

## Local

## Kuwait's Deputy Amir receives top state officials



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Premier, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. He also

received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-

Hamad Al-Sabah, as well as Deputy Premier, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh. — KUNA

## stc celebrates Saudi National Day



KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, celebrated the National Day of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with a video dedicated to the country's people on this joyous occasion.

With its Saudi roots extending from Saudi Arabia, stc dedicated a video production titled "We are one, our nations are one" to the Saudi population in celebration of their 90th National Day. The production emphasized on the unified and unbreakable bond that is shared between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait throughout history. With time, the two nations have only come closer together, celebrating special occasions as one united nation.

As a subsidiary of stc Group, stc Kuwait extended its sincerely heartfelt tribute to the Saudi Nationals, expressing its pride and appreciation on this memorable day. The top management team and employees at stc participated in the celebration, while wishing their neighbors a happy national day. As part of its celebra-



tion, stc has offered a 50 percent discount on all international calls to Saudi Arabia on the 23rd of September.

Commenting on the occasion, Danah Al-Jasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, said, "On behalf of stc, we would like to extend our appreciation and excitement in celebrating with the Saudi population this emotional day that comes close to the heart of the stc family and the people of Kuwait. As a gesture of the ties and values shared between the two nations, we dedicate this video production as an expression of the solid bond embodied with feelings of national pride and spirit."

or negative," said Christian Paulus, a Roche research and development manager. "The PCR remains the gold standard. Therefore if there are any questions open, or if the clinical appearance of the person who had a negative test, if the person has symptoms like a fever, then you would for sure do confirmatory testing."

Alitalia launched its "COVID Tested Flights" program from Rome to Milan last week, and will expand it from Wednesday. Only passengers with negative COVID-19 results can board. "So far no positive passengers have been found," said an Alitalia spokesman, adding that many chose to take the airline's antigen tests the night before the flight. Travellers can access airport-testing facilities via a preferred lane with their tickets.

The airline plans to analyze findings around the middle of October, but already expects antigen-tested flights will be expanded to domestic and later international routes. "First, we have to see how this experiment goes," the spokesman said. The pre-flight antigen tests follow a scheme in Italy where such tests were used defensively. SD Biosensor said its tests had been deployed at Italian airports for incoming tourists, to avoid a renewed COVID-19 wave imported from infection hotspots. —Reuters

## Kuwait participates in Arab-German Health Forum

BERLIN: Kuwait's Ambassador to Germany Najeeb Al-Bader participated in the 13th Arab-German Health Forum and got acquainted with ongoing efforts to curb the coronavirus pandemic. Bader said yesterday that the forum, which was held in the North Rhine-Westphalia State in western Germany, enabled him to take first-hand account of the European state's attempts to confront COVID-19 with the objective of eliminating the virus. He said he exchanged views with experts attending the forum about efforts by some Arab countries to fight the virus, which infected over 20 million people worldwide and killed hundreds of thousands others. The forum featured many sessions about impacts and challenges posed by the pandemic on health systems, said Bader. The sessions, he added, also included transfer of health expertise and technologies, building of smart hospitals, boosting Arab-German pharmaceutical cooperation and establishing health partnership between public and private sectors. Armin Laschet, Minister President of North Rhine-Westphalia State, addressed the forum and called for promoting cooperation between the Arab countries and the German state in health and education. Arab Ambassadors to Germany met with Laschet and discussed bilateral relations and cooperation. — KUNA



BERLIN: Kuwait's Ambassador to Germany Najeeb Al-Bader (left) meets with Minister President of North Rhine-Westphalia State Armin Laschet. — KUNA

## 380 whales...

Continued from Page 1

A rescue crew of 60 conservationists, skilled volunteers and local fish farm workers have spent days wading in icy water trying to release the whales - which can grow up to six meters long and weigh a ton each.

The crews have focused efforts on a group of 30 partially submerged whales, using boats fitted with special slings to guide them back to the open ocean. "They're focused on the job - it's demanding work, some of them are up to their chest in cold water so we're trying to rotate the crews," Dekka said. "It's very draining physically. It's also draining emotionally."

Nearby, rescuers decked in fluorescent uniforms tried to cloak fully beached whales in wet sheets to keep them alive, while other members of the once close-knit pod lay dead. "As time goes on (the whales) do become more fatigued so their chances of survival reduces," Dekka said. "But we'll keep working as long as there's live animals at the site. Increasingly our focus is shifting to what to do with the retrieval and disposal of the carcasses."

