



2 US official thanks Amir over Afghanistan evacuations



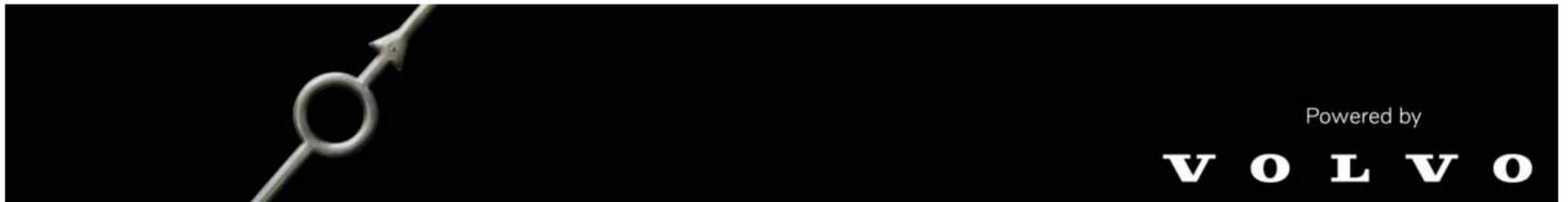
8 Dry year leaves Syria wheat farmers facing crop failure



11 Russian crew arrives at ISS to film first movie in orbit



16 Football fiasco symptom of rush to bring out games



National dialogue begins behind closed doors

General pardon, reforms debated at meeting amid positive atmosphere

BNK Automotive recognizes Kuwait's Olympic medalists



KUWAIT: (From left) Olympian Abdullah Al-Rashidi, BNK Automotive President Bader Al-Kharafi, Paralympian Ahmad Al-Mutairi and Paralympian Faisal Sorour are seen during an honoring ceremony at Volvo Studio at Khaleejiya Complex yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: BNK Automotive, the official dealer of Volvo in Kuwait, gifted Kuwait's Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic heroes brand-new Volvo V90CCs at a ceremony at the Volvo Studio at Khaleejiya Complex yesterday. The athletes who were honored include Olympian Abdullah Al-Rashidi, who won the bronze medal in the skeet shooting event, Paralympian Faisal Sorour, who claimed bronze in the men's standing shot put F63 event, and Ahmad Al-Mutairi, also a Paralympian, who bagged the silver medal in the men's T33 100-meter wheelchair race.

The ceremony to celebrate and gift Kuwait's reigning Olympians was attended by the athletes and BNK Automotive President Bader Al-Kharafi,

who congratulated them on their outstanding achievements. "Their dedication, commitment and sportsmanship are an example to us all and we are very proud of our Kuwaiti brothers. This gift is a small token of our appreciation for their efforts to raise the name of Kuwait high across the world for all to see," he said.

The ceremony marks Volvo Car and BNK Automotive's continued commitment to and support of the people of Kuwait, and is one of the many community engagement events held at the Volvo Studio at Khaleejiya Complex, which have also included cancer awareness and female empowerment initiatives and celebrations of local artists. (See Page 3)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The long-awaited national dialogue was launched yesterday with closed-door meetings between the government and representatives of the National Assembly, amid mixed reactions and hopes. HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Minister of Islamic Affairs Essa Al-Kandari and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Mubarak Al-Harees represented the government.

The invitation for the dialogue was issued by HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with the aim to resolve all political problems rocking the country, which have paralyzed the political scene for almost a year. No statement was issued by the government and the lawmakers on the outcome of the first session of the dialogue, but local media cited parliamentary sources as saying a positive atmosphere prevailed.

"An optimistic atmosphere prevailed and all parties are keen to emerge from the deadlock," the local Al-Oula24 TV quoted parliamentary sources as saying following the session. The sources added the session lasted for four hours and tackled issues including a general pardon, freedoms, economic reforms, the electronic crimes law and protecting the prime minister against grillings, adding that a

second session has been set for tomorrow, according to the TV channel.

But not all opposition members were happy about the meeting, amid signs of divisions among their ranks. Former opposition MP Faisal Al-Mislem, who is among several ex-MPs and activists living in exile in Turkey, criticized the "ill-prepared" dialogue. "Today, an ill-prepared and badly-represented dialogue starts" Mislem said on Twitter. "What can we hope from dialogue when its powerful parties aim to include MPs in the Cabinet, maintain Marzouq (Al-Ghanem) as speaker and fragment the (opposition) bloc of 31 MPs," the former lawmaker said.

But former minister and MP Ali Al-Omar said the dialogue should herald a new chapter between the two authorities - the government and Assembly - and lead to eliminating disputes and achieving a political breakthrough. He said MPs should insist on conveying several messages to the government, mainly its failure to execute the development plan, the absence of government priorities, low representation of MPs in Cabinet and failure to tackle economic, education and health issues and counter corruption.

