



**7** Taliban battle for Panjshir as US warns of civil war



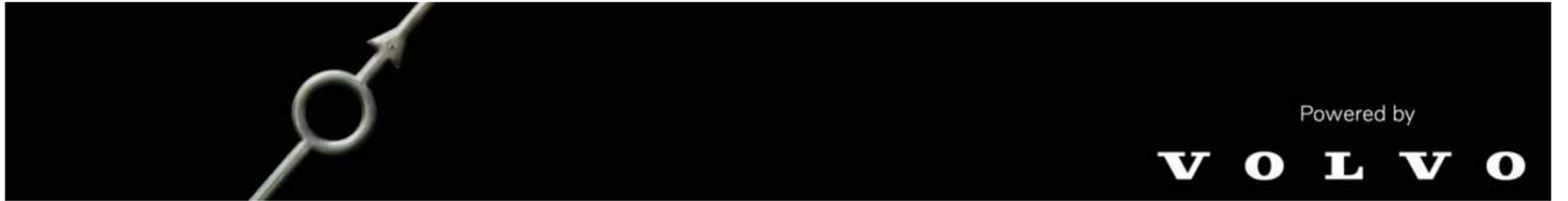
**8** 'Silent crisis' looms as US to end COVID aid for millions of jobless



**13** Do tourist boats stress out whales? Researchers find out



**16** Tokyo bids colorful farewell to 'historic, fantastic' Paralympics



# Speaker confident of political breakthrough

## Health official says PCR test for arrivals essential after Delta case in returnee



KUWAIT: An Egyptian resident is welcomed upon arrival at Kuwait International Airport yesterday as direct flights resumed between the two countries. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said yesterday that a large number of initiatives have been put forward during the parliamentary recess, adding he is confident they will lead to a political breakthrough. He declined to provide details about the initiatives, which came from HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, MPs, political groups and activists, but expressed hope that positive results will be achieved before the start of the next Assembly term late October.

He however harshly blasted the opposition, whom he accused of opposing all positive initiatives and obstructing solutions. Ghanem said the initiatives aim to achieve "understanding that will contribute to achieve political breakthroughs for many complicated issues that had been the center of disputes in the past years". He did not elaborate on the nature of the issues.

Kuwait has been plunged into non-stop political disputes between the government and opposition MPs, which intensified in the past year. Disputes between the government and the speaker on one side and a majority of MPs completely paralyzed the National Assembly during the previous term. The government - with its 16 Cabinet members backed by the speaker and around 16 MPs - blocked attempts by the opposition, which had the

support of 32 law-makers, to grill the prime minister, leading them to boycott or disrupt sessions.

Ghanem said the initiatives are being studied quietly away from the media and "certain quarters who always attempt to obstruct positive initiatives", a clear reference to the opposition. "But I am pleased to announce today with confidence that considerable progress has been made in these initiatives, which reflect the good intention of those who floated them," Ghanem said.

Such initiatives are expected to secure a parliamentary majority, said Ghanem, who strongly lashed out at opponents. "I cannot deny that a small minority (of MPs) are trying to obstruct the initiatives, but they have been exposed to the Kuwaiti people. They work for agendas that are known to all," said Ghanem, adding they will raise their voices as long as progress is achieved. "Personally, I am confident there will be breakthroughs before the start of the next Assembly term" he said.



Marzouq Al-Ghanem

Continued on Page 2

### News in brief

#### Children hurt in Houthi attack

RIYADH: Two children were hurt and 14 homes damaged as Saudi forces intercepted ballistic missiles fired across the border by Yemeni rebels, scattering debris over the eastern city of Dammam. "Saudi Air Defense has intercepted and destroyed (3) ballistic missiles and (3) bomb-laden drones launched by the Iran-backed Houthi militia," spokesperson Brigadier General Turki Al-Maliki said. — AFP (See Page 5)

#### IS attack kills 13 Iraqi police

KIRKUK: Thirteen Iraqi policemen were killed in an Islamic State group attack against a checkpoint in the country's north early yesterday, security and medical sources said. The attack, in the region of Al-Rashad around 65 km south of Kirkuk city, took place just after midnight, a senior Iraqi police officer said. "Members of the Islamic State organization targeted a federal police checkpoint," said the officer. — AFP

