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Kuwait sees 231 new COVID-19 cases, three deaths

KUWAIT: Kuwait said yesterday that 231 new coronavirus infections were registered over the past 24 hours, raising the total to 142,426. Meanwhile, three fatalities were recorded over the same period, which upped the country's COVID-19 death toll to 878, the health ministry said. The ministry had earlier reported that 524 patients had recovered from the virus over the past 24 hours, raising total recoveries to 136,413. The number of people hospitalized with the virus stood yesterday at 5,135, with 76 of them in intensive care units, according to ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad, who revealed that 4,827 swab tests were conducted over the same period raising the total to 1,091,469. Dr Sanad went on to urge the public to abide by health precautions, mainly social distancing, which he said is the only way to halt the spread of the virus. — KUNA

Indian embassy sets up helpdesk

KUWAIT: The embassy of India has set up a helpdesk at its premises for assistance of those who fall in the category of the special announcement made by the Kuwait government for regulation of stay or exit from Kuwait. Information on the announcement is also available at the helpline numbers of the embassy. These numbers are: +965 - 65806158, 65806735, 65807695 and 65808923 from 8am to 8pm, +965 - 65809348 from 8 pm to 8 am. Those who require travel documents may visit the helpdesk during office hours. Any Indian national not having passport and residency and if he has not applied for emergency certificate yet, may do so by filling the EC form and deposit the same either at the boxes kept at Indian passport offices at Al-Sharq, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Fahaheel and at the embassy.

Kuwait remains committed to creating balance in global market: Oil Minister

Kuwait participates in OPEC, OPEC+ ministerial meetings

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Oil and Acting Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel and Kuwait's Governor of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Haitham Al-Ghais are set to participate in the OPEC 180th Ministerial Meeting today and the 12th OPEC plus Ministerial Meeting tomorrow through videoconference. Fadhel said in a statement released by the Oil Ministry that Kuwait continues its cooperation and full commitment to increase production levels according to OPEC quota in order to create a balance in the global oil markets. He mentioned that Kuwait is still playing an effective role in the negotiations and discussions, which led to the adoption of many OPEC decisions, adding that OPEC's decisions brought stability and confidence to the oil market and increasing the oil sector's contribution to the global economy. Regarding the OPEC meeting, Fadhel said that the global oil market is looking forward to the influential role of state members to stabilize the oil market, especially in the next phase. OPEC appreciated Kuwait's role in advancing the desired cooperation between all member states in the organization in order to achieve balance and stability in the global oil market.

New deal

OPEC hosts the two meetings today and tomorrow to discuss prospects of maintaining the oil production's cut. The oil sector stakeholders are scheduled to celebrate the possibility of hammering out a new deal whether to keep the decrease of the crude output by 7.7 million barrels per day. On the table is a recommendation of the joint OPEC-non-OPEC ministerial committee to slash production in a bid to boost markets' stability. The virtual sessions coincide with OPEC's 60th anniversary and fourth anniversary of the coalition, established on December 10, 2016.

Kuwaiti doctor wins at Global Awards in Morocco

KUWAIT: Dr Abdullah Al-Ajeel from the Kuwait Ministry of Health received the Professional Excellence Award for the year 2020 in the field of health at the level of Arab countries. The award is part of the fifth session of the Global Awards of Arab Best Foundation for the year 2020, held recently in Marrakesh, Morocco. The Secretary-General of the Best Arab Award, Abdullah

OPEC+ crude producers, in April, trimmed the output by 9.7 million bpd, 10 percent of the global demand that fell at the time due to ramifications of the coronavirus crisis. Sources close to OPEC said yesterday the conferees would seek to capitalize on the noticeable recovery of the oil prices that hit \$46 pb, highest level since outbreak of the pandemic late last year. Participants in the OPEC+ gathering would look into the latest regular report by the organization that predicted demand increase for OPEC crudes next year at a rate of 5.2 million bpd as compared to 2020. In light of this forecast, the

Moreover in this vein, observers allude, as another factor for the prices' reasonable level; to states' latest financial incentives' policies, intended to relieve cash-strapped citizens and jobless; in the shadow of the corona crisis that paralyzed wide sectors of the businesses.



Oil Minister Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel

Growing reserves

OPEC Secretary General Mohammad Sanusi Barkindo has acknowledged that balancing supply and demand has become harder due to global reserves' growth by a staggering one billion bpd since start of this year. The crude reserves' glut could have been much bigger had the OPEC+ countries made no significant efforts to maintain the market balance, Barkindo believes. The producers' commitment to the output cut reached a remarkable and record level of 100 percent in November, according to many observers. Moreover, they believe that the conferees will opt to maintain the current level of the crude production in the first half of the coming year (2021).

