

Local

Kuwait begins first stage of COVID-19 vaccination today

Trial vaccination a success: Ministry Spokesman

KUWAIT: Health Ministry personnel completed preparations at the Kuwait International Fairground in Mishref yesterday to start the first stage of vaccination against COVID-19 today, targeting health workers at the frontlines and who are exposed to the virus. Director of Public Health Department Dr Fahad Al-Qimlas was present and met with health workers who are covered by the first stage of the vaccination. Meanwhile, Ministry Spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad noted that the ministry's vaccination plan focuses mainly on giving priority to medical personnel in the first phase of the campaign. Furthermore, he affirmed that the ministry's health cadres were invited via text messages with the vaccination date and place.

Dr Sanad had earlier announced the success of the trial vaccination campaign against the novel coronavirus. "There were no unexpected side effects recorded by those who had the first dose" on Thursday, Dr Sanad said in a press statement. "The campaign will commence its work officially on Sunday according to the registered appointments on the ministry's website using the QR code, and the medical staff will have a priority," he noted.

The trial vaccination campaign began on



KUWAIT: Health workers listen to instructions ahead of the start of the first stage of vaccination against COVID-19, at Kuwait International Fairground in Mishref yesterday. — KUNA photos

Thursday at Kuwait International Fairgrounds in presence of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah. "We start this campaign upon the arrival of the Pfizer vaccine to

Kuwait, and will continue over the upcoming few months until everyone in the country is vaccinated," said the Prime Minister in a press statement. A large number of elderly people and health workers

have joined the campaign in its early hours, and with the cooperation of the authorities which helped ease the process, the campaign seeks to defeat this pandemic. — KUNA

Saudi King requests formal invitations to GCC Summit

RIYADH: The General Secretariat of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) announced yesterday that the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has requested from GCC Secretary General, Dr Nayef Falah Al-Hajraf, to invite their Majesties and Highnesses, the leaders of the GCC states to attend the 41st GCC Summit being held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on January 5, 2021.

Dr Hajraf, said: "I had the honor today to personally deliver King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud's invitation to the President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan to attend the 41st GCC Summit taking place in Riyadh on January 5, 2021. The invitation was received by the Vice-President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum today in Dubai."

Dr Hajraf said: "The commitment by Gulf leaders to hold the summit on an annual basis, and especially in these exceptional times, is a testament to the strength of the GCC, to their belief in their duty to the people of the Gulf, and their devotion to increasing cooperation and integration among member countries."



Today, as the GCC enters its fifth decade with a global pandemic in the backdrop, the institution's mission to facilitate trade and economic integration among member states is more relevant than at any time in its history. The GCC remains focused on meeting the ambitions of the Gulf people, increasing integration, interconnectedness, and trade among member states and the international community. I am grateful to their Majesties and Highnesses, the leaders of the GCC states, for their tireless efforts to further strengthen Gulf cooperation."

The GCC has held an annual meeting of the Supreme Council to discuss coordination, integration, and interconnection between the member States and their citizens in economic development, commerce, education, and culture. The GCC's focus today is on meeting the ambitions of the region's young and digital population and enabling them to drive the region forward while remembering their shared heritage.

Minister rules out police academy exemptions

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Interior Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah said that Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences allows no exemption in the enrolment of new cadets. "As a prestigious scientific institution producing well-trained security cadres, the academy selects the new students based on scientific rules, fairness and equal opportunities for all away from any exemptions," he affirmed during an inspection tour of the academy Thursday.

Sheikh Thamer, accompanied by senior security officers, was welcomed by the academy's director General Maj Gen Nasser Bouresli, according to a press release from the General Directorate of Security Relations and Media.

He noted that the academy spares no effort in providing quality training for the cadets and building their capacity with a view to creating an integrated security system able to ensure the security and stability of the country.

The minister conveyed to the academy's leaders, teaching staff, personnel and cadet the greetings and best wishes of the higher political leadership of the country. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Interior Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah (center) is seen during the tour. — Interior Ministry photo

Kuwait arrests 3 'extremists'...

Continued from Page 1

it was found the teenagers were lured to embrace IS ideology through online games. A squad of security officers raided the house of one of the teenagers in Ahmadi after obtaining permission from the public prosecution.

They arrested the teenager and referred him to the juvenile investigation office, where he admitted he has been in contact with IS for some time. The teenager told interrogators that a person communicated with him through a popular online game, and deliberately joined his team during the game. The IS man then communicated with him through social media platforms and

asked him to embrace the ideology of IS. He was also asked to convince his friends to join IS. The teenager said he succeeded in convincing five others.

During the raids, firearms and several computers containing correspondence with the terrorist group were confiscated. Official investigations related to the case of the arrested juveniles revealed IS members had tasked these juveniles with targeting places of worship and commercial complexes on New Year's Eve.

Al-Qabas quoted sources as saying that the ring-leader of the arrested juvenile suspects was the son of a former member of the National Assembly. The sources said "security forces had clear and explicit orders to take all precautions and to deal promptly and decisively with any suspect, and to report everything that is going on moment by moment to security leaders".

According to a report in Al-Anbaa Arabic daily, a security source said authorities had foiled a plan by

two juveniles that targeted a place of worship of an Asian community in Ardiya (the building is currently closed). The source said the youths were recruited through online games allegedly by members of IS.

