

Business

stc welcomes Ramadan with its
'Ramadan Lives On' campaign

A dedication to the people of Kuwait during the blessed holy month

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, launched its "Ramadan Lives On" campaign with a dedication to the people of Kuwait and the Arab world, wishing a blessed and fulfilling Holy Month of Ramadan.



2020 Ramadan
ad generates 4m
views on first day

In a statement released by the Company, stc announced that it released a Ramadan advertisement carrying the same name as its campaign, noting that the production received positive feedback from the public, generating over 4 million views on its first day.

This campaign comes within the framework of stc's corporate social responsibility strategy focusing on

supporting the local community and Arab World during these difficult times. Despite the current conditions and enforcement of social distancing, stc stands by its commitment, especially during the Holy Month, to continue providing its customers with uninterrupted services, allowing them to connect with their loved ones through stc's advanced digital channels and solutions.

In her role, Danah Al-Jasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, said, "We are pleased with the public's reception and feedback regarding our 2020 Ramadan advertisement, "Ramadan Lives On". The video exceeded 4 million views in one day after it was uploaded on stc's digital platforms, reflecting the originality of the concept and quality of the production, which was positively received by the audience."

Explaining the concept, Al-Jasem said, "We focused on portraying what the world is currently going through while touching on the importance of staying connected with your loved ones. Even though worldwide lockdowns and curfews have emptied streets, closed businesses, and triggered economic slowdowns, Ramadan lives on in our hearts and continues to be filled with life. The Holy Month reminds us of the strength of our faith and will power to adjust and overcome obstacles that arise in our paths. The annual tra-



Danah Al-Jasem

ditions tied to the Holy Month are still felt and experienced in our beloved country, despite the current circumstances. The concept also focuses on encouraging social distancing and staying at home, while using online platforms to connect with family and friends. We also still wanted to emphasize the importance of adhering to the government's guidelines and instructions to help ensure the health and safety of our people, taking us a step closer towards overcoming this pandemic together."

Al-Jasem added, "As part of our social responsibility agenda, we launched a series of activities and CSR initiatives under the umbrella of our "Ramadan Live On" campaign. The activities aim to support the people of Kuwait in facing the current conditions that are in effect due to the pandemic. The campaign comes as a segment of stc's commitment towards supporting the

local community and economy."

Al-Jasem concluded, "Since the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak in Kuwait, stc has worked diligently to assist the government's efforts in responding and containing the spread of infection. In our most recent initiative, stc utilized its resources to accommodate returning citizens to their beloved country, as well as back the preventative measures the country has set in place to combat the COVID-19 pandemic."

The Company also distributed 25,000 free prepaid lines to travelers arriving back to Kuwait in cooperation with Kuwait Airways and the Ministry of Health. The purpose of distributing the prepaid lines was to ensure that returning citizens had a channel to communicate with their loved ones at no cost during the mandatory isolation period.

To better serve its customers, stc upgraded its digital channels to offer the Company's array of products and services to new and existing customers from the comfort of their homes. stc's online platforms also allow customers to seamlessly execute transactions related to their accounts online and hassle free. With the upgrade came a series of online exclusive offers to enrich the customers' experience at home, whether it be online gaming, working remotely from home or enjoying services to fulfill their entertainment needs.

Ooredoo launches
Ramadan campaign

KUWAIT: Under the theme "In a time when we can't be together, at least we can still be close", Ooredoo Group has launched its much-awaited annual Ramadan campaign with a short video highlighting how people can still connect despite the ongoing global pandemic.

This year's Ramadan campaign was designed to showcase the power of technology in enabling families, friends and communities around the world to overcome the current disruptions to a traditional Holy Month and build stronger ties with loved ones. For the first time in the region, Ooredoo's Ramadan campaign was shot completely using only smartphones, with people performing and sharing their scenes from their own homes. Ooredoo teams around the world leveraged the power of the company's networks to be able to work closely together remotely and help film the campaign's short video in 11 different countries, including Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Maldives, Palestine, Algeria, Tunisia, USA, France and South Africa.

The Holy Month of Ramadan will be very different to many this year. Unlike other years, society will have to experience this blessed month away from many of their loved ones. But although apart, people won't have to feel alone as Ooredoo delivers on its promise to enable all the communities which it serves to stay connected and enjoy the internet, while staying safe. During the Holy Month of Ramadan, Ooredoo is encouraging people to maintain social distancing and make use of group chats and video calling to keep in touch at this challenging time. With Ooredoo's advanced networks, families and communities can stay connected, productive, entertained and most importantly close at a time when the global pandemic is often preventing them from being together.