Statistics showed that costs of facing the second wave of the virus exceeded \$20 trillion, equivalent to 20 percent of the global gross product. OPEC noted in its regular report, released last week, that the demand for the OPEC crudes, in 2020, dropped by 200,000 bpd to stand at 22.1 million bpd, 7.2 million bpd less as compared to 2019. Additionally, the organization predicted in its report that this demand would reach, next year, 27.9 million bpd, some 5.6 million bpd higher than that of 2020. — KUNA



Efforts to capitalize on price recovery

decision makers will study duration of the output cut. Although current price remained short of the producing states' aspiration to see it at the level of \$60 pb to be compatible with the price upon which their budgets had been projected, they appeared generally satisfied with the latest price level, considering the unchecked spread of the virus globally.

Observers link the price improvement to the US presidential process, high hopes upcoming mass production of vaccines will curb the contagion along with the forecast such a success will dissuade states' leaders from ordering further lockdowns giving way for restoration of normal life and recovery of industries namely those that require energy, in addition to restoration of regular air transports.

AbdulKareem, said in a statement, Sunday that the winners were selected among a group of Arab competencies that lead major institutions from all over the Arab world. The award's supreme committee and its branch in various Arab countries are concerned with the process of nominating individuals and institutions in accordance with the internal controls approved for these committees, he said. In selecting the winners, he indicated that the expert committees use modern evaluation methods to measure the rates of ability, compliance, and administrative excellence, levels of popularity and attractiveness of services, performance, and productivity.

Meanwhile, the representative of the Higher Committee for the Best Arab Award, Mohammad

Al-Kandiri, said in a similar statement that the idea of the award came from the basis of the Arab nation's permanent and renewed need for creativity and excellence in all fields. Dr Abdullah Al-Ajeel is the recipient of several awards at the local, Gulf, regional and international levels, including 6 awards from the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, Kuwait Electronic Prize in the field of electronic sciences, in the field of e-learning, and in the field of electronic inclusion. He also received the Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Prize twice and the Creativity Medal from the Bahrain Conference for Technology Innovation, the most recent of which was the 2017 Information Summit Award from UNESCO-United Nations. — KUNA

Court ruling a win for press freedom in Kuwait

KUWAIT: In a new court ruling seen as a victory to liberties in general and freedom of the press in Kuwait in particular, the felonies court chaired by Judge Abdullah Al-Othman confirmed that newspapers will not be indicted if they publish genuine news, even if the names of concerned officials are mentioned.

The criminal court exonerated an editor-in-chief for publishing the name of an engineer after an MP demanded to hold him to account through a parliamentary question, which was published by the paper. The court said newspapers cannot be held to account or convicted in cases of publishing official news, even if it mentions names, because it did not accuse anyone - rather it was reporting facts, Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported yesterday.

Lawyers and legal experts considered this ruling a new victory for freedom of expression, adding that the Kuwait judiciary gives journalistic and information freedom a high status and rejects muz-

zling writers who always seek to reveal the truth and serve public interest, away from any personal convictions or other goals, as responsible freedom is guaranteed by the law and the constitution.

Lawyers said the ruling explains that publishing names in newspapers is not considered defamation, and that conveying news with evidence is not a means of targeting anyone; it is rather to convey the truth. This is the role of the media, especially with regards to issues of public opinion. They said the ruling relied on the role of the paper that published the news, and by publishing the name of the complainant, it only reported the truth and did not write the name by itself. The ruling stressed that the role of the paper is to report true news and this is what took place without any additions.

Lawyers reaffirmed that this ruling is a moral support for freedoms in Kuwait and an answer to all opinions that adopted the idea of limiting freedom of expression, or those who called for shackling the media and making it afraid of reporting facts to the readers as they are. They insisted that enemies of democracy want papers to be as they like, so they support silencing and preventing the publication of truth in public issues and events that preoccupy the society. They added that Kuwaiti journalism was and still is the spokesperson of the people, who are looking for the country's interests.

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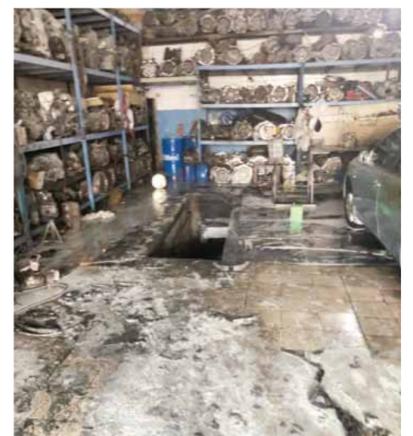
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Man hurt in Shuwaikh garage fire



KUWAIT: Firemen put out a blaze reported in a garage in Shuwaikh Industrial yesterday. Shuhada and Shuwaikh Industrial fire stations responded to an emergency call reporting a fire that started in a vehicle parked inside the garage. Firefighters towed the vehicle out of



the garage to prevent the flames from spreading, before they put out the blaze. One man was injured in the incident and was taken to hospital in a stable condition, Kuwait Fire Force said. An investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire.