[Yemen's new government sworn in, ending months of wrangling](#)

Sat, 2020-12-26 19:41

AL-MUKALLA: Yemen's new unity government was sworn in on Saturday before President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi in Riyadh, closing months of violence and political wrangling in southern Yemen provinces that weakened the anti-Houthi bloc.

Led by Prime Minister Maeen Abdul Malik Saeed, the new government is formed of 24 ministers, representing major political forces in Yemen, including the powerful Southern Transitional Council (STC).

Setting the new government's priorities, the Yemeni president met with the ministers after the ceremony, in which he ordered them to focus their attention and efforts on addressing economic woes including managing a plunging currency, boosting revenues and defeating the Houthis, official news agency SABA reported. Hadi told the ministers that Yemenis are pinning hopes on this government to restore peace and stability to the liberated provinces, revive government bodies and unify forces to confront the Iran-backed Houthis.

"We want a revival of institutions, recovery of the economy, restoration of security and a confrontation of the coup. This in short is what awaits you," Hadi said, pledging his full support and the dismissal of ineffective ministers. Addressing the ministers of defense and interior, Hadi said that the new government is responsible for merging and disarming factions, getting them under the state's control and putting into place the remaining security and military components of the Riyadh Agreement.

"We want the temporary capital Aden free of all military units. Security services must carry out their duties. We do not want conflicts after today. No more blood. Our enemy is the Houthis," he said.

During the meeting, Hadi thanked Saudi Arabia for paving the way for the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement, expressing hope for a new bailout from the Kingdom to steady the country's troubled economy.

At the same time, the new prime minister said that his government is aware of the big challenges and would collectively work in accordance with agendas set by President Hadi.

After months of political stalemate, the Arab coalition announced on Dec. 11 that Yemeni parties would immediately implement security and military arrangements under the Riyadh Agreement, agreeing to form a new government when the deployment of forces came to an end.

Under the supervision of the Saudi de-escalation committee in Yemen, hundreds of military troops from the former government and the STC departed contested

areas in the southern province of Abyan. Military units also withdrew from Aden and were redeployed in battlefields with the Houthis.

Positive news about the formation of the new government and its expected return to Aden have pushed the Yemeni riyal into recovering against foreign currencies. Moneychangers told Arab News on Saturday afternoon that the riyal surged to 720 against the US dollar after sinking to 920 a couple of weeks ago, shortly after ministers took the constitutional oath.

Main category:
Middle-East
Tags:
Yemen
government

Killing of Yemeni mother sparks outrage against HouthisCOVID-19 could 'easily overwhelm' Yemen's health system, warns official

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[Fire at Egyptian hospital kills 7 coronavirus patients](#)

Author:
Associated Press
ID:
1608988777849158300
Sat, 2020-12-26 11:44

CAIRO: An intensive care unit at an Egyptian hospital caught fire on Saturday, killing seven coronavirus patients, officials said.
Local police said the blaze erupted at a private hospital in Obour, an outlying district of the greater Cairo area.
The fire injured at least five others. The injured and other patients were

evacuated to nearby hospitals, the police said.

Firefighters were able to put out the blaze, the cause of which police and prosecutors are investigating.

The state-run Al-Ahram daily reported that an initial investigation blamed an electric short-circuit for the fire.

A similar blaze erupted at the coronavirus ward of a private hospital in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria in June, leaving seven patients dead and one injured. There was another fire in May in a coronavirus isolation center in Cairo that didn't cause any casualties.

Egypt has seen a surge in the confirmed cases of the virus, forcing the government to reopen most of its hospitals designated to treat and isolate COVID-19 patients after the first wave of the pandemic subsided.

The Health Ministry reported its highest daily number of confirmed cases on Friday at 1,113, along with 49 deaths.

The new numbers have brought the county's official tally to more than 130,126 cases, including at least 7,309 deaths.

However, the actual numbers of cases in Egypt, the Arab world's most populous county with over 100 million people, are thought to be far higher, in part due to limited testing.

Main category:
[Middle-East](#)
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[Coronavirus](#)
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Egyptian health minister says country in second wave of coronavirus pandemicEgyptian startup prepares MENA students for a post-pandemic world

[Egyptian startup prepares MENA students for a post-pandemic world](#)

Author:
Fri, 2020-12-25 22:31

DUBAI: Connecting the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to educational opportunities is set to become even more vital in the coming months as the world adjusts to post-pandemic circumstances. That's where MARJ3, an Egyptian social enterprise co-founded by Sami-Al Ahmad and Ahmed El-Gebaly, will prove to be a beacon of hope and opportunity.

MARJ3 connects the MENA youth to scholarship opportunities, universities and courses globally. "I got my first scholarship from the University of Delaware, funded by the US government," said Ahmed. "I studied in three universities — Delaware, San Diego, and California — for six weeks. They really affected my life, and I learnt a lot.

"That's why we launched MARJ3 — to help MENA region students learn. Now we're the leading platform in the MENA region for education purposes."