Meanwhile, 26 non-profit organizations said in a joint statement that the national dialogue should discuss pressing reforms and pave the way for holding a larger national conference to resolve local issues.

Whistleblower calls to regulate Facebook

WASHINGTON: A Facebook whistleblower told US lawmakers yesterday that the social media giant fuels division, harms children and urgently needs to be regulated, drawing pledges Congress would take up long-delayed action. Ex-employee Frances Haugen testified in Capitol Hill after she leaked reams of internal research to authorities and The Wall Street Journal, which has fueled one of Facebook's most serious crises yet.

"I believe that Facebook's products harm children, stoke division and weaken our democracy," Haugen told a Senate sub-committee. "Congressional action is needed. They won't solve



WASHINGTON: Former Facebook employee and whistleblower Frances Haugen testifies before a Senate committee hearing on Capitol Hill yesterday. — AFP

this crisis without your help," she added. In her testimony, she noted the danger of the power in the hands of a service that is woven into the daily lives of so many people.

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News in brief

Some visas to be issued

KUWAIT: Kuwait will resume issuing entry visas (commercial visit visas and work permits) to foreigners to work in activities related to food security in the country, the government announced yesterday. The decision, which is effective immediately, covers the following activities: Farms, restaurants, catering and bakeries, fishing and selling fish, shepherding and dairy production, food factories, suppliers and supermarkets, and water and soft drink bottling companies.

Mawlid holiday on Oct 21

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Commission announced yesterday that Thursday, October 21 will be a public holiday to mark the Prophet's (PBUH) birthday in lieu of the original holiday which falls on Monday, October 18.

Woman kills self in detention

KUWAIT: A Filipino woman committed suicide by hanging herself with her clothes at Naem police station in Jahra yesterday, after she was arrested for not having any identification documents with her. Maj Gen Farraj Al-Zoubi ordered an investigation into her death and the security lapses that led to the alleged suicide.

Nobel Physics Prize honors climate work

STOCKHOLM: US-Japanese scientist Syukuro Manabe, Klaus Hasselmann of Germany and Giorgio Parisi of Italy yesterday won the Nobel Physics Prize for climate models and the understanding of physical systems, the jury said. The Nobel committee said it was sending a message

with its prize announcement just weeks before the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, as the rate of global warming sets off alarm bells around the world.

"The world leaders that haven't got the message yet, I'm not sure they will get it because we are saying it. But... what we are saying is that the modelling of climate is solidly based in physics theory," said Thor Hans Hansson, chair of the Nobel Committee for Physics. Manabe, 90, and Hasselmann, 89, will share half of the 10 million kronor (\$1.1 million) prize for their research on climate models, while

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STOCKHOLM: Portraits of the co-winners of the 2021 Nobel Prize in Physics (from left) Syukuro Manabe, Klaus Hasselmann and Giorgio Parisi are displayed on a screen at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm yesterday. — AFP

Inequality, inflation hurting pandemic recovery: IMF

WASHINGTON: The global economic bounceback from the COVID-19 crisis will downshift this year as countries struggle with rising prices, high debt loads and divergent recoveries in which poor nations are slipping behind wealthier ones, the leader of the IMF warned yesterday. While the Washington-based crisis lender has hundreds of billions of dollars in new firepower to help countries recover from the catastrophe, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said factors from rising food prices to unequal vaccine access were taking a toll.

"We face a global recovery that remains 'hobbled' by the pandemic and its impact. We are unable to walk forward properly," Georgieva said in a speech delivered virtually from Washington to Bocconi University in Milan. The IMF will release new growth forecasts next week, but Georgieva warned "we now expect growth to moderate slightly this year" from the six percent forecast in July, and "the risks and obstacles to a balanced global recovery have become even more pronounced."

These include a widening divergence between rich countries and poor countries in the trajectories of their recovery from the pandemic. "Economic output in advanced economies is projected to return to pre-pandemic trends by 2022. But most emerging and developing countries will take many more years to recover," Georgieva said. "This delayed recovery will make it even more difficult to avoid long-term economic scarring - including from job losses, which hit young people, women and informal workers especially hard." Georgieva's speech comes ahead of the fall meetings of the IMF and World Bank, where the former will unveil its latest World Economic Outlook offering forecasts on an array of topics. Since their previous report in July, the IMF's tool kit for dealing with global crises was greatly expanded with a \$650 billion increase in cash reserves for member nations known as Special Drawing Rights.

These reserves, \$275 billion of which went to emerging and developing nations, give countries funds to draw on as their economies recover. — AFP