very long time. Let us not forget what rumors can do to stock markets and how difficult it is to recover if damage occurs.

Please avoid rumors - do not believe them, do not follow them. Be vigilant and aware, think deeply and use logic!

Allah Almighty says: "O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful."

—Holy Quran (49:6)

## Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait has recorded 38,678 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of Friday, in addition to 313 deaths. With the exception of 193 cases in intensive care, all infected cases are in stable condition and are recovering in quarantined locations designated by the government for this purpose, while thousands have been discharged from quarantine after exhibiting no symptoms during their 14-day quarantine period, the Ministry of Health confirmed. Meanwhile, 30,109 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 8,175 people receiving treatment and 23 quarantined.

### Curfew

Kuwait imposed a three-week partial curfew starting May 31 (from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am), as part of a five-phase plan for a gradual return to normal life, brought to a standstill by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The curfew hours were later reduced to start 7:00 pm and end at 5:00 am, starting from June 21, 2020. The first phase included a total lockdown on Farwaniya, Khaitan, and Hawally, joining Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh which were put under lockdown earlier. The lockdown ended in Hawally and Khaitan on June 21, 2020.

Activities to resume in first phase included home deliveries of restaurants, telecommunication companies, food retailers, companies' transportation of employees, gas stations, private clinics and car workshops. The second phase will see the curfew shortened to be between 9:00 pm and 6:00 am, while resuming work in the government and private sectors with the workforce being less than 30 percent, in addition to resumption of constructions, banking sector, malls opening for eight hours and according to special instructions, parks and pickups from restaurants.

The third phase would see an end of curfew, and health authorities would be assessing situation of areas under lockdown. It would see increase of workforce to less than 50 percent. Visits for social care homes would be allowed, reopening of hotels, resorts and hotel apartments. Taxis will be allowed to operate with only one passenger, and mosques would be allowed to perform Friday prayers.

Phase four would see an increase in workforce, restaurants would be receiving customers but with restrictions, and public transportation resumed but with distancing. All activities would resume in phase five, government and private sector returned to normal, families could gather, weddings and graduation ceremonies, health clubs and gyms to reopen, as well as cinemas and theaters.

Mosques in the so-called 'model residential areas' reopened their doors for worshippers on June 10 amid strict health precautionary measures. Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs Mohammad Al-Afasi said that mosques in commercial, markets and heavily-populated areas will remain closed for the time being. Worshippers must wear face masks, keep social distancing between queues and between worshippers must be strictly observed. Worshippers must bring their own mats so they do not get in contact with mosque carpets. Mosques will reopen five minutes before prayer time and close 10 minutes after prayer.

Earlier, Kuwait imposed a total curfew from May 10 to May 30, allowing room for people to walk out for daily exercise between 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm, and to shop at co-ops and supermarkets once every six days during the curfew hours by making an appointment through [www.moci.shop](http://www.moci.shop). Before that, Kuwait enforced a country-wide partial curfew from 5:00 pm to 6:00 am, which was later extended to start from 4:00 pm until 8:00 am during Ramadan, while allowing restaurants

and food stores to make home deliveries from 5:00 pm until 1:00 am. The government also locked down Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh in a bid to contain the spread of the virus and enable health workers to test inhabitants. Earlier, the government decided to close all shopping malls, beauty salons and barber shops as part of its measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The government also allowed supermarkets, restaurants and shops to host a maximum of five people at a time and in case there are lines, the distance must be at least one meter between people. The Ministry of Commerce launched a website ([www.moci.shop](http://www.moci.shop)) to enable people to book appointments to shop at co-operative societies in their areas. The Public Authority for Industry also announced that companies can apply to evacuate their workers from Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Mahboula. To do so, they must fill a 'workers evacuation form' available on [www.pai.gov.kw](http://www.pai.gov.kw), and send the form via email to: [Jasiri@moh.gov.kw](mailto:Jasiri@moh.gov.kw).

### Precautions

Kuwait halted all commercial flights until further notice, and has sent special flights to repatriate Kuwaitis back home from countries affected with the virus' spread. Kuwait took all measures to test Kuwaitis repatriated from infected areas for potential infection. Kuwait had required all expatriates who arrived from travel on March 1 and beyond to visit Kuwait International Fairground where the Ministry of Health has set up a center to test people for possible infection. Meanwhile, the Cabinet announced on April 9 the operation of all airline flights for expats who are wishing to return back to their countries. Authorities also announced a public holiday in the country from March 12 to May 28, with work resuming on May 31, while entities providing vital services will remain open. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education has suspended classes for March at all public and private schools (for both students and teaching staffs); first from March 1 to March 12, and later extended it until March 29, before eventually suspending schools until August for grade 12 and October for other stages. State departments have been on high alert to take precautions against the potential spread of the virus. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has taken measures to make sure that facial masks, hand sanitizers and other goods remain accessible to the public.

