

Local

Amir congratulates Saudi King on Crown Prince's successful surgery

Sheikh Nawaf reassures on Mohammad bin Salman's health

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Friday phoned Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz and congratulated him on the successful surgery of Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz. His Highness the Amir wished King Salman and Crown Prince

everlasting good health, and Saudi Arabia further progress and prosperity. Meanwhile, King Salman expressed great gratitude to His Highness the Amir for the call that embodies the deep-rooted and historical relations between the two countries and their brotherly peoples. The King wished the Amir permanent wellbeing.

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah phoned Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman to congratulate him on the successful surgery. In his call, His Highness the Amir wished the Saudi Crown Prince everlasting wellness and wished the Saudi Kingdom further progress and welfare under the

wise leadership of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman thanked His Highness the Amir of Kuwait on the call and his sentiments which reflect the strength and depth of relations between the two Arabian Gulf nations. He also wished His Highness the Amir everlasting wellbeing. — KUNA



CAIRO: Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi reads a letter from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during his meeting with Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah yesterday. — KUNA

Kuwait's Amir sends letter to Egypt's president

CAIRO: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a written

message to Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, which was delivered by Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah yesterday. The message discussed the deep-rooted bilateral relations between the two countries, and means to support and strengthen these ties. The letter was handed to the president during a meeting he held with Kuwait's foreign minister, who was on a state visit to Cairo. — KUNA

US Defense Secretary congratulates Kuwait on national celebrations

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah received a phone call from US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, congratulating Sheikh Hamad on the 60th National Day and 30th Liberation Anniversary yesterday. In a statement published by Kuwait Army's public relations department, Sheikh Hamad thanked Austin for his kind feelings, underlining the strong ties and joint work between Kuwait and the US. Meanwhile, he noted America's key role in liberating Kuwait and the sacrifices of the American army members during the Gulf Storm operation. The minister also spoke of the great efforts of leaders who led the military operations, mainly former US President George Bush. Austin invited his Kuwaiti counterpart to visit the US in the near future, as part of the deep relations between the two countries.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah received a phone call yesterday from his UAE counterpart Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who extended his congratulations on Kuwait's 60th National Day and 30th Liberation Day. The UAE foreign minister wished the Kuwaiti people



Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah

US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin

further prosperity and progress under the wise leadership of Their Highnesses the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. In turn, the Kuwaiti foreign minister expressed gratitude for the warm sentiments, wishing the Emirati people progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Children wearing face masks celebrate Kuwait's Liberation Day on Friday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Biden says US strike in Syria...

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human rights and international law". The air strikes would lead to "intensifying military conflicts and further destabilize the region," the foreign ministry spokesman said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least 22 fighters from Iraq's state-sponsored Hashed al-Shaabi paramilitary force were killed. It said US warplanes hit three trucks loaded with munitions coming from Iraq near the Syrian border town of Albu Kamal and destroyed border posts of the Hashed, an umbrella group that includes small militias with ties to Iran.

Kirby said the Pentagon had received "preliminary details" about casualties but declined to release any figures. He said nine "facilities" used by the militias were "totally destroyed" and two "partially destroyed". It was the first US military action targeting such groups since Biden took office five weeks ago and came just as Washington had opened the door to resuming negotiations with Tehran over its nuclear program.

Kirby said the targeted location was used by Kataeb Hezbollah and Kataeb Sayyid al-Shuhada, two Iraqi pro-Iran groups operating under the Hashed. Kataeb Hezbollah said one of its fighters was killed and slammed the strike as a "heinous crime in violation of international law". Kirby said Iraqi and Kurdish partners had provided intelligence that led to the identification of the groups behind the rocket attacks.

Israeli vessel hit by blast in...

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Dryad suggested Iran could be behind the blast, noting the incident comes amid heightened tensions

Iraq's defense ministry denied the US had coordinated with it to conduct the strike, saying it only works together with the US-led coalition in the fight against the Islamic State group. Syria's ally Russia also condemned the attack, with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov questioning the Biden administration's plans in Syria. "It is very important for us to understand the United States' strategic line on the ground," Lavrov said. Kirby responded to criticism by Lavrov that Moscow had been notified just four or five minutes before the US struck the targets. "We did what we believe was the proper amount of notification for this," he said. "It shouldn't come as a shock to anybody that we're going to do what we have to do to notify but we're also going to do what we have to do to protect our forces."

