

Local

World leaders in Kuwait to offer condolences



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets President of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani. — Amiri Diwan photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at the Amiri Terminal yesterday several presidents and heads of states, who arrived in Kuwait to offer condolences on the passing of the late Amir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Afghanistan

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received President of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani and his accompanying delegation, who paid their respects and expressed condolences on the passing of His Highness Sheikh Sabah.

Lebanon

Lebanese President Michel Aoun and his accompanying delegation also arrived at the Amiri Terminal to meet His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-

Jaber Al-Sabah and offer condolences on the late Amir's passing.

Mauritania

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received President of Mauritania Mohamed Ould Ghazouani and his accompanying delegation who expressed condolences on Sheikh Sabah's passing.

Pakistan

Furthermore, Pakistan's President Arif Alvi and his delegation arrived in Kuwait and met with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the Amiri Terminal, where they offered condolences over the late Amir's demise.

Yemen

Moreover, Yemeni President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi and his accompanying delegation



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Lebanese President Michel Aoun.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Pakistan's President Arif Alvi.

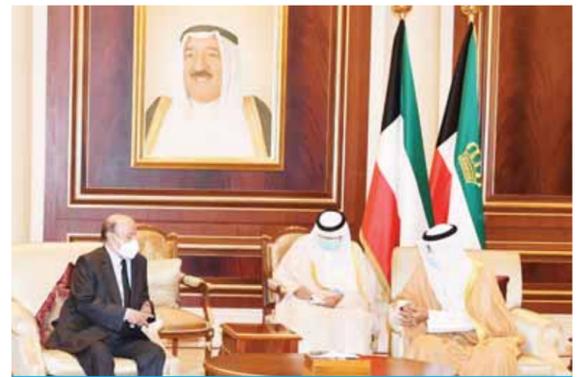
offered condolences on Sheikh Sabah's passing during a meeting with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the Amiri

Terminal.

The presidents also offered condolences to Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem, Deputy Chief of the



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets President of Mauritania Mohamed Ould Ghazouani.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Yemeni President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi.

Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Sheikh Mishal Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah,

His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and other figures. — KUNA

Devils released on Aussie mainland...

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ravaged the remaining population on the Australian island state of Tasmania. It is estimated that fewer than 25,000 Tasmanian devils still live in the wild, down from as many as 150,000 before the mysterious, fatal disease first struck in the mid-1990s. On Australia's mainland, they are believed to have been wiped out by packs of dingoes - wild dogs native to the vast continent - an estimated 3,000 years ago.

Faulkner said it was hoped the project would create an "insurance population" against the face-tumor disease, which has so far proved untreatable, and help restore the native environment. "Devils present one of the only natural solutions to the control of fox and the cat, and the fox and cat are responsible for nearly all of our 40 mammal extinctions (in Australia)," he added. "So there's more than the devil at stake here."

Aussie Ark selected the reintroduced devils for their breeding suitability, placing them in the sprawling, fenced area in the hopes of warding off threats to their survival including feral pests, noxious weeds and cars. "We've put young, healthy devils in, we put them in now which gives them the best part of six months to settle, find their territory (and) prepare for breeding" which usually occurs in February, Faulkner said.

Another 40 are set to be released over the next two years into the sanctuary, which is on land bought by Aussie Ark for its habitat suitability, high number of herbivores and location near a national park. "The



BARRINGTON TOPS, Australia: This undated handout photo shows actors Chris Hemsworth and Elsa Pataky releasing Tasmanian devils into a wild sanctuary in New South Wales state. — AFP

land initially was selected because it's just like a slice of Tasmania," Faulkner said. He said he was confident that close monitoring as the Tasmanian devils make the "massive transition" back to the wild - where they have no supplied food, water or shelter for the first time in their lives - would ensure the program's early success.