In 2016, Ahmed and Sami, who is originally from Syria, met in Egypt while they were both studying as final year students. The social entrepreneurs decided they wanted to connect more young people like them to the sort of

opportunities that drastically changed Ahmed's life for the better.

"We started as a normal startup and didn't have a lot of money," said Sami. "We started with 26 opportunities and shared them on social media and Facebook pages and began to invest our own money to start doing marketing and ads."

The idea spread quickly on social media, and within a year MARJ3 gained over 250,000 likes on Facebook. Nowadays, the numbers are even more compelling. They currently have over 10,000 opportunities on their platform and get 2.4 million visitors per month.

But the aim of MARJ3 is not to just improve and inspire individuals, but also to effect change across the region through education. "Around 95 percent of scholarships ask you to come back to your home country and benefit your country for at least two years," said Ahmed.

"They ask that you should transfer this information that you've learnt from other countries that you study abroad in."

"Even if students go to study at Harvard, they usually come back (to their home country) to work at multinational companies, startups, NGOs or the government sector."

An enterprise like MARJ3 is a huge operation which relies on many components to ensure that it is successful, such as a workforce that believes in its mission. The company currently employs 10 people but also works with 174 interns, who are tasked with helping to source global opportunities to help fulfil the ambitions of MENA's promising youngsters.

In return, they too benefit from access to scholarships. "If you look at the revolutions in the MENA region, it was young people who started it, they are people who want to learn more and develop their country," said Ahmed.

"We wanted to work more with this sector because they have a lot of power. They learn fast, they're ready to change and develop themselves. The education sector needs people like this."

Since its launch in 2016, MARJ3 has been successful in helping many students across the region, from Tunisia to Palestine, find scholarships and access funding through its fellowship program. Even the coronavirus pandemic has not slowed its momentum as the organization has restructured its program to make it completely online.
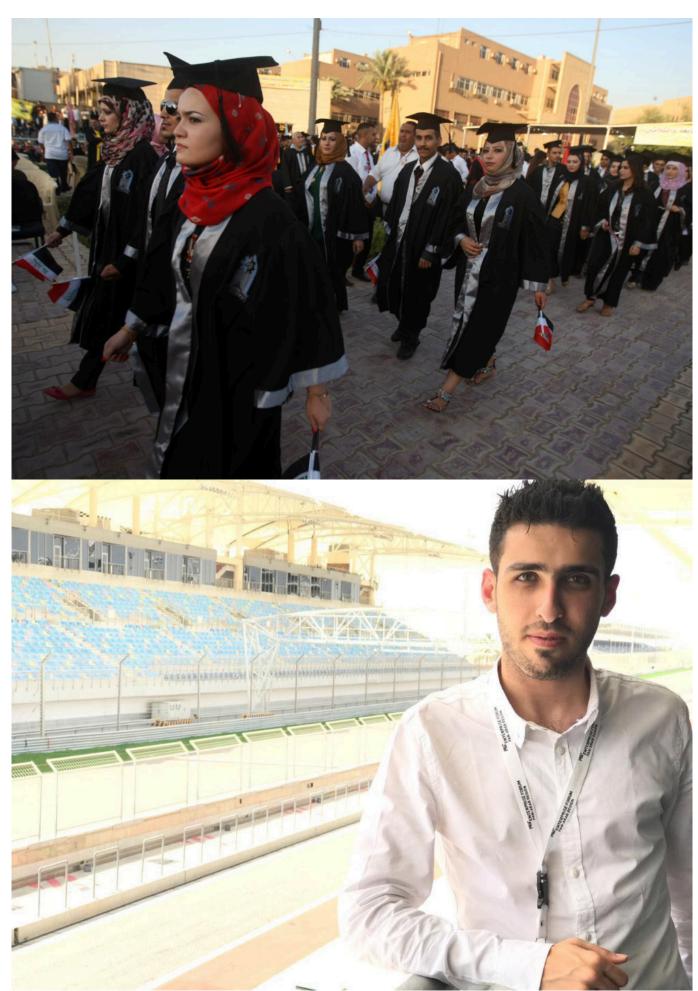
The journey has not always been straightforward, and Sami believes that perseverance is vital if a social enterprise is to succeed.

"One of the key things you need to build a start-up is persistence," he said. "It's a long and hard journey. You will have a lot of ups and downs; some stuff that makes you excited and some stuff that puts you in a very bad mood. You need to try again and again."

• This report is being published by Arab News as a partner of the Middle East Exchange, which was launched by the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives to reflect the vision of the UAE prime minister and ruler of Dubai to explore the possibility of changing the status of the Arab region.

Main category:

A startup sees Kuwait's property-rental industry ripe for disruptionMENA startups inject tech savvy into Saudi Arabia's entertainment scene

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[A startup sees Kuwait's property-rental industry ripe for disruption](#)

Fri, 2020-12-25 21:56

KUWAIT: An expat landing in the Gulf for the very first time will surely find it a melange of unique experiences. Trying to lock down a rental deal is one of them. In a market with one too many expats and too many options to choose from, the challenge is as real as it gets.