The US action followed three rocket attacks on facilities in Iraq used by US and coalition forces fighting IS. One of those strikes, on a military complex in the Kurdish regional capital Arbil on Feb 15, killed a civilian and a foreign contractor working with coalition forces, and wounded several US contractors and a soldier.

Last week, the Biden administration offered talks with Iran led by European allies as it seeks to salvage a 2015 nuclear deal, left on the brink of collapse after Biden's predecessor Donald Trump withdrew from it. But the new administration has also made clear it would not brook "malign activities" by Iran.

Iran is believed to be searching for an opportunity to avenge the US assassination of top general Qasem Soleimani one year ago. Soleimani, a senior Revolutionary Guards commander, was Iran's key liaison to its allies in Iraq and Syria, and elsewhere in the region. He was killed in a US drone strike just as he arrived in Baghdad for meetings with top Iraqi officials. — AFP

between Israel and the Islamic republic. "Whilst details regarding the incident remain unclear, it remains a realistic possibility that the event was the result of asymmetric activity by Iranian military," it said. "Tensions between Israel and Iran remain fraught, especially in light of increased signs of rapprochement between Iran and the Biden administration," Dryad added. "Increasingly, Iran is also becoming fearful of improving relations between Israel and the Gulf states." — AFP

UK bids farewell to lockdown hero; US backs rescue plan

LONDON: Britain said farewell yesterday to fundraising war veteran Captain Tom Moore who died from coronavirus earlier this month, as the US pushed forward with a massive recovery plan for its COVID-battered economy. A vast \$1.9 trillion package - including \$1,400 payouts to most Americans and billions of dollars to boost vaccine delivery, help schools reopen and fund local governments - was passed in the US House of Representatives and will now move to the Senate.

"After 12 months of death and despair, the American recovery begins tonight," congressman Brendan Boyle told the House, just days after the US death toll surpassed 500,000. The bill is on track to be the second largest US stimulus ever, illustrating the huge effort needed to tackle the multiple crises unleashed by a pandemic that has killed more than 2.5 million worldwide.

Europeans continue to live under some of the world's toughest restrictions, and in France they just got tougher. Two cities - Dunkirk in the north and Nice in the south - locked down on the weekends to halt the spread. "We have to do something as Covid is getting worse in the region," Charlie Kentish, a British resident taking an early morning walk in Nice, told AFP. He was resigned to spending his weekends playing video games with his teenage children.

From Brazil to the Czech Republic, restrictions are being reimposed and tightened. Even in relatively unscathed New Zealand, the biggest city Auckland was thrust back into lockdown yesterday shortly after a three-day shutdown ended. A small cluster has been linked to a school, but the country's caseload still pales in comparison with the numbers seen in Europe and the Americas.

In Britain, 100-year-old Tom Moore helped lift the COVID-induced gloom last year by staging fundraising events including completing 100

lengths of his back garden using a walking frame. After his campaign went viral, he raised nearly £33 million (\$45 million) for healthcare charities, and was knighted for his efforts. His funeral, a small family ceremony, was shown live on national television and he was honored with a flypast of a World War II plane.

The rollout of vaccines has improved the prospects greatly for many older people, with Britain excelling in its distribution to vulnerable groups. But the campaign has not gone smoothly everywhere, with campaigners in Canada appealing for their loved ones to get the jab quickly. "I am 94 today! No gifts, just the vaccine please," reads a handwritten sign outside the Toronto home of Nina Rockett. Her daughter Margot has become frustrated with the relatively slow pace of Canada's rollout. "I think everybody should hang a banner like this outside their door or window or balcony," she said.

The virus has not spared younger people either. There is growing concern over cases of "long COVID", where people suffer symptoms for months after the initial illness. Areli Torres, a 31-year-old engineer from Mexico, told AFP she fell ill for a few days last June, but months later she is still suffering symptoms including numbness in parts of her body. "Everything's uncertain. Everything's been an ordeal. I've seen four doctors," she said. It had taken seven months just to get the correct diagnosis, she added.

The World Health Organization this week urged governments to prioritize understanding the long-term effects of infections. As the health effects linger, so does the fallout for cultural events. The pandemic has torpedoed the whirlwind of the glitzy Los Angeles parties that normally marks the start of the Hollywood awards season.

While the famous Sunset Strip is adorned with its usual giant "For Your Consideration" movie billboards, voters are watching nominated films from home, and journalists are interviewing actors on their laptops. Variety awards editor Tim Gray told AFP he had not been to a single in-person event for a film this year. "Everyone's just had to adapt," added The Hollywood Reporter's awards columnist Scott Feinberg. — AFP