

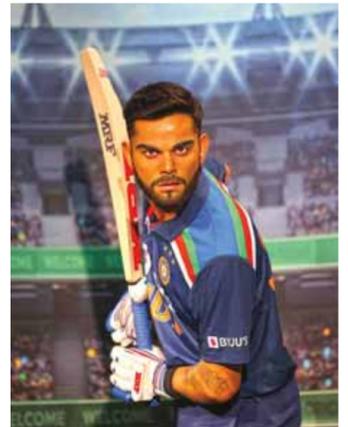
## Lifestyle | Features



A picture shows the newly opened Madame Tussauds museum in Dubai. — AFP photos



A waxwork of Barbadian singer Rihanna.

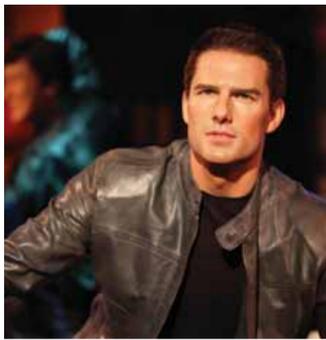


A waxwork of Indian cricket player Virat Kohli.

# Madame Tussauds opens museum in Dubai

London's renowned waxwork museum Madame Tussauds opened this week its first outpost in the Arab world in Dubai, which hopes to attract millions of tourists to Expo 2020. The brand, which began life in London where it boasts 250 wax sculptures that draw millions of visitors annually, also has smaller branches in the United States, Europe and Asia. "We have opened our doors on the 14th of October this year very close to Expo 2020," Sanaz Kollrud, general manager of Dubai's Madame Tussauds, told AFP. "We expect many visitors locally and internationally to come in. "We have chosen the talents that are relevant and popular in the region."

The Dubai branch displayed 60 sculptures of "global stars", including football sensation Lionel Messi and pop singer Rihanna. And about 15 were from the



A waxwork of US actor Tom Cruise.

region including Lebanese pop stars Nancy Ajram and Maya Diab. With only limited oil reserves, the emirate of Dubai has been focusing on the development

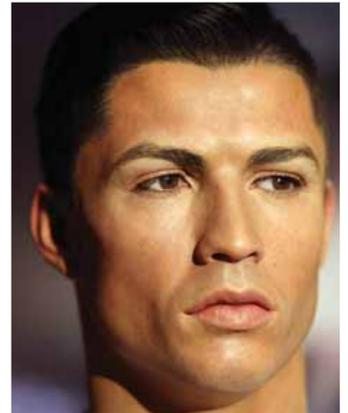
of tourism and the entertainment sector. Dubai is counting on the six-month Expo 2020 Dubai-which opened on October 1 after a one-year delay to attract millions of visitors and boost its pandemic-hit economy.

## Ronaldo wearing 'wrong' shirt

The Dubai branch said yesterday it will soon change the shirt of the wax figure of Cristiano Ronaldo after online backlash that the Portuguese footballer was wearing the "wrong" jersey. London's renowned waxwork museum opened this week with Ronaldo's wax figure donning the striped black and white shirt of his previous team, Italy's Juventus. In August, Ronaldo returned to Manchester United in the English Premier League on a two-year contract with an option to extend that deal by a further season.

"With the ever-changing, fast world of sports where players regularly move teams, fans of Cristiano Ronaldo will be excited to hear that his wax figure is being updated with his new Manchester United jersey very soon," the museum said in a statement to AFP. "Each figure at the attraction has been captured in a moment of time and resembles an iconic part in their history."

A number of British and Portuguese online media outlets had noted that the 36-year-old star footballer at the museum was wearing the "wrong shirt" of Juventus, which Ronaldo left after three seasons. The five-time Ballon d'Or winner first made his name on the world stage in six years at United between 2003 and 2009. — AFP



A waxwork of Portuguese footballer Cristiano Ronaldo.



Members of the media attend a press preview to experience SUMMIT by Night ahead of the grand opening of SUMMIT One Vanderbilt in New York.—AFP photos



A woman poses as members of the media attend a press preview to experience SUMMIT by Night ahead of the grand opening of SUMMIT One Vanderbilt in New York.

## Netflix braces for staff walkout and LGBTQ rally over Chappelle special

Netflix bosses braced for an employee walkout and rally in Los Angeles yesterday as anger swelled over a recent Dave Chappelle comedy special that activists say is harmful to the transgender community. The streaming giant has found itself embroiled in an intense and highly public controversy over Chappelle's "The Closer," in which the stand-up star insists "gender is a fact" and accuses LGBTQ people of being "too sensitive."

"A list of firm asks" will be presented to Netflix content chief Ted Sarandos at the rally, which organizer Ashlee Marie Preston said Tuesday had been moved to a larger site due to "overwhelming demand." Organizers did not specify their demands ahead of the rally, although Preston said the event would call for content that prioritizes "the safety and dignity of all marginalized communities." Transgender Netflix employee Terra Field has called on the streamer to add a content warning to "The Closer," and to promote more "queer and trans comedians and talent." "A place can't be a great place to work if someone has to betray

their community to do so," Field wrote in a blog post Monday.

