

Local

Kuwait Amir condoles with Egypt over hospital fire victims

Sheikh Nawaf receives state officials at Seif Palace



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has sent a cable of condolences to Egyptian President Abdulfattah Al-Sisi on a deadly fire that happened at a medical unit for treating COVID-19 cases in Cairo. His Highness the Amir prayed for the souls of the deceased, wished the injured recovery and well-being and their families strength and patience. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-

Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of identical content to President Al-Sisi. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also addressed Sisi with a similar cable. Meanwhile, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem sent a similar cable to his Egyptian counterpart Dr Ali Abdulal. It was reported in Cairo that the blaze killed seven patients and injured five people. The fire had

erupted at a hospital in Obour district on northern outskirts of the Egyptian capital.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh

Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir later received Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh. In the meantime, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali and Saleh at Seif Palace.

Zain evolves graduate program to 'CODE 7' data science focused initiative

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading mobile telecom innovator in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces that after five successful years, the company's progressive Generation Z graduate training program has transformed into an initiative focused on developing cutting edge skills of future data analysts.

The new program, called 'CODE 7' targets Kuwaiti graduates who have majored in computer science-related subjects. Five dynamic young people were selected to participate in the inaugural year-long program by Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi. These bright young recruits, who will formally commence the pro-

gram at the start of 2021, will be guided through the year with the intention that they will then go on to support digitization efforts within Zain in areas such as data analytics and data science.

Aligned to the reimagined graduate program, Zain is set to establish an in-house Data Science division that will harness the talents of the participants given the company's focus on identifying future trends and developing skill sets to match those future requirements. Ultimately, Zain expects students who pass through its CODE 7 program to grow to become highly sort-after data science professionals who support Zain's evolution to a digital lifestyle operator and beyond.

Bader Al-Kharafi commented, "The world continues to change at a rapid pace, and the importance of data science-related disciplines in making organizations future-ready and successful is highly relevant. As such, we believe it is the right time to launch this CODE 7 initiative, taking our graduate program to a new direction. We have every confidence that the efforts we will place in these young talents will result in forging high-performing and successful careers, as well as being beneficial for Zain through the insights they will later be able to offer the company. I encourage the incoming graduates to make the most of this life-altering opportunity and wish them every success."

The year-long CODE 7 program offers an invigorating selection of topics, subjects, and activities that include:

- Creativity and Innovation
- Data Science Certification to expert level
- Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning



KUWAIT: Five CODE 7 participants: (from left) Omar Saleh, Khalid Al-Jassim, Abdullah Al-Rasheed, Abdulaziz Khalifa and Sara Al-Rabab.

- Behavioral Work (life skills, resilience etc)
- Innovative Sustainable Projects
- Rotations across Zain operations on digitization
- On-the-job applications and case

The five successful participants to be selected for the inaugural CODE 7 program are: Omar Saleh; Khalid Al-Jassim; Abdullah Al-Rasheed; Abdulaziz Khalifa and Sara Al-Rabab.

EU launches vaccinations...

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In Greece, the first in line was nurse Efstathia Kampissiouli who flashed a V-sign while being vaccinated and later told Ert TV it was "a great honor for me but also for those working on the frontline". European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen hailed the campaign start as a "touching moment of unity and a European success story", adding the process will "help to get our normal lives back gradually".

Countries are however showing different strategies, with Italy focusing on health workers, France the elderly and in the Czech Republic, Greece and Slovakia political leaders at the front of the queue. In a sign of impatience, some EU countries began vaccinating on Saturday, a day before the official start, with a 101-year-old woman in a care home becoming the first person in Germany to be inoculated and Hungary and Slovakia also handing out their first shots.

Araceli Rosario Hidalgo Sanchez, a 96-year-old living in a care home in central Spain became the first person in the country to be vaccinated yesterday, in an event broadcast by national television. She said smilingly she felt "nothing" from the shot. France began its campaign in care homes for the elderly in the Paris suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis, a low-income area hard hit by COVID-19, with a 78-year-old woman named Mauricette the first to receive the jab to applause from staff.

"We have a new weapon against the virus - the vaccine," tweeted President Emmanuel Macron. Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven described the vaccine as a "ray of light in the darkness". One of the first Swedes to get the vaccine, Stig Larsson, 89, said he "did not hesitate" about being inoculated. China, Russia,

Canada, the United States, Switzerland, Serbia, Singapore and Saudi Arabia have also begun their vaccination campaigns.

Britain, which last week finalized a deal on leaving the EU, began its vaccination campaign amid much fanfare on Dec 8, three weeks ahead of the bloc. But it was also in Britain that a new strain of the virus emerged that has already reached several other European countries as well as Japan and Canada. The new strain, which experts fear is more contagious, prompted more than 50 countries to impose travel restrictions on the UK.

Echoing concerns from officials across the continent, Health Minister Olivier Veran said France has not ruled out imposing a third nationwide lockdown if coronavirus cases continue to rise after the holiday season. He said it would become clear in the next months if the vaccine did not just stop people falling sick but also from passing the virus on. "This would allow us to leave this nightmare quicker," he said.

Vaccines other than the Pfizer-BioNTech jab are also in the pipeline, and the United States, where over a million people have already been vaccinated, last week began jabs with the vaccine developed by US biotech firm Moderna. Meanwhile the University of Oxford and drug manufacturer AstraZeneca have applied to the UK authorities for permission to roll out their COVID-19 vaccine.

