



2 Residents stranded abroad struggle to re-enter Kuwait



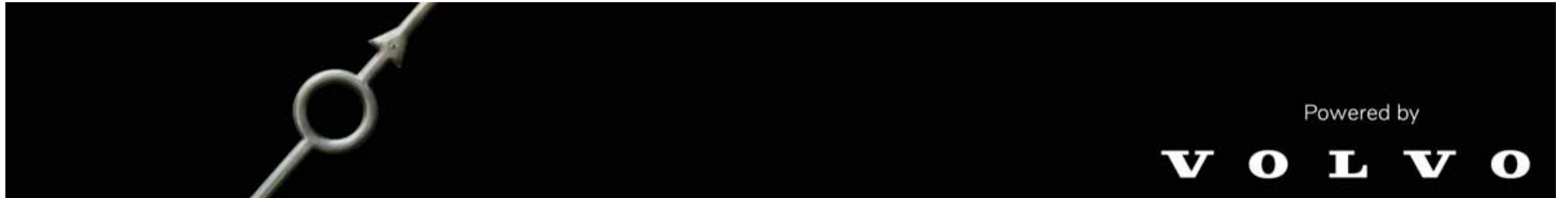
7 Libya political upturn boosts migrant exodus



13 Bob Dylan sued for allegedly sexually abusing girl in 1965



16 India quicks star with bat and ball in thrashing of England



Taliban declare end to war, pardon everyone

Taliban co-founder returns • Biden defends exit • Life returning to new normal

600+ Afghans cram into US military flight

KABUL: A photo shows more than 600 Afghans - women, men, children and the elderly - sitting packed on the floor of a cavernous US military plane, part of a dramatic airlift hours after Kabul fell to the Taliban. The now-viral image, obtained and posted by the respected military news site Defense One, was taken inside a US Air Force C-17 transport.

The Afghans crammed in the giant cargo hold on the Sunday night flight were among those approved for evacuation by US authorities, according to the site. The US military said about 640 Afghans were on board. But such a large number on one flight was not planned, a US official told Defense One - many climbed onto the half-open ramp at the back of the plane in desperation. "The crew made the decision to go" rather than force them out, the official said.

It came as Taliban fighters flooded the streets of Kabul, with panicked citizens rushing to the airport to try and find a flight out of Afghanistan. "The unusually high number of passengers aboard this aircraft... was the result of a dynamic security environment that necessitated quick decision making by the crew," US Central Command spokesperson Karen Roxberry said in a statement. It "ultimately ensured that these passengers were safely taken outside the country".

Continued on Page 2



Image shows the inside of Reach 871, a US Air Force C-17 Globemaster III flown from Kabul to Qatar on Aug 15, 2021. The plane safely evacuated some 640 Afghans. — AFP

KABUL: The Taliban said yesterday the war in Afghanistan was over and that all their opponents would be pardoned, as they held their first news conference since seizing power from the Western-backed government in Kabul. "War has ended... (the leader) has pardoned everyone," spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said, adding: "We are committed to letting women work in accordance with the principles of Islam."

Shortly before he spoke, the Taliban's deputy leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar - who also co-founded the movement - arrived in Kandahar, landing in the insurgent group's former capital just days after they took control of the country. Mujahid said the Taliban would soon be establishing a government, but gave little detail of its make-up apart from saying they would "connect with all sides". "All those in the opposite side are pardoned from A to Z," he said. "We will not seek revenge."

Asked what the difference between the movement that was ousted 20 years ago and the Taliban of today, he said: "If the question is based on ideology, and beliefs, there is no difference... but if we calculate it based on experience, maturity, and insight, no doubt there are many differences. The steps today will be positively different from the past steps."



Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar

A spokesman for the group's political office in Doha, Suhail Shaheen, told Britain's Sky News that women would not be required to wear the all-covering burqa, but did not say what attire would be deemed acceptable. "The burqa is not the only hijab (headscarf) that (can) be observed, there is different types of hijab not limited to burqa," he said.