The whales have been found stranded across an area 10 km long, and the search area has been expanded to see if more of the mammals are stuck nearby. Some of the whales rescued Tuesday re-stranded overnight, in line with predictions by whale behavior experts, who say the highly social creatures would try to return to be with family and friends.

But Dekka remained upbeat about the immediate prospects for those that made it to the ocean. "The good news is the majority of whales that were rescued are still out



This photograph taken on September 21, 2020 shows a pod of whales stranded on a sandbar in Macquarie Harbour on the rugged west coast of Tasmania. Up to 90 whales have died and a "challenging" operation is underway to rescue 180 more still stranded in a remote bay in southern Australia on September 22. — AFP

in deep water and swimming," he told reporters in the nearby town of Strahan. "They haven't stranded. So we've been more successful than not."

The causes of mass strandings remain unknown - even to scientists who have been studying the phenomenon for decades. Some researchers have suggested the pilot whales may have gone off track after feeding close to the shoreline or by following one or two whales that strayed. Tasmanian environment department marine biologist Kris Carlyon said it was a "natural event" with strandings of the species occurring regularly throughout history in both southern Australian and neighboring New Zealand.

"We do step in and respond in these

situations, but as far as being able to prevent these occurring in the future, there's really little that we can do," he said. Carlyon said animal welfare issues were a major reason authorities and conservationists intervened in mass strandings, along with public expectations and the opportunity to learn more about a species.

It would have been a "hugely stressful" experience for the whales that were freed, he said, but past events showed they were likely to thrive in the wild. "We have shown fairly conclusively that animals will regroup, they will reform those social bonds, and they will - at least in the short- to medium-term for the duration that they've been tracked - demonstrate normal and natural behavior," Carlyon said. — AFP

## Airlines look to tests that give...

Continued from Page 1

accurate as the molecular, or PCR, tests. They generally produce more "false negatives" which could mean sick people could slip through the cracks and onto planes.

An increasing number are hitting the market, from companies such as Abbott Laboratories, Becton Dickinson & Co and Quidel Corp and Roche, which is rebranding antigen tests from South Korea's privately held SD Biosensor. Airlines are pressing governments to embrace alternatives to blanket travel restrictions amid a resurgence of COVID-19 cases in Europe. Rapid antigen tests that can be administered by non-medical staff are expected to become available in coming weeks for as little as \$7 each, the head of industry body the International Air Transport Association said on Tuesday.

Despite the drawbacks of such antigen tests, carriers hope they could tip the balance in convincing people to fly. "It is to give ... confidence, at a specific point in time, that the result is positive

## Saudi Arabia to resume umrah...

Continued from Page 1

of year, usually attracts millions of Muslims from across the globe each year. The ministry said umrah would be allowed to resume at full "natural capacity" once the threat of the pandemic is eliminated. The decision to resume umrah was in response to the "aspirations of Muslims home and abroad" to perform the ritual and visit the holy sites, the ministry added.

The decision comes after the kingdom organized the smallest hajj in modern history in late July, with only up to 10,000 Muslims allowed to take part in total - a far cry from the 2.5 million who participated last year. Health authorities said no coron-

avirus cases were reported at the holy sites during the hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam and a must for able-bodied Muslims at least once in their lifetime.

Hajj pilgrims circled the sacred Kaaba - a cubic structure inside Mecca's Grand Mosque towards which Muslims around the world pray - along socially distant paths. The pilgrims were also subjected to regular temperature checks and required to go into mandatory quarantine after the ritual.

King Salman, the kingdom's ruler, said holding the hajj in the shadow of the pandemic required "double efforts" by Saudi authorities. The hajj and umrah pilgrimages are a massive logistical challenge, with colossal crowds cramming into relatively small holy sites, making them vulnerable to contagion. The kingdom has sought to contain a spike in infections, which have now risen to more than 330,000 cases - the highest in the Gulf - and over 4,500 deaths. But Saudi Arabia has also reported a high

rate of recoveries, which surpassed 312,000 on Tuesday.

Last week, Saudi Arabia partially lifted its suspension on international flights, six months after travel curbs were imposed due to the pandemic. Saudi Arabia's custodianship of Makkah and Madinah - Islam's two holiest sites - is seen as the kingdom's most powerful source of political legitimacy. The holy sites are also a key revenue earner for Saudi Arabia. The pilgrimages typically cost thousands of dollars for worshippers, who often save for years as well as endure long waiting lists for a chance to attend.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 reform plan seeks to decouple the economy of the kingdom - the world's top crude exporter - from oil dependency towards other sources of revenue, including religious tourism. The government hopes to welcome 30 million pilgrims to the kingdom annually by 2030. —AFP