Even if one does achieve the seemingly impossible and finds a place to call home, outdated payment systems can prove to be another thorn in their side. This endless dilemma inspired Shaheen Al-Khudhari back in 2016 to find a definitive tech-based solution. Thus, he became the founder and CEO of Ajar, a property management and rent collection startup.

"The idea sprung when I moved into a new apartment and started facing issues with rent payments, chasing for receipts, withdrawing and safekeeping large chunks of cash for payment, worrying about missing out on the payment if I was not in the country and so on," Al-Khudhari shares.

Having identified key issues in Kuwait's real estate market, Al-Khudhari launched Ajar to provide the ultimate convenience to landlords and tenants. The former get a full-fledged property management service in real time, while the latter get to pay their rent without breaking a sweat.

The next step was to convince potential clients to use Ajar services, which was not as big of a challenge as it may seem.

"With my experience as an IT manager in a real estate company, I was able to reach out to many potential landlords that I knew had problems keeping track of their real estate performance. Once those joined, it was a word-of-mouth and network effect that really got Ajar up and running, reaching our first 10,000 units in quite a short time."

After the astounding success in Kuwait, the next logical step for Ajar was to expand to the Gulf's biggest real estate market — Dubai. The company later moved its headquarters there. "The UAE's real estate market is international, with a global mindset, but the practices for rent collection are very

unfriendly to the tenant and rather outdated," Al-Khudhari said. "Rent payment in Dubai didn't match the (progressive) vision for the city."

From there on, Ajar exponentially grew in popularity and number of users, which in turn attracted investments that amount to $7.5 million to date.

The onset of the pandemic in March 2020 brought fresh opportunities to Ajar. In a world suddenly left with no choice but to seek contactless transactions and remote management, the company was perfectly equipped to overcome the challenges brought forth by Covid-19. In fact, it has generated more business during the pandemic than in any year since its inception.

"During the lockdown, when banks were closed and people couldn't step out of their houses, we were the only solution provider for property management and rent collection that was actively collecting rent," said Al-Khudhari.

"We also learnt from this experience how crucial it is to have a team with a strong mindset that doesn't get affected by negative media coverage — a focused, knowledgeable and dedicated team can get any company to be the best in its field."

Today, Ajar is exploring more expansion opportunities to eventually cover most GCC markets in the next few months. Of particular interest are Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, but the company does not plan to stop there. "We'll then be heading to more virgin markets which need to digitize their solutions, like Malaysia," said Al-Khudhari.

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Main category:

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A startup sees Kuwait's property-rental industry ripe for disruption

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[UAE confirms 1,230 new COVID-19 cases, 6 deaths](#)

Author:
Fri, 2020-12-25 21:35

DUBAI: The UAE on Friday recorded 1,230 new COVID-19 cases and six virus-related deaths.
Officials from the Ministry of Health and Prevention said the total number of cases since the pandemic began had reached 199,665. The death toll is 653.
It was also announced that 1,386 people had recovered from the virus in the past 24 hours. The total number of recoveries is 175,865.
On Thursday the Dubai Health Authority (DHA) was recognized by the International Hospital Federation's "Beyond the Call of Duty for COVID-19 Programme" for its response to the pandemic, along with over 100 hospitals from 28 countries.
It was honored for the "proactive and swift measures" it implemented back in January to minimize the spread of the virus and introduce mass testing of the population.

> .[@DHA_Dubai](#), Rashid & Latifa Hospital receive international recognition for their Covid-19 responsehttps://t.co/m0F9pBaEAX [pic.twitter.com/w9sxMar1uG](#)
>
> — Dubai Media Office (@DXBMediaOffice) [December 25, 2020](#)

"The DHA's Dubai Shield Programme was recognized at the Beyond the Call of Duty for COVID-19 Programme for proactively responding with outstanding and innovative actions in facing the COVID-19 pandemic," said a statement from Dubai Media Office. "Additionally, DHA's hospitals — Rashid and Latifa Hospital for Women and Children — were recognized for their outstanding COVID-19 response action plan."
Dubai Economy on Thursday issued warnings to two establishments for failing to adhere to COVID-19 precautions. Inspectors found 688 other businesses to be compliant.

Elsewhere, Kuwait recorded 260 new COVID-19 cases, bringing its total to 149,277. The death toll remains 926.

تعلن #وزارة_الصحة عن تأكيد إصابة 260 حالة جديدة، وتسجيل 232 حالة شفاء، ولم تسجل أي حالة وفاة جديدة بـ #فيروس_كورونا_المستجدّ COVID-19 ، ليصبح إجمالي عدد الحالات 149,277 حالة pic.twitter.com/SyLUGd2oz8

— وزارة الصحة - الكويت (@KUWAIT_MOH) December 25, 2020

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Middle-East
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UAE
Ministry of Health and Prevention
Dubai Health Authority
COVID-19
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