As part of the "ambitious" rewilding scheme, Aussie Ark plans to eventually introduce more of the animals to unfenced areas, where they will contend with a much greater range of new threats including the country's notorious bushfires. The Tasmanian devil is one of seven cornerstone species critical to Australia's ecosystem that Aussie Ark plans to reintroduce to the wild sanctuary in the coming years, along with quolls, bandicoots and rock wallabies. — AFP

Assembly-govt meeting on population law postponed

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A meeting between the National Assembly's human resources committee with the government to study amendments to the population law has been postponed for next week because the Cabinet weekly meeting was delayed.

The assembly approved the law in the first reading last week with all Cabinet's 12 members present voting against the law after the government objected to a number of points.

The law calls on the government to set a cap for the number of expats needed by the country within six months of issuing the law and asks the government to gradually reduce the number of expats over the next five years. It also requires the government to introduce quotas for various foreign communities in the country. The government has reportedly objected to the six-month period and also to setting specific quotas for expat communities.

The two sides were supposed to make the necessary amendments before sending the law back to the assembly to make its second and final vote on

the legislation that basically aims at substantially reducing the number of expats.

MP Mohammad Al-Dallal yesterday asked the Minister of Social Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel about measures adopted by the ministry against employers who delay the payment of salaries to employees.

He demanded to know the number of labor complaints filed by individual or groups of workers in the private sector for not receiving their salaries or those who had their passports taken by employers since 2017. He asked for the names of companies which committed such violations.

In the meantime, MP Osama Al-Shaheen asked Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh about Kuwait's readiness to face the danger of drones. The lawmaker was referring to a statement by a Pentagon official saying Kuwait needs a comprehensive assessment to its system of countering drones.

Shaheen asked the minister about Kuwait's military and technical preparedness against the dangers of drones and in protecting vital installations and if Kuwait has devised a plan to protect its vital facilities against possible attacks by drones.



Trio win Nobel for discovery...

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"I didn't even realize this was the day the Nobel Prizes were going to be given out," he added. "To see so many people get cured is astounding," he told the Nobel Foundation.

Prior to the trio's work, the discovery of the Hepatitis A and B viruses had been critical steps forward - the discovery of Hepatitis B won the Nobel Medicine Prize in 1976 - but the majority of blood-borne hepatitis cases remained unexplained. The discovery of Hepatitis C virus revealed the cause of the remaining cases of chronic hepatitis, and "made possible blood tests and new medicines that have saved millions of lives", the Nobel committee said.

Alter was credited for his pioneering work studying the occurrence of hepatitis in patients who had received blood transfusions, determining that their illness was neither Hepatitis A or B. Houghton built on Alter's work to isolate the genetic sequence of the new virus. Rice, 68, subsequently completed the puzzle by using genetic engineering to prove that it was the new strain alone - Hepatitis C - that was causing patients to get sick. The trio will share the prize sum of 10 million Swedish kronor (about \$1.1 million).

In 2013, Houghton reportedly declined Canada's Gairdner International Award because two of his key collaborators who worked with him at pharmaceutical group Chiron Corp were not included. Houghton, Alter and Rice would normally receive their prize from King Carl XVI Gustaf at a formal ceremony in Stockholm on Dec 10, the anniversary of the 1896 death of scientist Alfred Nobel who

created the prizes in his will. But the in-person ceremony has been cancelled this year due to the pandemic and replaced with a televised ceremony showing the laureates receiving their awards in their home countries.

The award for work on a virus comes as the world battles the new coronavirus pandemic, which has put the global spotlight on science and research. "The pandemic is a big crisis for mankind, but it illustrates how important science is," Nobel Foundation head Lars Heikensten said. No prizes were expected to be awarded this year directly linked to the coronavirus, as Nobel prize-winning research usually takes many years to be verified.

But Nobel medicine committee chair Patrik Ernfors said yesterday's prize was "relatively easy to relate to today's situation". "The first thing you need to do is to identify the causing virus, and once that has been done, that is in itself the starting point for the development of drugs to treat the disease and also to develop vaccines against the disorder. So the actual viral discovery itself is a critical moment."

