

## Local

# Kuwait's Amir receives Crown Prince, top officials



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice, and Minister of State for Enhancing Transparency Abdullah Al-Roumi.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets ministers of defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah and interior Sheikh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received

Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah and

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice, and Minister of State for Enhancing Transparency Abdullah Al-Roumi.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Speaker Ghanem and His Highness

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled at Seif Palace yesterday. His Highness Sheikh Mishal also received ministers Sheikh Hamad and Roumi, in addition to Minister of Interior Sheikh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah. — KUNA

## Army putschists claim coup, arrest Guinea president

CONAKRY: Army putschists in Guinea said yesterday they had arrested the president and staged a coup, in the latest political upheaval to roil the impoverished west African country, as the government insisted it had repelled the attack. "We have decided, after having taken the president, to dissolve the constitution," said a uniformed officer flanked by soldiers toting assault rifles in a video sent to AFP. The officer also said that Guinea's land and air borders have been shut and the government dissolved.

But the situation remained unclear as Conde's government released a rival statement saying that an attack on the presidential palace by special forces had been "repulsed". Another video sent to AFP by the putschists showed a rumpled-looking President Alpha Conde sitting on a sofa, surrounded by troops. He refused

to answer a question from one soldier about whether he was being mistreated.

Guinea - one of the world's poorest countries despite boasting significant mineral resources - has long been beset by political instability. Earlier yesterday, residents of the capital Conakry's Kaloum district, the government quarter, reported hearing heavy gunfire. Speaking on condition of anonymity for their safety, they reported seeing a number of soldiers on the streets who called on residents to return to their homes and stay there.

A Western diplomat in Conakry, who also declined to be named, said the unrest started after the dismissal of a senior commander in the special forces - provoking some of its highly trained members to rebel and occupy the presidential palace. AFP was unable to independently

confirm this account. Later yesterday, the head of Guinea's military special forces Lieutenant-Colonel Mamady Doumbouya appeared on public television, draped in the national flag, and cited government "mismanagement" as a reason behind his actions.

The apparent coup comes amid a long period of political tension in Guinea, first spurred by Conde's highly contested bid for a third presidential term last year. The day before the presidential election last year, the military blocked access to Kaloum after an alleged military rebellion east of the capital. Conde, 83, also survived an assassination attempt in 2011.

The most recent presidential poll in the nation of some 13 million people, in Oct 2020, was violently disputed and also marred by accusations of electoral fraud. Conde won a controversial third term in that poll, but only after pushing through a new constitution in March 2020 that allowed him to sidestep the country's two-term limit. Dozens of people were killed during demonstrations against a



CONAKRY: Members of the armed forces of Guinea drive through the central neighborhood of Kaloum yesterday. — AFP

third term for the president, often in clashes with security forces. Hundreds were also arrested.

Conde was then proclaimed president on Nov 7 last year - despite his main challenger Cellou Dalein Diallo as well as

other opposition figures calling the election a sham. After the poll, the government launched a crackdown and arrested several prominent opposition members for their alleged role in abetting electoral violence in the country. — AFP

## Boom time for Afghan...

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The Taliban for years procured weapons and ammunition from the black market. They also captured arms and equipment from the battlefield and abandoned military posts, according to UN and Western monitors.

And the recent collapse of the Afghan military created an arms bonanza for the militants. Alongside a large haul of American-made infantry weapons,

Afghanistan's new rulers now possess equipment and vehicles - including humvees, armored personnel carriers, and at least one functioning Black Hawk helicopter. The militants are also making the most of their spoils.

The Taliban are cashing in on a wide variety of items from abandoned Afghan and Western military bases. They seized Panjwai district in July as the withdrawal of US-led troops from Afghanistan gathered pace. In the local market, everything from construction material to metal trays salvaged from the district's Afghan military base was for sale. "We bought all these things from the Taliban after they conquered the Afghan army base," said vendor Murtaza, who gave only one name. "Now we bring them to the market to sell." — AFP

such scheme in the Gulf.

