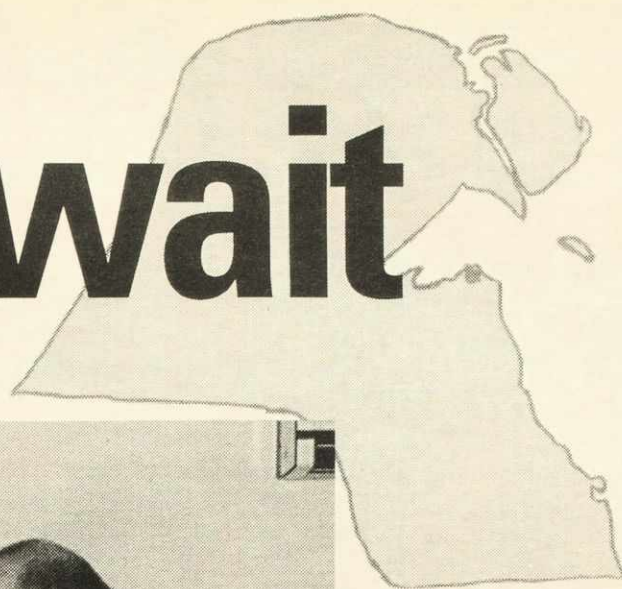


Dal in Kuwait



BY ADEL ISKANDAR

The Arabian Gulf state of Kuwait has been a focal point for international news media since the invasion by Iraq six years ago. From international attention, Kuwait is now making headlines closer to home, here in Nova Scotia.

Following a series of intensive negotiations, Dalhousie University triumphed over 13 other academic institutions to sign a \$30 million agreement with the Kuwaiti government to establish the Centre of Excellence in Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation in Kuwait. This was the largest grant ever awarded to a Canadian university for service in the Health Professions.

Dalhousie has become a source of higher education for five Kuwaiti nationals and over fifty former residents of the Gulf state over the last few years. Formal connections had not yet been established between Dalhousie and the Kuwaiti government when many of these students first arrived.

The springboard for the series of communications that began between Dalhousie University and the Kuwaiti government was a visit in October 1995 of a Canadian delegation to the Arab nation. This senior delegation was headed by Dr. Ron Stewart (formerly the Nova Scotia Minister of Health) and Dalhousie President Dr. Tom Traves. During the course of the visit, the delegation met with their counterparts from various academic institutions and research facilities.

"Although the main target of the visit was to support Dalhousie's proposal for the establishment of a Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation centre in Kuwait, the delegation's aim was to strengthen academic ties with Kuwait," stated Dr. Traves.

Talks were conducted with



Dalhousie President Dr. Tom Traves receiving a commemorative present from Kuwait's Minister of Health, Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Mheilan.

Kuwait's Ministry of Health concerning the prospect of collaborative projects in fields such as tele-medicine. Dr. Traves and the delegation also discussed future cooperation with Kuwait's Environmental Protection Agency, the establishment of several joint business training programs, and possible work with the Institute for Scientific Research.

"The negotiations were extremely productive," said Dr. Traves. "There is great potential for Dalhousie to pursue its academic mandate and market its educational facilities in Kuwait and other Arab nations."

Dalhousie professor Lydia Makrides, Director of the School of Physiotherapy and the Cardiac Prevention Research Centre, masterminded the \$30 million agreement as the Project Director. With six visits to Kuwait in the past year, Makrides has already laid the foundations for the centre's operation.

The Centre of Excellence will offer clinical research facilities in physiotherapy and rehabilitation,

and provide a postgraduate hands-on training program for Kuwaiti physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and other health professionals.

During the course of this three year contract, a team of 42 Canadian health professionals will work on the establishment of the centre. A six month clinical residency program will also be organized at Dalhousie University for 21 Kuwaiti physiotherapists. This program will incorporate multimedia module workshops.

"Despite the many miles that separate us from that part of the world, there remains the similarity in stroke problems; everything from stroke to cancer," explained Makrides.

When asked about the cultural differences, especially in gender roles, and if they were of any significance during her stay in Kuwait, Makrides stressed that she felt no pressure at all as a negotiator.

"People there were extremely friendly and hospitable, and at no point did I feel compromised as a

woman," verified Makrides.

On the other hand, Dalhousie's involvement in the Arab world and Arabian Peninsula is not limited to Kuwait alone. Departments all over campus, from Psychiatry to Dentistry, have made numerous professional connections with many Arab nations. With an estimated total of 90 Arab students attending Dalhousie, the Arab world is no stranger to this university.

One of the more recent projects is the Canadian Mid-East Academic Institute at Al-Ain in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This institute, organized and directed by Dr. Warwick Kimmins (Dean of Science) and Dr. Lynn McIntyre (Dean of Health Professions), was set up to provide students in the UAE with a preparatory curriculum for entrance into Dalhousie's medical, dental, and engineering programs.

Promoting Dalhousie's academic excellence in the Arab world was also the intention of another delegation that visited Dubai, UAE, in April of this year.

As part of a Canadian pavilion, universities in Nova Scotia had a booth in the Eighth Gulf Education and Training Exhibition. This annual exhibition provides students in the Arabian Gulf with information on academic opportunities and facilities worldwide.

"Despite the presence of 200 other institutes in the exhibition, there were 4,000 visitors to the Nova Scotia booth. It was a tremendous opportunity for the exposure of Dalhousie," explained Ava Czapalay, Assistant Registrar (Admissions) and the coordinator of Dalhousie-UAE communications. Czapalay also described the overwhelming interest of students in attending Dalhousie.

More recently, Dalhousie has not only become a more cosmopolitan university, but also more active on a global scale. With so many Arabs and other international students looking at Dalhousie for higher education, its prospects as a world-renowned educational institute are great.

Kuwait Fact File

Total Area: 17,820 sq. km (Approximately the size of Cape Breton Island)

Population: 1,817,400 (July 1995 est.)

Capital: Kuwait City

Literacy: 74%

Official Language: Arabic (English widely spoken)

Independence: June 19, 1961 (from UK)

Currency: US\$ 1 = 0.2991 Kuwaiti Dinar (KD)

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