

## Local

# Amir, Crown Prince meet Kuwait commerce chamber's chief

Sheikh Nawaf, Sheikh Mishal receive Saleh Al-Fadhala



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday Chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Mohammad Jasem Al-Saqr. His Highness also received the head of the central agency for illegal residents' affairs Saleh Al-Fadhala. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received Saqr and Fadhala at Seif Palace yesterday. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



LVIV, Ukraine: Tourists from GCC countries play with soap bubbles in Lviv, some 540 km west of Kiev. — AFP

## Ukraine pins hopes on...

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After exploring Lviv and the capital Kiev this summer, the family was pleasantly surprised. "The bars, the food and the coffee—all things here in Ukraine are amazing," Asma said outside the iconic Lviv Opera.

Anna Nayda, the head of the Kredens Cafe chain, admitted that the local tourism industry experienced some initial difficulties when catering for their new customers. "At first it was very difficult to find a common language," she said. But now her cafes are printing menus in Arabic and ensuring they have halal options. Several souvenir shops in the city have started making signs in Arabic while "Chudo Tour" said they are translating their pre-recorded audio guides.

"This is a push for change," Nayda said, adding that during the pandemic businesses struggled to pay rent and salaries. "Of course in these conditions you think about how to survive. We decided to make

changes and everything turned out great," she said.

Tourism to Ukraine is picking back up, but the climb is slow. After the number of tourists in 2020 was just a quarter of the level of the previous year in 2020, it was up nine percent in the first half of this year compared to the second half of last year. The number of visitors from the Gulf—mainly Saudi Arabia and Bahrain—gradually increased throughout the summer, said Khrystyna Kaguy, a manager at the Reikartz hotel group. Hassan, a 64-year-old businessman from Saudi Arabia, opted for a family holiday in Ukraine on the recommendation of a friend.

Compared to Germany or Switzerland, he described the country as "more energetic, more dynamic" and where the locals "are family oriented". "We'll definitely come back," he told AFP on a cafe terrace with his wife in Kiev. For tourists coming from arid conditions, trees and rain are a big draw. "The rooms that even slightly overlook the trees or the park are a big preference," Kaguy told AFP.

Gets, meanwhile, said he had never seen an adult so happy to see rain. "This is a thrill for them. They say that they came to Lviv on purpose, they are only interested in rain." According to Asma, the rain is like "magic". "Looks like heaven," she said. "We will come back." —AFP

sured the public that the situation in the northern border zone is stable.

In the meantime, prominent opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri said he will demand convening an emergency session of the National Assembly to debate what he described as "political, financial and administrative chaos" by the government. The Assembly is currently in summer recess and at least 33 MPs must sign a motion to call an emergency session to debate the issue.

Mohammad Zaman also praised Al-Mutairi's achievements at Tokyo Paralympics Games 2020 as 'historic'. Zaman conveyed his congratulations to III the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and III the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Al-Mutairi's victory. Kuwait has sent three athletes to the August 24-September 5 Tokyo Games. Basimah Najim is set to compete in the Shot Put F34 today and Faisal Sorour in the Shot Put F63 on Saturday. — Agencies

## Kuwait's Mutairi wins silver at...

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Meanwhile, Kuwait Ambassador to Japan Hasan

## WHO sounds alarm over...

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December 1," WHO Europe director Hans Kluge said yesterday. Europe has already registered around 1.3 million COVID deaths to date.

Of the WHO Europe's 53 member states, 33 have registered an incidence rate greater than 10 percent in the past two weeks, Kluge said, mostly in poorer countries. High transmission rates across the continent were "deeply worrying, particularly in the light of low vaccination uptake in priority populations in a number of countries." Kluge said the Delta variant was partly to blame, along with an "exaggerated easing" of restrictions and measures and a surge in summer travel.

While around half of people in the WHO's Europe region are fully vaccinated, uptake in the region has slowed. "In the past six weeks, it has fallen by 14 percent, influenced by a lack of access to vaccines in some countries and a lack of vaccine acceptance in others."