AstraZeneca chief executive Pascal Soriot said yesterday its vaccine was a "winning formula" and provided "100 percent protection" against severe COVID requiring hospitalization. There is concern that wariness among Europeans over the vaccine could impede its effectiveness, with a poll published in the Journal du Dimanche saying 56 percent of French people do not plan to take the jab.

China, accused of covering up the initial outbreak, has largely curbed the domestic spread of the virus. Its Communist leadership issued a statement hailing the "extremely extraordinary glory" of its handling of the crisis. — AFP

also asked about the reasons of not appointing Kuwaitis in their jobs.

In his questions to Finance Minister Khalifa Hamada, the lawmaker asked about the number of non-Kuwaiti employees, their salaries, qualifications and experience, who are employed at a number of state-owned companies like the Industrial Bank, Kuwait Cement Co, Kuwait Airways and others.

He also demanded the same information about companies in which the government owns 25 percent or more of their capital. Jowhar also demanded to know the size of public deposits at all local banks and the interest rates on them. He asked the minister for the number of Kuwaitis employed at local banks and their percentage of the workforce. The lawmaker asked Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah to provide him with the number of expat employees at the ministry of health, their qualifications and salaries.

National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said yesterday the Assembly office has been formed and it will meet today to decide the schedule of Assembly meetings.

Officials discuss Gulf 'cooperation' ahead of summit

MANAMA: Top Gulf Arab officials held a virtual meeting yesterday to bolster "cooperation" ahead of a summit next month amid efforts to end a rift between a Saudi-led alliance and Qatar. The foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman and Kuwait took part in the meeting hosted by Manama, while Qatar was represented by its minister of state for foreign affairs.

The participation of Qatar's foreign minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, would have been seen as another sign towards ending the diplomatic dispute. Saudi Arabia led its allies the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt to cut ties with Qatar in June 2017, saying it was too close to Iran and funding radical Islamist movements - charges Doha staunchly denies.

After severing ties, the countries issued a list of 13 demands for Qatar, including that it shut down its broadcaster Al Jazeera. The six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) addressed yesterday "suggestions on supporting and strengthening joint Gulf cooperation in various political, economic and social aspects", according to a statement by Kuwait's foreign ministry.

This comes after Manama on Wednesday called for an "end to regional disputes", softening its rhetoric surrounding the Gulf crisis. Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdellatif Al-Zayani expressed confidence Sunday "in Saudi Arabia's ability to find a solution to the dispute within the Gulf". Zayani added during the meeting that his country hoped for a return to



MANAMA: Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdellatif Al-Zayani holds a virtual meeting with top Gulf Arab officials yesterday. — AFP

normalcy in the region, according to Bahraini media.

Earlier this month, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said a resolution was in sight, with the four governments behind the blockade "on board" and a final agreement expected soon as the GCC prepares to convene in the kingdom on Jan 5. Egypt and the UAE have since given their public support to the negotiations although diplomatic sources say the UAE has been reluctant to compromise.

Sources privy to the negotiations have said the Saudi-led quartet was willing to compromise on its list of demands, with the upcoming summit providing a path to reconciliation but not a final comprehensive agreement. According to Majed Alraeesi, an Emirati analyst, coining the "coming phase a 'reconciliation' was unrealistic". "It is a phase (to show) credibility and good intentions from point zero with the goal to strengthen dialogue... the current optimism is out of place compared to the reality," he tweeted yesterday. — AFP

MPs discuss general amnesty...

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the appointment of non-Kuwaitis in such positions. Employees working in the following government agencies will be affected: Supreme Council for Planning and Development, Civil Service Commission, Public Authority for Manpower, Environmental Public Authority, Central Statistical Bureau and Kuwait Authority for Privatization.

MP Hasan Jowhar meanwhile sent a series of questions to the prime minister and the ministers of finance and health about the number of expatriate employees in government bodies under their authority. In his question to the prime minister, Jowhar demanded to know the number of non-Kuwaiti consultants employed in bodies under the Cabinet, the terms of their appointment and their qualifications and pay. He

Dubai cuts 2021 budget as COVID hits economy

DUBAI: Dubai said yesterday it expects to cut its budget to \$15.5 billion in 2021 after its economy was impacted by a plunge in tourism and other sectors amid the novel coronavirus pandemic. The emirate, one of the seven that make up the United Arab Emirates, had posted a record \$18.1 billion budget for 2020. "The newly-announced budget takes into account the exceptional economic conditions of the fiscal year 2020 and the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy," said a statement by the Dubai Media Office.

Dubai foresees a deficit for the fifth year in a row, of \$1.3 billion in 2021. In 2019, it had forecast a \$700 million deficit for this year. The emirate, which

depends heavily on tourism and retail services, closed its border for several months due to the pandemic, resulting in a 10.8 percent GDP plunge in the first half of the year. According to government estimates published earlier this week, the economy will likely contract 6.2 percent this year but is expected to see four percent growth in 2021. The new budget "confirms Dubai's ability to deal with the crisis, restore the pace of economic growth, strengthen social benefits and essential services," the media office said.

The government was counting on the six-month Dubai Expo 2020 global trade fair - which was scheduled for October but postponed by one year - to attract millions of visitors. Tourism has long been an economic mainstay of Dubai, which welcomed more than 16 million visitors last year. Before the pandemic, the aim was to reach 20 million this year. Dubai is renowned for its skyscrapers, including the world's tallest building, Burj Khalifa, but its key property sector has been hit since 2014 by lower oil prices. — AFP