

Local

Crown Prince receives Amiri Diwan Advisor, former ministers

Sheikh Mishal gifted book on UN General Assembly's role



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives the book from Amiri Diwan Advisor Mohammad Abulhasan. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Amiri Diwan Advisor Mohammad Abulhasan, who gifted His Highness a book. The book included a documentation of the role of the Security Council and the UN General Assembly when Abulhasan was the permanent representative of

ACK students win award at Huawei ICT Competition

KUWAIT: Two Electrical Engineering students at the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) took part in the team representing Kuwait at the Huawei Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Competition 2021 Middle East and earned the Outstanding Performance Award.

The Huawei ICT Competition took place over three stages, with the first being the preliminary stage that included students from the various universities of Kuwait conducting ICT examinations to qualify for the second stage of the competition, which is the national competition. Out of all the competitors, 30 were selected for the national competition, with 22 of them being ACK students. After the conclusion of the second examinations for the second stage of the competition, three students were chosen to represent Kuwait at the regional final, the Huawei ICT Competition 2021 Middle East which

was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The regional final brought together teams of university students from around the Middle East representing their countries in the competition. It took place over the course of three days, and included a written examination portion and a laboratory portion. The Kuwait Team included the ACK Electrical Engineering students Dina Sammour and Asama Akhtar, and was under the supervision of Mohammad Zaki, Senior Instructor of Electrical Engineering at ACK. After the competition, the Kuwait Team received the Outstanding Performance Award, and furthermore Mohammad Zaki was awarded the Excellent Tutor Award, and ACK received the Excellent Academy Award for the fourth year in a row.

Commenting on the achievement, Mohammad Zaki expressed his pride in the students for their hard work and dedication, noting that although ACK does not offer majors in ICT, the students were still up for the challenge and excelled in the competition against others specialized in the field. Mohammad Zaki also thanked Dr Mohammed Abdul Niby, Dean of the School of Engineering at ACK, and Dr Hassan Salti, Head of Electrical Engineering at ACK, for their support throughout the competition.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace former Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and former Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development Dr Mishaan Al-Otaibi. His Highness the Crown Prince also received former Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Mubarak Salem Al-Harees. His Highness Sheikh Mishal commended the minister for carrying out their responsibilities with dedication, thanking them for their efforts and serving the best interest of the country during their tenures as ministers, wishing them continued success.

His Highness the Crown Prince had received at Bayan Palace on Tuesday former Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Badah Al-Mutairi. His Highness the Crown Prince commended him for carrying out his responsibilities with dedication then thanked him for his efforts and wished him success in his future endeavors. — KUNA

US on 'threshold' of living with...

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1,200 daily deaths, "we're not at that point". Official data showed there are currently 145,982 COVID hospitalizations, even though a significant percent are thought to be hospitalized "with" the disease rather than because of it.

Earlier, the 81-year-old director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases slammed vaccine skeptic Republican Senator Rand Paul for unleashing "crazies" who were threatening his life and harassing his family, in unusually emotional congressional testimony. President Joe Biden's top officials, including his chief medical advisor Fauci, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) director Rochelle Walensky and acting Food and Drug Administration (FDA) head Janet Woodcock were summoned to testify before the Senate about the pandemic.

While many fellow lawmakers focused their questions on the lack of adequate testing and confusing new guidelines on how infected people should end

their isolation, Paul, who has railed against vaccine mandates and refused to get vaccinated, said Fauci was personally to blame for people's deaths. Paul faulted Fauci for hundreds of thousands of deaths that occurred since Biden took office - although the vast majority of those fatalities were unvaccinated and health officials, including Fauci, have consistently advocated for vaccines.

"You personally attack me and with absolutely not a shred of evidence of anything you say," Fauci responded. "All of a sudden that kindles the crazies out there and I have life threats upon my life, harassment of my family and my children with obscene phone calls." Fauci recalled that in late December, a man was arrested on his way from California to the capital Washington armed with an AR-15 assault weapon and multiple rounds of ammunition.

The man said he wanted to kill Fauci, because of what he said was blood on the scientists' hands. Fauci then brandished a printout from Paul's website that showed the banner "Fire Dr Fauci" next to an invitation to donate to the Republican's campaign. Though Omicron causes severe cases at a lower rate than Delta, it is reaching more people because of its extreme infectiousness. By Dec 27, the age-adjusted vaccine efficacy against hospitalization was 92 percent, according to data from New York state. — AFP

UK PM sorry for partygate scandal...

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Johnson - who was fired twice in previous jobs for lying to his bosses - had managed to weather one of the world's worst COVID death tolls thanks to a successful mass vaccination campaign, and his record as the leader who effected Britain's Brexit withdrawal from the European Union. But Hannah Brady, spokesperson for the pressure group COVID-19 Bereaved Families for Justice, said: "The prime minister's lies have finally caught up with him. Not content with kicking bereaved families like mine in the teeth by breaking the rules he set and then lying to us about it, he's now taking the British public for fools by pretending he 'didn't know it was a party'."

Even some on his own side want Johnson to go, but in response to Starmer, he urged all sides to await the findings of an internal inquiry he has commissioned by a senior civil servant. "He is not resigning," Johnson's press secretary told reporters. There have been a flurry of accusations about Downing Street parties held during lockdowns in 2020 which have dogged Johnson since late last year, sparking public revulsion.