Kuwait suspended issuing entry permits and visas unless those issued through diplomatic missions. The Interior Ministry issued an amnesty allowing residency violators to leave the country between April 1 and April 30 without paying any fines or airfare with a chance to return to Kuwait later. The amnesty was issued in view of the circumstances the country is currently going through and as part of the precautionary measures taken to fight the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). During the amnesty period, individuals desiring to procure valid residencies in Kuwait and were willing to pay the fines without being subjected to investigations were allowed to pay the fines and legalize their status if they meet the required conditions.

### Hotlines

The Ministry of Health has set the following hotlines to receive inquiries about the coronavirus 24/7: 24970967 - 96049698 - 99048619.

The Education Ministry set the following hotlines to receive inquiries on school closures related to the anti-coronavirus measures:

- 24970967 (24/7 hotline)
- 51575591 (Capital Educational Zone)
- 51576117 (Hawally Educational Zone)
- 51576576 (Farwaniya Educational Zone)
- 51577055 (Jahra Educational Zone)

- 51577655 (Ahmadi Educational Zone)
- 51577951 (Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Zone)
- 51578171 (Religious Studies Department)
- 51588599 (Private Education Department)
- 51592515 (Services Department)
- 51594544 (Public Relations Department)

### Medicine delivery

Kuwait's Ministry of Health (MOH) launched a new medicine delivery service for people in Kuwait, which they can use to order medications to be delivered during curfew hours. The medications will be delivered within 72 hours after the order is submitted. To place an order, patients should send a WhatsApp to the numbers for the hospitals and medical centers as listed below. The patient should include their name, Civil ID number, hospital or clinic file number, mobile phone number and the medicine needed to the following numbers:

- Amiri Hospital: 50880699
- Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital: 50880755
- Farwaniya Hospital: 50880852
- Adan Hospital: 50880908
- Jahra Hospital: 50881066
- Sabah Hospital: 97632660
- Jaber Hospital: 96992079
- Ibn Sina Hospital: 99613948
- Chest Hospital: 99258749
- Razi Hospital: 97633487
- Kuwait Cancer Control Center: 96735242
- Psychiatric Hospital: 97350113
- Physiotherapy Hospital: 99824037
- Maternity Hospital: 98559531
- As'ad Al-Hamad Dermatology Center: 98514508
- Zain Hospital: 97552031
- NBK Hospital: 96931761
- Al-Rashed Allergy Hospital: 94162470
- Infectious Diseases Hospital: 96989164
- Palliative Care Hospital: 94024786
- Sabah Al-Ahmad Urology Center: 90952469
- KFH Addiction Treatment Center: 94169363

Meanwhile, all licensed pharmacies in Kuwait delivering medicine are allowed to continue their services 24 hours a day. The Ministry of Health is also asking doctors and nurses affiliated with the private medical sector to volunteer in order to contribute to the fight against the virus. Volunteering is available through the link: <http://volunteering.q8-ehelth.com>. The ministry had closed all private clinics and medical centers effective March 22, 2020 until further notice.

### Mental health assistance

The Kuwait Psychological Association (KPA) is providing consultation through the phone for people suffering from the psychological impacts of coronavirus. Different doctors are working on the hotline in different timings as follows:

Dr Rashed Al-Sahl: on Monday and Wednesday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9797-6168.

Dr Fahad Al-Tasha: daily from 8:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 9904-8258.

Dr Othman Al-Asfour: daily 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm. Call 9938-5350.

Dr Mohammed Al-Khaldi (head of this team): daily 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Call 9903-6470.

Dr Ahmad Al-Khaldi: daily 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9910-7965.

Dr Muneera Al-Qattan: Monday and Wednesday 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9953-3108.

Dr Zainab Al-Saffar: Sunday and Thursday 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9954-9908.

Dr Sameera Al-Kandari: Tuesday 9:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 6770-9434.

Dr Kawthar Al-Yaqout: Monday and Wednesday 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 5521-0088.

For information and other concerns, call 9401-4283.