#### Man dies in shark attack

SYDNEY: A man has died following a shark attack in Australia despite the efforts of "incredibly brave" surfers and bystanders who came to his aid, authorities said yesterday. The man, believed to be in his 20s, was mauled by the shark at Emerald Beach near Coff's Harbour, about six hours north of Sydney, according to paramedics. It was the second fatal shark attack recorded in Australian waters this year. — AFP

#### Egypt bus crash kills 12

CAIRO: Twelve people were killed on an Egyptian highway early yesterday when their bus overturned on their return from the popular Red Sea resort Sharm El-Sheikh, medical and security sources said. Thirty-four other passengers were injured and transported to the port town of Suez for treatment, the medical source added. — AFP

## UAE launches new 'green', freelance visas

DUBAI: The UAE announced a new visa yesterday allowing foreigners to work in the country without being sponsored by an employer, loosening residency requirements in an attempt to boost economic growth. Foreigners in the oil-rich United Arab Emirates are generally only given limited visas tied to their employment, and long-term residency is difficult to obtain.

But those holding the new "green visa" will be able to work without company sponsorship, and can sponsor

their parents and children up to 25 years old, officials said. "It targets highly skilled individuals, investors, businesspeople, entrepreneurs, as well as exceptional students and postgraduates," said Minister of State for Foreign Trade Thani Al-Zeyoudi.

The visa will also grant them a grace period of 90-180 days to stay in the country once their visa is cancelled either due to job loss or retirement. Zeyoudi also announced a "freelance visa" for owners of independent businesses or self-employed workers based in the UAE and overseas in specialized fields such as artificial intelligence, blockchain and digital currencies.

Resource-rich Gulf countries such as the UAE are increasingly seeking

Continued on Page 2

## Crisis cements Qatari global influence

DOHA: Political leaders have flocked to Doha and some countries have moved their Kabul embassies to Qatar, all praising their host for its key role in the airlift out of the Afghan capital. Tiny Qatar has seized the moment, cementing its outside global influence and reputation as a neutral mediator after winning the trust of all

sides in Afghanistan's forever war.

Qatar invited the Taliban to open a political office in Doha in 2013, with then US president Barack Obama's blessing as conflict in Afghanistan raged. It went on to host talks between Washington and the Taliban that concluded in 2020 with a troop withdrawal agreement, followed by direct negotiations between the former insurgents and Afghan government.

Doha's long-standing hotline to the Taliban ultimately helped Qatar burst onto the world stage as the lynchpin of efforts to evacuate desperate Afghans and foreigners - and now the

Continued on Page 2

## Boom time for Afghan arms dealers

PANJWAI, Afghanistan: The Taliban takeover may have plunged Afghanistan into uncertainty and economic pain, but arms dealer Khan Mohammad is making the most of it.

Sandwiched between a pharmacy and a general store, his shop in the Panjwai district of southern Kandahar province - the spiritual birthplace of the Taliban - is flush with fresh inventory.

Camouflage combat vests and bandoliers hung from the walls as Mohammed showed off his wares, including US-made Smith & Wesson pistols and ammunition belts. More pistols, grenades, walkie-talkies and jars full of bullets lined the glass display



DUBAI: A boat sails at sunset against the backdrop of Burj Khalifa and high-rise buildings in this May 27, 2020 file photo. — AFP



DOHA: Afghan refugees are seen at their accommodation in the Qatari capital on Saturday. — AFP

play in the front. The end of the conflict has led many weapon-owners to conclude they no longer need them, Mohammad explained. "People who have had guns at home for years bring us their weapons," he said.

Mohammad has a customer lined up too. "We buy them and sell... to the mujahideen," he said, referring to the Taliban. "The Taliban don't let anyone else take (the weapons)." Mohammad did not just have weapons - there were accessories

too. White Taliban baseball caps with the Muslim proclamation of faith printed on them hung from the ceiling. The group's flags were also on sale.

Another dealer in the dusty Panjwai market, whose shop was adorned with large Taliban flags and pictures of the group's top leaders, had more potent offerings. They included assault rifles - variants of the AK-47 as well as the US-made M4 and M16 - and even light machine guns.

Continued on Page 2