Women "can get education from primary to higher education - that means university. We have announced this policy at international conferences, the Moscow conference and here at the Doha conference (on Afghanistan)," Shaheen said. "Thousands of schools in areas captured by the Taliban were still operational, he added. Baradar's arrival from Qatar - where he has spent months leading talks with the United States

Continued on Page 2

News in brief

Snap lockdown in New Zealand

WELLINGTON: New Zealand imposed a snap three-day lockdown yesterday after identifying a single case of locally transmitted COVID-19 suspected to be the Delta variant, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said. Ardern said New Zealand, which had not recorded any infections in the community for six months, could not take any chances with the "game changer" Delta strain, after a 58-year-old Auckland man was diagnosed with coronavirus from an unknown source. — AFP

New record for pi figure

GENEVA: Swiss researchers said yesterday they had calculated the mathematical constant pi to a new world-record level of exactitude, hitting 62.8 trillion figures using a supercomputer. "The calculation took 108 days and nine hours" using a supercomputer, the Graubunden University of Applied Sciences said. Researchers are waiting for the Guinness Book of Records to certify their feat, until then revealing only the final ten digits they calculated for pi: 7817924264. — AFP

Kenyan activist leaves Qatar

DOHA: A Kenyan security guard charged by Qatar with receiving money from a "foreign agent" to spread disinformation has left the Gulf state after paying a fine, a rights group said yesterday. Malcolm Bidali, under his pen name Noah, published articles on the plight of migrant laborers working on projects in the gas-rich host of the 2022 World Cup, including infrastructure for the tournament. — AFP

Blinded Gaza boy dreams of school

GAZA: Eight-year-old Mohammed Shaban dreamed of returning to the classroom in Gaza for the start of the school year. But after an exploded missile blinded him in May, he is staying home. Mohammed used to attend school with his cousins and neighbors in the town of Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip. He is one of hundreds of children the United Nations says were injured during fighting in May between the Zionist entity and Hamas, which controls the Palestinian enclave.

From May 10 to 21, the Zionist army pummeled the Gaza Strip. Mohammed said he was walking to a market to buy clothes during the conflict when a missile exploded. As a result of the blast,

his father Hani said, "Mohammed was injured in the eyes, which led to the loss of his eyes, and Mohammed became completely blind."

The Shabans say Mohammed was injured by a missile fired by the Zionists. The boy still hoped to return to school, Hani said, and his new disability left him moody and unpredictable. "He sometimes asks me, 'When will I see', or 'When will I go back to school with the children', or 'When will I go out to the street alone'," Hani said.

Human Rights Watch has accused both the Zionist entity and Gaza of war crimes during the conflict. Zionist air strikes killed 260 Palestinians, and HRW said Zionist strikes were not always directed at military targets. For now, Mohammed grips his father's hand, his head facing down, as they walk through their neighborhood. They step along narrow dirt streets lined by cinderblock walls covered in graffiti.

At home, Hani Shaban guided his son to sit down on cushions and showed him the collared



GAZA: Palestinian pupil Mohammed Shaban sits alongside classmates at a school in Beit Lahia yesterday. — AFP

shirts of his school uniform. Mohammed gripped a pen and tried to form letters in a notebook as his parents encouraged him.

Continued on Page 2

Hospitals in Lebanon grapple with outages

BEIRUT: Hospitals in the Akkar region of north Lebanon where a fuel tank explosion killed at least 28 people this week struggled to operate yesterday as life-threatening power cuts and telecom outages swept the area. Lights and phone lines went out across the impoverished and marginalized region that has long suffered from an ailing power grid but that is now grappling with an unprecedented crisis due to severe diesel shortages nationwide.

The outages come less than two days after a fuel tank exploded in the village of Al-Tleil, scorching people clamoring to fill petrol that the army was distributing. Around 80 people, including several soldiers, were injured, many of them left with severe

Continued on Page 2



BEIRUT: A pharmacist sits on a stretcher holding a sign reading "no gasoline = no ambulance" while others stands by holding signs reading "no electricity = no hospital" and "no vaccine = no treatment" as they stage a demonstration in the Achrafieh district on Monday. — AFP