The company is currently playing a key role in supporting customers across its global footprint with both digital solutions and relief measures. Ooredoo has significantly optimized network performance and enhanced internet speeds, enabling social distancing, seamless home schooling and access to home entertainment. The Company is conscious about its huge responsibility as a telecommunications company to help minimise the spread of COVID-19 by giving easy and affordable access to technology wherever it operates, even in the most remote areas. During this time, especially during the Holy Month of Ramadan, Ooredoo is here when its customers need it most, and is encouraging customers to stay at home with Ooredoo and enjoy the internet."

Also, Ooredoo's agile contribution to business continuity with a range of secure and immersive digital solutions will help ensure people have something to go back to once the current situation is resolved.

lions of dollars that's making its way into the economy, and I think this is going to have a significant impact." Congress this week passed a new \$483 billion economic relief bill, adding to the massive \$2.2 trillion emergency package passed in mid-March.

Another big package, this one for struggling state and local governments, is under discussion.

But resistance to more spending appears to be growing among some Republicans, exemplified by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's suggestion this week that it would be preferable for states to file for bankruptcy.

McConnell's comments were angrily denounced by Democratic and some Republican governors, and have so far not been echoed by the White House. "As I've said, this is a war. We'll win this war," Mnuchin said. "If we need to spend more money we will, and we'll only do it with bipartisan support."

The secretary brushed off concerns that the national debt is expected to exceed GDP this year.

"We're going to need to look at, over time, how we deal with that issue," he said. "But right now we're in a war and we have to protect American workers and American business. And we're going to do whatever we need to take to do that." White House economic adviser Kevin Hassett, however, warned in a separate television appearance that the impact of the pandemic has been so severe, with some 26 million people filing for unemployment benefits so far, that it could have long-term effects.

'Grave situation'

"Make no mistake, it's a really grave situation," he said on ABC's "This Week." "This is the biggest negative shock that our economy, I think, has ever seen. We're going to be looking at an unemployment rate that approaches rates that we saw during the Great Depression."

Hassett said debt levels have reached a point where "it can be a long-term negative for growth," and should be dealt with along with short-term stimulus in the next phase of legislative action.

"Again, you have to understand that this is an unprecedented shock to the economy, that we're going to be looking at second-quarter negative GDP growth that's probably north of minus 15, minus 20 percent. "It's the biggest negative shock that we've seen since the Second World War, and with that kind of emergency, the good news is we've got this bipartisan action, this build-a-bridge-to-the-other-side, but there's still going to be a heck of a lot of other problems that pop up." — AFP



In this file photo, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin speaks during the daily briefing on the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, in the Brady Briefing Room of the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP

Ghostly airports:
Air travel in the
time of the virus

NEW YORK: Ghostly airports, countless flight cancellations, shops and restaurants closed: the coronavirus has played havoc with air travel in the United States.

Following are some scenes witnessed by AFP journalists during the unusual experience of flying from South Dakota to Washington in the time of the pandemic. Denver, canceled. Phoenix, likewise. A single plane is taking off this Saturday from the small airport in Rapid City, South Dakota, headed for Minneapolis, Minnesota. In the Rapid City airport, every shop is closed. A gray-haired maintenance worker, not wearing a mask, carefully disinfects the handrail of an escalator in the near-empty terminal.

But there is one upside to the grim situation: For once, there is no line to get through the security check. "Can you take your mask off?" a security officer politely asks. She needs to compare a traveler's face to his photo ID.

Signs posted all around the boarding gates ask "What is social distancing?" The reminder is not necessarily overkill in a state that is one of the very few not to have placed its residents under lockdown during the pandemic. The few people traveling are polite and disciplined, maintaining appropriate distance between one another before boarding. Some even wear masks—a rarity in this part of the country.

Since Delta Air Lines had canceled two flights the

previous day from Rapid City to Minneapolis rather than fly nearly empty planes, Saturday's flight has about 20 travelers-seated by Delta in rather strange fashion.