The 2020 Nobel season continues today with the physics prize, with astrophysicists Shep Doeleman of the US and Germany's Heino Falcke seen as possible winners for work that led to the first directly observed image of a black hole in April 2019. American mathematician Peter Shor who paved the way for today's research on quantum computers, or France's Alain Aspect for his work on quantum entanglement, have also been mentioned.

The chemistry and literature prizes follow tomorrow and Thursday. Speculation ahead of Friday's peace prize has meanwhile focused on press freedom groups, Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg and other climate activists, or several UN organizations. The economics prize wraps things up on Monday, Oct 12. — AFP

Outrage after Trump visits...

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But health experts took to the airwaves and social media to criticize the "stunt," which they said demonstrated that he had learned nothing at all.

"Every single person in the vehicle during that completely unnecessary Presidential 'drive-by' just now has to be quarantined for 14 days," said James Phillips, chief of disaster medicine at George Washington University. "They might get sick. They may die. For political theater. Commanded by Trump to put their lives at risk for theater. This is insanity."

White House spokesman Judd Deere said "appropriate" precautions had been taken to protect Trump and his support staff, including protective gear. "The movement was cleared by the medical team as safe to do," he added. But Zeke Emanuel, chair of the Department of Medical Ethics and Health Policy at the University of Pennsylvania and regular TV pundit, described the appearance as "shameful". "Making his Secret Service agents drive with a COVID-19 patient, with windows up no less, put them needlessly at risk for infection. And for what? A PR stunt," he tweeted.

The episode came hours after a briefing by Trump's medical team, who said he had "continued to improve" and could be returned to the White House, which has the facilities to treat and isolate the president, as early as yesterday. The president was flown to Walter Reed with a high fever on Friday after a "rapid progression" of his illness, with his oxygen levels dropping worryingly low, Trump's physician Sean Conley said in a Sunday briefing.

Health experts have complained that the messaging from the administration - and particularly Trump's medical team - has caused widespread confusion. Conley admitted Sunday that he had kept from the public the fact that the president had been given extra

oxygen, in a bid to reflect an "upbeat attitude". And he gave a rosy account of Trump's progress Saturday, only for White House chief of staff Mark Meadows to tell reporters immediately after that Trump's condition had been "very concerning" and that he was "still not on a clear path to a full recovery".

With his tough reelection campaign in its final month against Democratic rival Joe Biden, Trump's diagnosis and hospitalization have left him sidelined from what he does best - campaigning. Meanwhile, Biden - who announced Sunday his latest negative test for the virus - started the week with a trip yesterday to key swing state Florida.

But Trump and his advisors have done their best to project a sense of continuity. His deputy campaign manager Jason Miller told ABC Sunday he had spoken to Trump for a half-hour Saturday and that the president was "cracking jokes". But controversy has been mounting over the possibility that Trump might have exposed numerous others to COVID-19 even after a close aide tested positive.

A timeline provided by his advisors and doctors suggested he met more than 30 donors on Thursday in Bedminster, New Jersey, even after learning that Hope Hicks had the virus - and just hours before he announced his own positive test. There were more than 200 people at the fundraiser, and a contact-tracing operation underway in New Jersey was looking at potentially thousands of people who may have been exposed.

All this came in a week when a Wall Street Journal/NBC poll - taken in the two days after a bruising presidential debate with Biden but before news emerged of Trump's illness - gave Biden a significant 53-39 percent lead among registered voters. As well as Trump and Hicks, numerous White House insiders and at least three Republican senators have contracted COVID-19, along with First Lady Melania Trump, who has not experienced severe symptoms. Public health experts have expressed alarm at the "White House cluster" that has been linked to the Sept 26 Rose Garden celebration of conservative judge Amy Coney Barrett's nomination to the Supreme Court. — AFP