Only six percent of people in lower and lower-middle income countries in Europe are fully vaccinated, and some countries have only managed to vaccinate one in 10 health professionals. "The stagnation in vaccine uptake in our region is of serious concern," Kluge said, urging countries to "increase production, share doses and improve access".

## IS rockets hit Kabul airport...

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are now focused chiefly on flying themselves and American diplomats out safely.

The regional Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) group, rivals of the Taliban, pose the biggest threat to the withdrawal, after carrying out a suicide bombing outside the airport late last week that claimed more than 100 lives, including those of 13 US troops. Yesterday, they claimed to have fired six rockets at the airport. A Taliban official said the attack was intercepted by the airport's missile defense systems.

Even as the US troop presence in Afghanistan drew to an end, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters that it was "a particularly dangerous time right now". "The threat stream is still real, it's still active, and in many cases it's still specific," he said yesterday.

The White House confirmed there had been a rocket attack directed at the airport yesterday, but said airlift operations there were "uninterrupted". "The President... has reconfirmed his order that commanders redouble their efforts to prioritize doing whatever is necessary to protect our forces on the ground," a White House statement said. An AFP photographer yesterday took images of a destroyed car with a launcher system still visible in the back seat.

A Taliban official at the scene said he believed five rockets had been fired. A suspected US drone

Kluge stressed that since public health and social measures were being relaxed in many places, "the public's vaccination acceptance is crucial".

"Vaccine skepticism and science denial is holding us back from stabilizing this crisis. It serves no purpose, and is good for no one." The warning comes as the WHO and UNICEF urged European countries earlier yesterday to make teachers a priority group for vaccinations so schools can stay open.

As schools reopen after the summer holidays, the agencies said it was "vital that classroom-based learning continue uninterrupted", despite the spread of the Delta variant. "This is of paramount importance for children's education, mental health and social skills, for schools to help equip our children to be happy and productive members of society," Kluge said. "The pandemic has caused the most catastrophic disruption to education in history," he added.

The agencies urged countries to vaccinate children over the age of 12 who have underlying medical conditions that put them at greater risk of severe COVID-19. It also recalled the importance of measures to improve the school environment during the pandemic, including better ventilation, smaller class sizes, social distancing and regular COVID testing for children and staff.

Some 10,000 COVID deaths are now reported every day around the world, a much lower figure than the highs of January when an average of 14,800 people were being killed daily. But the figure is much higher than at the start of July when some 7,800 daily deaths were registered. — AFP

strike had hit the car, about two kilometers (1.2 miles) from the airport. While there were no reports of fatalities or airport damage from the rocket attacks, they caused greater anxiety for locals already traumatized by years of war.

"Since the Americans have taken control of the airport, we can't sleep properly," Abdullah, who lives near the airport and gave only one name, told AFP. "It is either gun firing, rockets, sirens or sounds of huge planes that disturb us. And now that they are being directly targeted, it can put our lives in danger." A journalist in Kabul said there was a constant sound of planes overhead, with aircraft taking off and landing, as well as jets offering surveillance and protection.

The United States earlier said an air strike on Sunday night had eliminated another threat from the Islamic State jihadists. However, it may have also killed civilians. "We are aware of reports of civilian casualties following our strike on a vehicle in Kabul today," Captain Bill Urban, a US Central Command spokesman, said in a statement. "We would be deeply saddened by any potential loss of innocent life."

The Taliban have promised a softer brand of rule compared with their first stint in power, which the US military ended because the group gave sanctuary to Al-Qaeda. But many Afghans fear a repeat of the Taliban's brutal interpretation of Islamic law, as well as violent retribution for working with foreign militaries, Western missions or the previous US-backed government.

On Sunday, the Taliban revealed their supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada was in southern Afghanistan and planning to make a public appearance. "He is present in Kandahar," said Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, referring to the movement's spiritual birthplace. — AFP