

We will not allow anyone to undermine Kuwait's security and stability: emir

Wed, 2021-05-05 21:12

LONDON: Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said on Wednesday "we will not allow anyone to undermine the security and stability of Kuwait."

Speaking during his annual speech on the last ten day of Ramadan, the emir said cooperation between authorities is the basis for any national action. "We adhere to the democratic approach and are committed to calm dialogue," he added.

Sheikh Nawaf called on the country to avoid tensions that hinder the progress of development and to stand up against rumors being spread on social media platforms.

Sheikh Nawaf also called for the need to adhere to health precautions in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, and praised the work of medical staff.

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Tunisian union rejects steps pushed by government to unlock IMF funds

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Reuters

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Wed, 2021-05-05 20:50

TUNIS: Tunisia's most powerful labor union rejects reported reforms proposed by the government as part of efforts to secure foreign financing, one of its most senior officials told Reuters on Wednesday.

A government delegation is in Washington for talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on a possible \$4 billion loan and reforms to eliminate subsidies and reduce the massive public sector wage bill.

On Tuesday, Reuters reported a government document laying out proposals such as encouraging voluntary redundancy on 25 percent pay, early retirement packages and offering staff part time work at 50 percent of full pay.

While the government has not yet formally commented on the details, union acceptance of any reforms is seen as important to its chances of securing the money it says it needs to finance both its debt repayments and this year's fiscal deficit.

The UGTT has more than a million members and has proven able to mobilize significant opposition to previous governments through strikes, sit ins and pressure on political parties.

"These are unilateral measures that we did not discuss with the government and we were surprised when we read about the details," UGTT deputy secretary general Sami Tahri said.

Last month, the government and UGTT said they had struck a deal on economic reforms that would allow Tunisia to start negotiations with the IMF for a loan program, but they did not reveal its contents and said details remained to be agreed.

Tahri said the government should focus on raising more revenue by targeting tax evasion rather than measures that he said would target state employees and renewed a UGTT demand to start negotiations on another public sector pay rise.

He said early retirement and other schemes to reduce the size of the state workforce would cause a decline in civil service performance and lead to an exodus of experienced staff, "exhausting the administration."



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[G7 urges Iran to release foreigners, dual nationals under 'arbitrary arrest'](#)

Wed, 2021-05-05 20:44

LONDON: G7 foreign ministers concluded their first in-person talks in more than two years Wednesday, hitting out at China for human rights abuses and a crackdown on pro-democracy figures, and voicing concern about Russian aggression.

The club of the world's leading economies also called on Iran to release foreign and dual nationals who they said had been imprisoned arbitrarily, in

a wide-ranging final communique after three days of meetings in London.



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[COVID-19: Next 10 days dangerous for Egypt](#)

Author:

Tue, 2021-05-04 21:45

CAIRO: Mohamed Abdel Fattah, undersecretary of the Ministry of Health for Preventive Affairs, said that citizens must adhere to coronavirus precautionary measures and warned of the extra care needed during the next 10 days to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

"We have seen an increase in the number of coronavirus cases in some

governorates . . . the next 10 days are the most dangerous for the spread of the virus because of the crowds due to the last 10 days of Ramadan and Eid," he said.

During televised statements, Abdel Fattah said that any citizen who felt shortness of breath should visit the health care centers of the ministry immediately, pointing out that there were highly skilled teams in all governorates to follow up on the hospital's preparations and to meet all needs. He said that respiratory symptoms were currently the most common in Egypt.

"Citizens must receive the vaccine to prevent the spread of the virus, and social distancing must be followed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 . . . Cairo, Menoufia, Aswan, Qena, Sohag and the Red Sea are the governorates with the highest number of cases," he said.

"Coronavirus cases are up 10 percent, an increase that is not worrisome, and our hospitals are equipped to receive all coronavirus patients, and 40 percent of hospital beds are vacant," he added.

Abdel Fattah said that the Indian variant of the virus has spread in 17 countries, including Iraq and Jordan, but it had not yet been detected in Egypt.

He said that Egypt had succeeded in managing the crisis and there were 2,200 liters of oxygen distributed to all governorates of the republic.

Mohamed Awad Taj Al-Din, adviser to the Egyptian president for health, said that the country had been preparing to face the situation if the Indian variant spread to Egypt, including stricter procedures for travel and at airports for those coming from India directly or indirectly.

"All published research indicates that the body's natural resistance to the Indian coronavirus variant is less than the older viruses," Taj Al-Din said, adding that Egypt was currently experiencing its third coronavirus wave. He said there has been a clear increase in the number of cases and deaths compared to the same period last year.



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[Beirut blast survivor dog gives birth to puppies in the rubble](#)

Tue, 2021-05-04 21:56

BEIRUT: While removing chemical containers at the Beirut port explosion site, German firm Combi Lift discovered a female dog who not only survived the deadly blast from last August but also gave birth to three puppies while inside an acid container.

"The puppies were found around three months ago," said Roger Accaoui, vice president of Perpetual Animal Watch (PAW), a non-profit organization that cares for pets and finds homes for stray dogs in Lebanon.

Combi Lift and the head of its delegation, Heiko Wilderhof, contacted PAW when they found the puppies and their mom, who were in desperate need of

care.

According to Accaoui, the female dog was among several stray dogs that survived and continued to live in the rubble following the catastrophic blast on Aug. 4 that killed 211 people and injured more than 6,000.

"She gave birth to mixed-breed puppies inside an acid container and they remained in the contaminated area," Accaoui said. "One of the puppies passed away due to the contamination. The two remaining puppies underwent medical tests and got vaccinated while their mother remained at the port."

Accaoui said the surviving puppies were taken to a farm to receive treatment after suffering from infections.

"A family called wanting to adopt a puppy and when they found out the story of these puppies, they empathized even more and decided to adopt one," Accaoui said.

Wilderhof was so touched by the unlikely experience that he decided to adopt the other puppy and later named it "Samir" after a friend he met in Beirut. After some time to recover, Samir left for Germany with Wilderhof's daughter last Saturday.

Nine months have passed since the massive explosion, which also destroyed the city's waterfront and residential neighborhoods facing the port. Nearly 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrates – a highly explosive material used in fertilizers – had been improperly stored in the port for years and fueled the deadly blast. Work to remove and sort through the rubble is still ongoing.

Lebanon hired Combi Lift in the wake of the explosion and the German firm said it found 58 containers at the port that posed a threat to the city. Some of the containers had been there for more than a decade.

The German firm is still waiting for a SR7.5 million (\$2 million) payment before it can proceed with the operation of removing the chemical containers.

Accaoui said the port explosion site is still teeming with abandoned dogs. Many have taken shelter in the debris because the houses where they used to live were destroyed in the blast.

"These dogs go to the port specifically since it is an extension of the main cow and sheep slaughterhouse in Beirut, which provides them with food," said Accaoui, who also announced a July start date for a trap-neuter-release campaign for stray dogs in the port area.



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