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SYRIAN REBELS OUST AL ASSAD REGIME

■ OFFENSIVE SPEARHEADED BY
HAYAT TAHRIR AL SHAM GROUP

■ DEPOSED SYRIAN PRESIDENT
REPORTEDLY FLEES TO MOSCOW

■ UAE CONCERNED OVER RISKS
OF INSTABILITY, EXTREMISM

DUBAI

BY STEPHEN N. R.
Senior Associate Editor

Syrrian President Bashar Al Assad's government has collapsed following a swift advance by rebel forces, who swept into Damascus declaring victory, ending 54 years of family rule.

Russian state media said that Al Assad and his family have been granted asylum and are in Moscow.

According to reports, the Syrian army offered minimal resistance in several areas after the rebels launched their offensive on November 27. Celebrations erupted across Syria, with jubilant crowds ransacking Al Assad's residence in Damascus. "I can't believe I'm living this moment," said Damascus resident Amer Batha. "We've been waiting a long time for this day. We are starting a new history for Syria."

The fall of Al Assad, 59, who ruled Syria for over two decades after succeeding his father in 2000, has sent ripples through the Middle East. While Syrians celebrate, fears of impending chaos loom large.

UAE worried

Dr Anwar Gargash, Diplomatic Adviser to the UAE President, expressed concerns over the risks of instability and extremism. "Syria is still not out of the woods," he told reporters in Manama. "We



AFP

■ People stand atop a tank in celebration at Umayyad Square in Damascus yesterday. Islamist-led rebels declared that they have taken Damascus in a lightning offensive, sending President Bashar Al Assad fleeing and ending five decades of Baath rule in Syria.

hope Syrians will unite to prevent another episode of chaos."

The offensive was spearheaded by Hayat Tahrir Al Sham (HTS), a group designated as a terrorist organisation by Western governments.

The group's leader, Ahmad Al Sharaa — widely known as Abu Mohammad Al Jolani — urged remaining government forces in Damascus to surrender.

In a televised address, Al Sharaa confirmed that Prime

Minister Mohammad Ghazi Al Jalali would continue in his role during the interim period until an official transition of power is arranged. HTS, which severed ties with Al Qaida in 2016, has since attempted to rebrand it-

self as a more moderate force within Syria's fractured political landscape. The wave of jubilation extended beyond Syria's borders, with refugees celebrating in Turkey and Germany.

SEE ALSO P9

UAE stresses on family with new ministry

DUBAI

BY KHITAM AL AMIR
Chief News Editor

The UAE Government yesterday announced a ministerial reshuffle, with the setting up of a new ministry and the upgradation of another. The government reshuffle was announced under the directives of President His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, by His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai.

As per the announcement, the government has established the new Ministry of Family, while the existing Ministry of Community Development has been upgraded to the Ministry of Community Empowerment.

Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid said the Ministry of Family will be led by Sana Bint Mohammad Suhail. "Family is a national priority, the cornerstone of our progress, and the foundation of our nation's future ... The UAE President has underscored the need for comprehensive national programmes aimed at increasing family formation in the UAE," he said. The Ministry of Community Empowerment will operate under the leadership of Shamma Bint Suhail Al Mazroui.

SEE ALSO P4



MCLAREN CLINCH CONSTRUCTORS' TITLE IN ABU DHABI

■ Lando Norris produced a flawless performance to clinch the F1 Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix and give McLaren Racing their first world title after 26 years at the Yas Marina Circuit yesterday. Starting from pole, the Brit kept the Ferrari duo — Carlos Sainz and Charles Leclerc — at bay to ensure the slender lead was preserved to give the constructors title to his team, which had previously won it in 1998. Norris said over the team radio: "Congrats to everyone. Incredible, so proud of you all, you all deserve this. Thank you, it's been a special one. Next year is going to be my year too."

Virendra Saklani/Gulf News

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