Lisa Wilkie was forced to film her brother dying of COVID in intensive care in May 2020, because their mother was not allowed to visit the hospital under the restrictions. "People died sticking to the rules, and they broke those rules to have a bottle of

wine," a tearful Wilkie told the BBC. Johnson's apology followed the same pattern as previous allegations of Downing Street parties during lockdowns in 2020: Denials or stonewalling, followed by a mea culpa in the face of documentary proof.

Senior Conservative MP Roger Gale said it was now clear that Johnson had misled parliament and was, politically, a "dead man walking". "Unfortunately what the prime minister has said today leaves people like me in an impossible situation," he told the BBC, warning that Tory backbenchers could now hold a no-confidence vote. Nigel Mills, another Conservative lawmaker, said: "If the prime minister knowingly attended a party I don't see how he can survive, having accepted resignations for far less."

The prime minister was rocked when the email was leaked late Monday in which a senior aide invited more than 100 colleagues to the event on May 20, 2020, encouraging them to "bring your own booze". The event occurred when the government was ordering members of the public not to meet, even outdoors, and tight restrictions were in place on social mixing, including at funerals.

The party was held just over a month after Johnson had come out of intensive care with COVID, and some reports said it was staged with his full knowledge as a "welcome back" event. Police at the time were fining people breaching the COVID rules, and had the option to prosecute repeat or egregious offenders. Johnson could yet face a more serious, criminal probe by London's Metropolitan Police. Even the front pages of newspapers that normally back him and the Tories were damning. "It's my party and I'll lie low if I want to," mocked The Sun tabloid. — AFP

WHO: Omicron 'dangerous' for unvaccinated

GENEVA: The Omicron variant of COVID-19 is dangerous - and especially so for those who have not been vaccinated against the disease, the World Health Organization said yesterday. The WHO said the huge global spike in cases was being driven by Omicron but insisted there should be no surrender to the variant of concern.

"While Omicron causes less severe disease than Delta, it remains a dangerous virus, particularly for those who are unvaccinated," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a press conference. "We mustn't allow this virus a free ride or wave the white flag, especially when so many people around the remain unvaccinated."

"In Africa, over 85 percent of people are yet to receive a single dose of vaccine. We can't end the

acute phase of the pandemic unless we close this gap." Tedros wanted every country to have 10 percent of their population vaccinated by the end of September 2021, 40 percent by the end of December, and 70 percent by mid-2022.

But 90 countries had still not reached 40 percent, 36 of them still short of the 10-percent mark, he said. The "overwhelming majority" of people admitted to hospitals around the world were unvaccinated, he added. While vaccines remain very effective at preventing death and severe COVID-19 disease, they do not fully prevent transmission, said Tedros.

"More transmission means more hospitalizations, more deaths, more people off work - including teachers and health workers - and more risk of another variant emerging that is even more transmissible and more deadly than Omicron," Tedros said that the numbers of deaths worldwide had stabilized at around 50,000 per week.

"Learning to live with this virus does not mean we can, or should, accept this number of deaths," he said. WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan added: "This is not the time to declare this is a welcome virus." — AFP

Archaeologists from Europe...

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The team of 20 people have made "major discoveries", he said, including the residence of a ruler identified by about 60 cuneiform tablets that have been transferred to the national museum in Baghdad.

Vallet said Larsa is like an archaeological playground and a "paradise" for exploring ancient Mesopotamia, which hosted through the ages the empire of Akkad, the Babylonians, Alexander the Great, the Christians, the Persians and Islamic rulers. However, the modern history of Iraq - with its succession of conflicts, especially since the 2003 US-led invasion and its bloody aftermath - has kept foreign researchers at bay.

Only since Baghdad declared victory in territorial battles against the Islamic State group in 2017 has Iraq "largely stabilised and it has become possible again" to visit, said Vallet. "The French came back in 2019 and the British a little earlier," he said. "The Italians came back as early as 2011." In late 2021, said Vallet, 10 foreign missions were at work in the Dhi Qar province, where Larsa is located.

Iraq's Council of Antiquities and Heritage director Laith Majid Hussein said he is delighted to play host, and is happy that his country is back on the map for foreign expeditions. "This benefits us scientifically," he told AFP in Baghdad, adding that he welcomes the "opportunity to train our staff after such a long interruption".

Near Najaf in central Iraq, Ibrahim Salman of the German Institute of Archaeology is focused on the



AL-HIRA, Iraq: Members of a German-Iraqi archaeological expedition follow up on a geophysical survey at this ancient site about 25 km south of Najaf on Oct 24, 2021. — AFP

site of the city of Al-Hira. Germany had previously carried out excavations here that ground to a halt with the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein. Equipped with a geomagnetic measuring device, Salman's team has been at work in the one-time Christian city that had its heyday under the Lakhmids, a pre-Islamic tribal dynasty of the 5th and 6th centuries. "Some clues lead us to believe that a church may have been located here," he explained.

He pointed to traces on the ground left by moisture which is retained by buried structures and rises to the surface. "The moistened earth on a strip several meters long leads us to conclude that under the feet of the archaeologist are probably the walls of an ancient church," he said. Al-Hira is far less ancient than other sites, but it is part of the diverse history of the country that serves as a reminder, according to Salman, that "Iraq, or Mesopotamia, is the cradle of civilizations. It is as simple as that!" — AFP