"The Closer" has been condemned by LGBTQ groups, which cited studies linking stereotypes about minorities to real-world harm. But Sarandos wrote to staff last week that "content on screen doesn't directly translate to real-world harm," and emphasized the importance of defending "artistic freedom." Three employees including Field were reportedly suspended after crashing a virtual meeting for executives over the episode, but later reinstated. Another was sacked for leaking internal data about the cost of the episode.

The walkout and rally have drawn support from film and television celebrities such as Jameela Jamil ("The Good Place") and Jonathan Van Ness ("Queer Eye"), who have recorded a video message expressing "love and support" for the movement. Acclaimed comedian Hannah Gadsby—who has her own popular Netflix specials—last week called the streaming giant an "amoral algorithm cult." — AFP



A billboard for the Dave Chappelle Netflix special "The Closer" is seen in Hollywood, California. — AFP

## Walking on 'Air': New York's newest skyscraper attraction

What does it feel like to hover over 1,000 feet (300 meters) in the air? A new tourist attraction opening in New York this week tries to answer that question. "Air," an art installation by artist Kenzo Digital, opens today inside the recently completed One Vanderbilt tower, now the Big Apple's fourth-highest tower. An elevator that is all glass, including the floor, takes thrill

seekers up the side of the building in Midtown Manhattan to 1,200 feet in just 42 seconds.

There, they step out onto three floors of glass and mirrors that offer spectacular views but also aim to distort one's sense of where they are, leaving them with a feeling they are floating. The experience challenges "the perception of space and plunges the visitor into a factory of silhou-

ettes and skyscrapers," according to Kenzo, who is known for his collaborations with signer Beyonce. It is "euphoric and multisensory" he says.

Nick Barat, who got a sneak preview as part of a press visit on Monday, said the art installation made it different from the city's other observatories, such as the Empire State Building. "It makes you think about the relationship you have with the city and yourself," he told AFP. One Vanderbilt, next to Grand Central station, is 1,401-feet high including its spire. Only the One World Trade Center and the residential skyscrapers of Central Park Tower and 111 West 57th Street in New York are taller. The Kohn Pederson Fox-design boasts two glass boxes that jut out of the building and suspend guests 1,063 feet above Madison Avenue. On a clear day it is possible to see more than 60 miles (100 kilometers) away. — AFP



Christine Tan sits in the window and poses for a picture as members of the media attend a press preview to experience SUMMIT by Night.

## 'Afghanistan not forgotten': Antiques dealer runs Expo pavilion

Afghan antiques dealer Muhammad Umar Rahimi carried his most prized possessions to display at Expo 2020 Dubai, hoping to portray his war-scarred homeland in a light different to that under Taliban rule. Near a fast food outlet on the sprawling world fair site in the United Arab Emirates, with no sign to indicate the location of the Afghan Pavilion, Rahimi has on display 300 items—from daggers and carpets to saffron and deep-blue lapis lazuli stones.

"When the Afghan government collapsed, Expo organizers decided that this be turned into a people's pavilion for the people of Afghanistan," Rahimi, who has

been living in Vienna for more than 40 years, told AFP. The 63-year-old said it was then that he took it upon himself to contact Expo and organize the pavilion, which was running the risk of not opening at all as the Taliban took control of Kabul in mid-August.

An Expo 2020 spokesperson said that in light of developments in Afghanistan

the fair welcomed "the initiative of the Afghan business community to run the pavilion and share with the world the story of the people of Afghanistan". Far from the scenes of war and destruction, traditional robes, hand-woven rugs and lute-like rubabs decorate the pavilion at the fair that opened earlier this month. "This exhibition is extremely important for

Afghanistan," said Rahimi. "There are a lot of Afghans who live here."

With the help of two of his sons and his brother, all of whom live in Austria, Rahimi transported items from his personal collection at his own expense. "It's part of my blood. It's my profession," he said. "We worked day and night, 20 hours a day... and completed this in 72 hours."

The Afghan pavilion opened about a week after Dubai inaugurated the six-month Expo on October 1, with a delay of nearly a year due to the coronavirus pandemic. According to the Afghan consulate in Dubai, one of seven emirates that make up the UAE, the Gulf country is home to approximately 150,000 of its citizens. Many of them run successful businesses, while others work in shops, restaurants and construction.

## 'Fertile land'

On August 15, Taliban fighters took Kabul after a lightning offensive launched in May as the United States and NATO began the final stages of withdrawing their troops. The hardline Islamists are seeking diplomatic recognition as well as assistance to avoid a humanitarian dis-

aster, having returned to power after two decades of war. No country has yet to recognize the Taliban, whose first stint in power between 1996 and 2001 was brutal with public executions and a ban on women leaving the home unchaperoned.

Rahimi did not want to comment on the political situation in Afghanistan but stressed the overwhelming desire for peace and for a safe, stable and prosperous homeland. He said his participation in the Expo was to introduce people to his home country and what it can offer. "It is so Afghanistan's name is not forgotten, and people see our culture and fertile land," Rahimi told AFP. "We want peace... and we have hope in the future of Afghanistan." Fawaz Al-Shamri, who had stumbled upon the Afghan pavilion after visiting the nearby Saudi one, said that it was enlightening to learn more about the Afghan culture. "This is a chance to see what they offer," said the Saudi citizen. — AFP



This picture shows a view of the pavilion of Afghanistan during the Expo 2020 in the Gulf Emirate of Dubai. — AFP photos