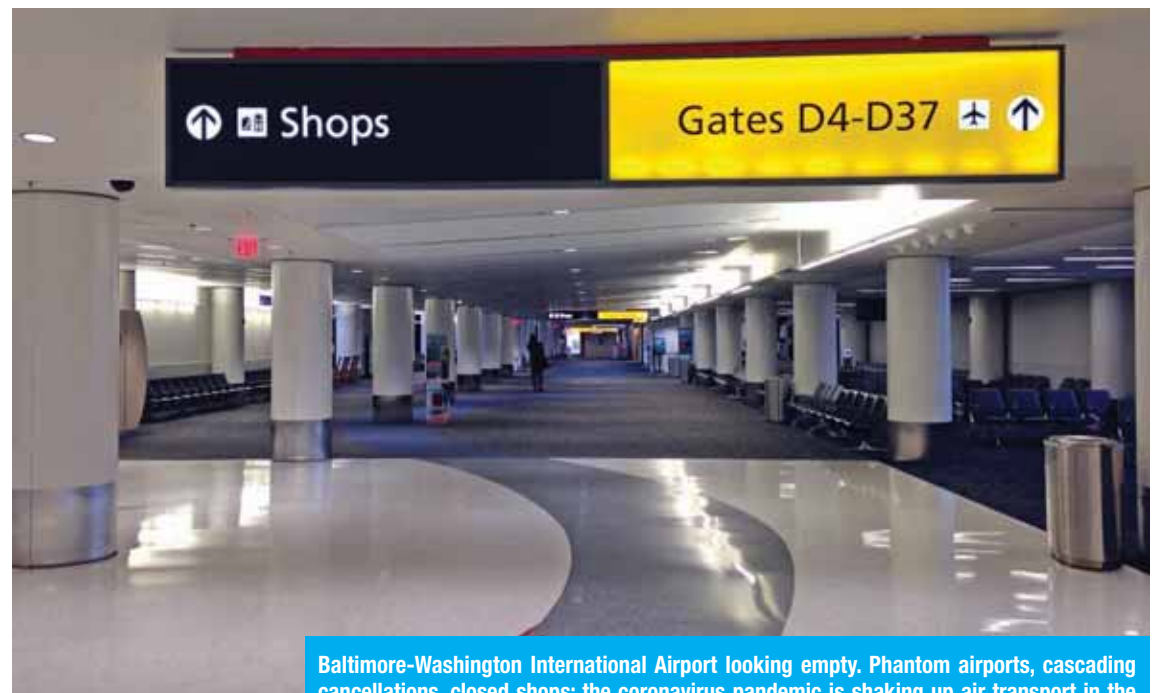
People not traveling together are seated next to each other, many of them toward the rear of the small plane, while several rows of seats toward the front remain empty.

No on-board service

"We do not offer service on board," a flight attendant, wearing gloves but no mask, announces apologetically, as she passes out plastic bags containing snacks, bottles of water and disinfecting wipes. She moves up and down the aisle frequently with a trash bag to be sure no one leaves any waste in the seatback pouches.

The AFP team has a brief layover in Minneapolis, where most shops and restaurants are closed. In this major regional hub, normally full of life, an almost oppressive silence reigns, broken only by the regular pleas on the public-address system for people to take proper protective measures.

As the travelers prepare for takeoff on another Delta flight bound for Baltimore-Washington International airport, a video is shown for passengers with advice on anti-virus precautions-before the usual video explaining how to inflate a life jacket or find the exits in the event of a water landing. In this plane, much larger than the first one, each person enjoys an entire row of three seats-almost like flying in first class, only without the Champagne. Upon our arrival at BWI airport, people jump up from their seats, not really respecting any sort of social distance. Bad habits, it seems, are not so easily forgotten. — AFP



Baltimore-Washington International Airport looking empty. Phantom airports, cascading cancellations, closed shops: the coronavirus pandemic is shaking up air transport in the United States. — AFP

US renews waiver
for Iraq to import
Iranian electricity

WASHINGTON: The United States has renewed a waiver for Iraq to continue importing Iranian electricity, a State Department official said on Sunday, but this time for a shorter period of 30 days, adding that Washington would be reassessing whether to renew again once a "credible government" is formed in Iraq. "The Secretary granted this brief extension of the waiver to allow time for the formation of a credible government," a State Department official said, referring to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and added that the waiver would expire on May 26.

Washington has repeatedly extended the exemption for Baghdad to use crucial Iranian energy supplies for its power grid, for periods of 90 or 120 days. The United States has insisted that oil-rich Iraq, OPEC's second-largest producer, move towards energy self-sufficiency as a condition for its exemption for importing Iranian energy.

Earlier this month, Iraq's president named intelligence chief Mustafa Al-Kadhimi as prime minister-designate, the third person tapped to lead Iraq in just

10 weeks as it struggles to replace a government that fell last year after months of deadly protests. "Once that government is in place, the Secretary will reassess whether to renew the waiver and for how long," the State Department official said.

David Schenker, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Bureau at the State Department in a briefing earlier this month had praised Kadhimi's work as the head of intelligence.

Ties between Washington and Baghdad have been strained as the United States said it was disappointed that Iraqi forces have failed to protect the US forces stationed in Iraq. They have come under multiple rocket attacks this year alone, for which the United States blames the Iran-backed militia.

US-Iranian relations have been bitter since the Islamic Revolution toppled the US-backed Shah of Iran in 1979 and ushered in an era of theocratic rule. Tensions flared up after President Donald Trump pulled out the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and reimposed US sanctions that have crippled the Iranian economy.

Worsening tensions, a Jan. 3 US drone strike in Iraq killed Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds Force. It also killed Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, who founded Iraq's Shi'ite Kataib Hezbollah militia after the 2003 US-led invasion.

The State Department official said the waiver granted by Pompeo applied only to electricity and referred to the Treasury Department for transactions related to Iranian natural gas imports. — Reuters