Similar programs have since been launched in other resource-rich Gulf countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Riyadh said in June 2019 that it will offer permanent residency for 800,000 riyals (\$213,000) and a one-year renewable residency costing 100,000 riyals, allowing expats to do business and buy property without a Saudi sponsor.

Doha also flung open its property market to foreigners, with a scheme giving those buying homes or stores the right to longer-term or permanent residency permits. Foreigners account for 90 percent of the 10 million population in the UAE, the Arab world's second-largest economy after neighboring Saudi Arabia. — Agencies

have detected an infection in a passenger who arrived from a country where the Delta strain is active. The tweet promoted speculation that the case is of an Egyptian passenger after commercial flights resumed with Egypt following a year-long suspension.

But Jarallah wrote a second tweet saying the case was not of an expat and not related to someone who came from an Arab country. Local media said the case was of a Kuwaiti returning from Turkey. Jarallah insisted on the importance of continuing PCR tests on arrival.

## Crisis cements Qatari global...

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push to reopen Kabul airport. "The Qataris have earned a reputation as honest brokers who are willing to help multiple warring parties to find a way to end these conflicts," said Colin Clarke, senior research fellow at the Soufan Center. "I think what Qatar got out of it was a growing recognition that Doha is the place to make a deal. It has grown into the Geneva of the Middle East, a place where warring parties can meet on neutral territory."

In little more than a week, the Arabian desert peninsula will have welcomed the foreign ministers of Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Britain and the US. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, due in Qatar today, has already expressed "profound gratitude" for Qatar's evacuation of foreigners and Afghans vulnerable to reprisals from the Islamist hardliners.

Britain's Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab lauded the dramatic airlift, in which Doha has served as a key transit stop, saying "the biggest operation of its kind in our living memory (was) in no small part because of the cooperation of our Qatari friends". While in Doha, where Britain has relocated its Kabul embassy, Raab described Qatar as "an influential player" and its ruler Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani as a "friend".

The Gulf nation has been working with the Taliban to quickly reopen Kabul's airport, closed since the departure of US troops, and it hopes to see the establishment of humanitarian aid corridors. At the height of evacuation operations, Qatar's ambassador to Afghanistan personally escorted Americans and vulnerable Afghans to the airport. His efforts to accompany a number of young Afghan women, for whom access to education

under the Taliban is not assured, was seen as a powerful gesture.

Qatar's meteoric rise on the world stage is all the more striking because until January the gas-rich emirate was at loggerheads with its neighbors. Saudi Arabia, along with the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt, cut ties with Doha in 2017, accusing it of backing Islamist groups and Iran, charges which Qatar denied.

Despite its regional rehabilitation at a January summit, Qatar's growing role has not been without challenges. French website Intelligence Online claimed senior Qatar commanders "would have been convinced of the Pashtun insurgents' willingness to share power" with the now-ousted government. "Doha has watched with surprise the total disconnect between the promises of the political representatives (of the Taliban) in exile and the realities on the ground."

Several observers have also raised questions about the longevity of Qatari influence following the spectacular Taliban victory. David Roberts, an associate professor at King's College London, questioned whether the Taliban negotiators in Doha "will be able to retain important places in the Taliban apparatus back home, and whether they will have control".

"That will be the limit of the Qatari endgame," he told AFP. "I imagine that the phone lines between Washington, DC and Doha have been red-hot in the past few days. The apparatus in the State Department and the Pentagon, they know that Qatar has now had years of contacts that can be potentially used and leveraged."

On a skeptical note, however, Michael Rubin, resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, accused Doha of providing the Taliban with international legitimacy as well as access to international finance. "There is a limit to Qatar's influence," he said. "Attention can be addictive, and Qatar is both an addict for attention and a country in search of relevance." — AFP

## UAE launches new 'green'...

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to diversify their economies and reduce reliance on oil. The coronavirus pandemic has also impacted tourism and businesses in the UAE, whose economy was already slumping in recent years due to low oil prices. In 2019, the UAE launched the 10-year "golden visa" to attract wealthy individuals and highly skilled workers, the first

## Speaker confident of political...

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Meanwhile, head of the consultative committee to counter the coronavirus pandemic at the health ministry Khaled Al-Jarallah said yesterday authorities