The source said interior ministry operations received a call about a juvenile who left an AK-47 machinegun in front of the house of an officer following an argument with another juvenile. The juvenile who left the weapon was identified and questioned. He said another person of his age contacted him and asked him to carry out a terrorist act against an Asian community's place of worship.

The youth said he thought it was a joke, but was surprised when the other youth, who lives in Fahaheel, handed him a firearm and asked him to accompany him to the place of worship in Ardiya. But he did not oblige after he realized it was a serious matter. The source said state security raided the Fahaheel juvenile's home and found another weapon and IS flags.

Major blast hits Nashville after...

Continued from Page 1

The explosion could be felt miles away and damaged dozens of businesses - scattering glass, debris and bricks as well as provoking the collapse of one building in an area with numerous bars, restaurants and shops. In a dramatic sequence of events that shattered the Christmas morning calm, police rushed to the area after getting reports of gunshots and noticed the vehicle as they arrived on the scene.

A recorded message playing from the motorhome warned that a bomb would detonate within 15 minutes - enough time for a bomb squad to clear the area before the explosion, Drake and police spokesman Don Aaron told reporters earlier Friday. Witnesses told the Tennessean newspaper the warning, spoken in a woman's voice, counted down to the blast. "Evacuate now. There is a bomb. A bomb is in this vehicle and will explode," one recalled the chilling recording saying.

Pictures shared on social media from the immediate aftermath showed thick plumes of black smoke rising from the burning RV and storefronts that had been torn apart. The blast happened near an AT&T facility, knocking out phone service for many in the area. The telecommunications company said that "given the damage to our facility it will take time to restore service". The Nashville International Airport announced it had temporarily

halted flights due to "telecommunications issues" associated with the blast.

Officers began knocking on doors and evacuating residents due the bomb warning, not knowing if or when the detonation could come. A dog walker had been heading towards the vehicle just before the blast, the Tennessean newspaper said, but police turned him back, potentially saving him from serious injury or death. The blast knocked an officer to the ground, the paper said, and gave another officer hearing loss.

Both President Donald Trump and President-elect Joe Biden were briefed on the incident, which is being investigated by the FBI and the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. "This appears to have been an intentional act. Law enforcement is closing downtown streets as investigation continues," the Metro Nashville Police Department tweeted.

Firefighters said at least three people were taken to the hospital with minor injuries, according to local media. The damage was "limited but it is dramatic," Nashville mayor John Cooper said, adding that the city was "lucky" the blast had occurred on Christmas when few people were downtown. "It's unfortunate but any other morning I think it would have been a much worse story."

Biden issued a statement saying he and his wife Jill Biden "thank all the first responders working today in response to the incident, and wish those who were injured a speedy recovery". Trump's spokesman Judd Deere tweeted that the president is "grateful for the incredible first responders and praying for those who were injured." — AFP

EU readies vaccination...

Continued from Page 1

But a new strain that emerged in Britain and spread rapidly has sent jitters through already overstretched health services as countries from Sweden to Japan have reported cases. Austria began its third national lockdown yesterday and millions also woke to tougher restrictions in Britain, where the vaccine rollout has already begun.

France, Spain and Sweden are among the countries confirming that the new virus strain has reached their shores. French officials said late on Friday that a Frenchman living in Britain had tested positive after arriving from London, adding that he was not showing symptoms and was isolating. Four cases were confirmed in Madrid yesterday, though the patients were not seriously ill, the Madrid regional government's deputy health chief Antonio Zapatero said, adding "there is no need for alarm".

The new strain, which experts fear is more contagious, prompted more than 50 countries to impose travel restrictions on the UK. Thousands of trucks backed up in southern England, but the bottleneck eased after France lifted a 48-hour entry ban for drivers with a negative coronavirus test. South Africa has detected a virus mutation in some infected people but on Friday denied British claims its strain was more infectious or

Two caught with 4,075 liquor bottles

KUWAIT: Ahmadi police arrested two men who had 4,075 bottles of homebrewed liquor in their possession, the Interior Ministry announced yesterday. Patrolmen had stopped the two after noticing they were behaving abnormally, and arrested them after finding the bottles. The suspects were sent to concerned authorities for further action.

dangerous than the one originating in the UK.

In Asia, China's communist leadership issued a statement hailing the "extremely extraordinary glory" of its handling of the virus, state news agency Xinhua reported. Japanese capital Tokyo reported a record 949 new daily cases while Thailand has seen a new outbreak linked to a seafood market near Bangkok infect almost 1,500 people.

In Australia, there was little sign of the usual rush to the Boxing Day sales in Sydney, with residents largely heeding the state premier's request they stay home faced with a new virus cluster. "Even when we entered the store there were less than 10 people," shopper Lia Gunawan told The Sydney Morning Herald.

Across the world, people are being urged to respect social distancing guidelines. "Vaccines are offering the world a way out of this tragedy. But it will take time for the whole world to be vaccinated," said World Health Organization Tedros chief Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Friday. In the Vatican, Pope Francis pleaded for "vaccines for all" in his traditional Christmas message on Friday, urging leaders from politics and beyond to find a solution "especially the most vulnerable and most in need".

In authoritarian post-Soviet Turkmenistan, where the government says no coronavirus cases have been detected, President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov claimed that licorice root could cure COVID-19. Without citing any scientific evidence, former dentist Berdimukhamedov claimed that "licorice stops the coronavirus from developing". — AFP