

# KRG launches "Sport for all" programme

## The new initiative to boost the metabolism of Kurdish society

**The Kurdistan Region wants sport to be the platform to introduce Kurdistan to the world, as well as to serve as a basis to strengthen international relationships.**

Kurdistan Region Ministry of Sports and Youths, established in 2006, organized Iraq's first post-war international sports conference in Erbil city, capital of Kurdistan Region.

"Sport is an incredibly powerful tool that helps us to unite communities," said Taha Barwary, Kurdistan Region Minister of Youths and Sports, speaking at the two-day conference.

According to Minister Taha, this conference will help the Kurdistan Region to take the vital next steps in developing a culture of sports that would celebrate the involvement of women, youth and the disabled, and promote an infrastructure to ensure talented athletes excel to become formidable competitors at an international level.

International delegations from Wales, England, Sweden and Iran attended the conference. The Welsh delegation, led by Chief Executive Dr Huw Jones, aims to help the war-torn Kurdistan become the Wales of the Middle East.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has declared that when it comes to sport, they wish to emulate Welsh success in developing a solid future for sport.

Dr Jones and two colleagues led workshops as part of a two-day conference in Erbil, while meeting with senior ministers and policy advisors, to pass on guidance and expertise.

"Politically, Wales and Kurdistan share broadly similar struc-

GLOBE PHOTO/Safin Hamed



Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani addresses the first International Sport Conference held in Erbil, April 27.

tures and, with a population of four million, the region is just bigger than Wales. The KRG is very keen to develop sports opportunities and are looking at our structures for advice – just as we would look to Australia or New Zealand. They will be looking at the work we do in schools and in communities as well as how we help sportsmen and women achieve at the very highest levels," said Dr Jones.

Olympic bronze medallist, Kate Allenby, who was part of Wales' delegation, expressed her excitement to be travelling to Iraqi Kurdistan to share her experiences with the region's policy makers.

"I am deeply passionate about

getting people engaged with sport, not just because it's about physical activity but because it can help people to develop life skills as well as create a positive environment and a wealth of opportunity."

During the conference, Allenby emotionally talked about her life and the challenges she faced, before she reached the level where she was able to win a bronze medal at the last Olympic in China.

Welsh Minister for Sport, Alun Ffred Jones, remarked that he is pleased to hear that the KRG has invited staff from the Sports Council of Wales to share their experiences of sports development in Wales.

"I look forward to hearing about the impact of the visit on developing sport in Kurdistan," said Jones.

Kurdistan Region President, Massoud Barzani, who opened the conference, noted the importance of the role of sport in bringing people together, in creating an environment of friendship and building a strong and healthy region.

"The Kurdistan Region will benefit from our guests' experiences and we will give them the chance to see the current level of sport in the Kurdistan Region" said Barzani.

Underlining the importance of sport for all citizens, President Barzani, said "Sports should be

available for all people, girls and boys - not just boys – because exercise is a necessity for every human being."

The Ministry of Sport and Youths proclaimed that one of the ministry's aims is to attract women into sport.

According to the ministry, there are 104 sport clubs in the region, but less than 10% of the players are female.

Farhad Abdullah Khayat, head of the Shaqlawa club, said the government should allocate a special budget to encourage women to participate in sport.

"Sport halls and soccer fields should be built for women," said Khayat.

## Masrouf Barzani meets with Croatian Ambassador to Iraq

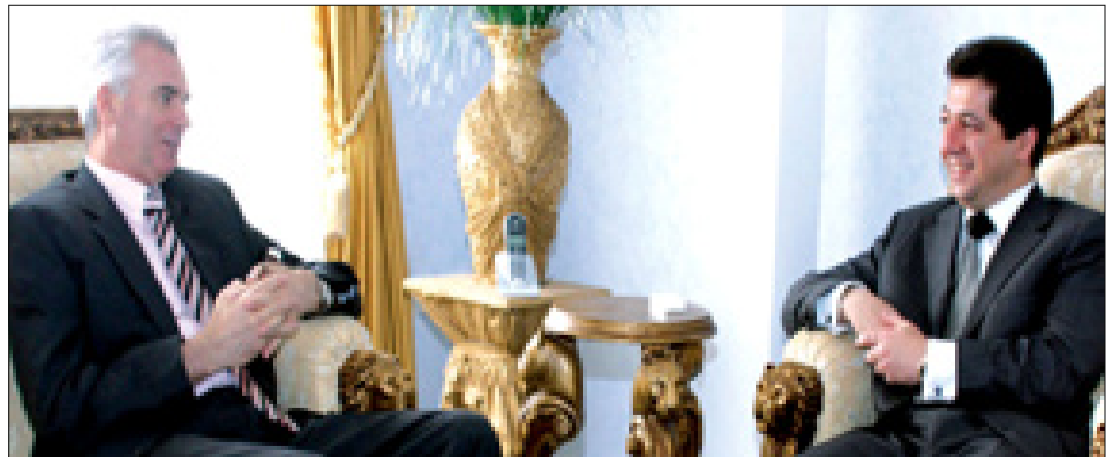
The Chief of Kurdistan Region Intelligence Agency (Parastin), Masrouf Barzani, held a meeting with the Croatian Ambassador to Iraq, Jerko Vokas, and Croatian representative in Kurdistan Region, Jasim Zahir.

In the meeting, both sides stressed on the importance of bilateral and friendly relationship between Croatia and the Kurdistan Region, while expressing their mutual regard for the strength-

ening and expansion of relations.

On the other hand, the meeting was used to highlight the current situation in Iraq and in particular developments in the Kurdistan Region. Meanwhile, the Croatian Ambassador to Iraq described the positive role of the Kurdistan Region in contributing to the steady improvements in the Iraqi situation.

GLOBE PHOTO



Masrouf Barzani and the Croatian Ambassador to Iraq Jerko Vokas.