

Report # 114
BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD
GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL
NEWS MONITORING REPORT
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Following news monitoring report is based on the important political, social, economic and Geo-strategic events occurred in Gulf Cooperation Council States along with a Comprehensive summary of the report.

OUTLINE

GCC

- **\$2 trillion construction projects in GCC planned**
- **EU-GCC political, economic dialogue in Brussels kicks off next week**
- **US\$2 trillion GCC Projects Market Offers Opportunities for Global Construction and Investment Community**
- **GCC Weekly Economy**

YEMEN

- **Southern Yemen provinces hit by civil disobedience**
- **Yemen releases 236 Al Houthi supporters**
- **Oman commits \$100m in aid to Yemen**
- **Yemen war violations need to be investigated: HRW**
- **Saleh labels exiled secessionist leader a traitor**
- **Human Rights Watch calls for probe of war violations**
- **Efforts to end Yemen rebellion suspended**
- **Yemeni tribes warn against killing fugitive**
- **Al Qaida suspect put on CIA wanted list is on the Yemeni government's radar, alleges tribal leader**

SAUDI ARABIA

International Front

- **Riyadh-Mumbai new route**
- **India keen to take partnership with Kingdom to higher levels**
- **KSA, Vietnam mull rice cultivation**
- **No meddling in Iraq affairs**
- **Saudi cleric announces on-air plans to visit Occupied Jerusalem**
- **Islamic preacher may not visit Occupied Jerusalem**
- **Saudi cleric should apply for visa: Israel**

Social Front

- **GPYW chief orders investigation into reporter's beating**
- **Call to set up specialist hospitals across the Kingdom**
- **Desert chase fetches 15 illegals in Riaydh**

Economic Front

- **Saudi shares increase to 18-month high**
- **Select buying hits stocks, KSE ekes out gains**
- **Saudis, Vietnamese mull rice cultivation and oil refining deals**

UAE

International Front

- **UAE's Humanitarian Mobile Hospital performs Bosnia's 1st endoscopic open heart surgery**
- **Enhancing UAE-Swaziland relations discussed**

Economic Front

- **New laws to maintain UAE's competitive edge: Mansouri**
- **UAE-Norway trade up to US\$339 million in 2009**

KUWAIT

International Front

- **Kuwait denies reports it allowed Israelis into the country**
- **Kuwaiti artist sparks furore over singing in Hebrew at local club**
- **Kuwait arrests Egyptians planning support group for Al Baradei**
- **Kuwait projects in Lebanon to help improve economy**
- **NATO, Kuwait agree on holding joint courses**

Political Front

- **Sectarian controversy over Abdalli border incident**
- **Bid to empower women in law field**
- **Ministers fall out over naturalization list**
- **Kuwaiti lawyers call for major judicial reforms**

Social Front

- **Controversial Kuwaiti TV channel could be back on air soon**
- **Chinese man arrested in Kuwait for '34 bogus wives'**
- **Jihad on Israelis 'duty' of every Muslim: Al-Nashim**
- **'Only 90,000 bedoons in Kuwait'**
- **New English syllabus indicates 'openness'**
- **Development plans await implementation**

Environment Front

- **Ignoring ban, people frequent beaches**
- **Waste Management Conference tackles environmental issues**

Economic Front

- **Kuwait records KD6bn budgetary surplus**

Oil and Gas

BAHRAIN

International Front

- **Palestinian envoy urges Bahrain to go ahead with football match in Palestine**
- **Envoy assures players that passports will not be stamped by Israel**
- **Bahrain MPs call for cancellation of match in Palestine**
- **Bahrain lawmakers say no to game in Palestine**
- **Palestinian envoy in Manama under fire for encouraging Bahrainis to play in Palestine**

Social Front

- **Higher Education Council to hand out 355 'controversial' degrees**
- **Local news on BlackBerry banned in Bahrain**

OMAN

Social Front

- **Call to safeguard against fire outbreaks in Oman**
- **Oman unveils cyber-security outfit**
- **Experts in Gulf discuss strategy to combat red tide**
- **Oman police bust Asian visa racket gang**
- **During the 2003 Census, Oman became the first country in the world to introduce Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) for data collection**
- **Doha to host Arab and non-Arab cultural weeks**

QATAR

- **Doha to host Arab and non-Arab cultural weeks**
- **Women expatriates in Qatar can now sponsor their husbands and children**
- **Qatar is drafting new media law**
- **Visa on arrival ended for US and UK visitors**

Oil and Gas

- **Qatalum plant to be launched tomorrow**

SUMMARY

DETAILED REPORT

GCC

\$2 trillion construction projects in GCC planned

Some \$2 trillion worth of projects are planned or under way in the six GCC countries and opportunities abound for global construction and investment community, organizers of MEED's 2010 Arabian World Construction Summit (AWCS) said on Saturday.

Under the theme "Growing in a Challenging Market", AWCS will host over 50 expert speakers from the Arab world highlighting key business opportunities and addressing topical issues that currently impact the industry. Over 400 international delegates are expected to attend the three-day event to be held on May 24-26 at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC). Edmund O'Sullivan, chairman, MEED Events, said: "In 2009, almost \$52 billion worth of contracts were awarded in the GCC region and we expect this level to rise in 2010. The total value of infrastructure contracts increased by 11 percent to \$15 billion in 2009, from \$13 billion in 2008. There are significant opportunities in key areas such as infrastructure, transportation and housing and they will continue to lead the construction industry for years to come. "Reflecting this trend, AWCS will serve as a forum to discuss the opportunities and challenges in the sector while offering new business prospects. The summit has served as a great information and networking platform for the last two years and we are confident the upcoming edition will offer many business leads to participants." With a population of about 29 million that is expected to reach 33 million by 2020, the Saudi Arabian market offers considerable opportunities for the construction sector. According to Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Commerce and Industry, there will be a shortfall of 160,000 - 200,000 homes

a year. The country will require 1.2 million homes by 2015 but will be able to deliver only 900,000 according to latest industry indicators. Furthermore, the country has earmarked \$69 billion for new projects such as social infrastructure, universities and hospitals, railway lines, airports and ports. Dr. Faysal Alaquil, director, Business Development of Construction Products Holding Company (CPC), said: "As one of the largest and most lucrative construction products companies in the region, CPC has been involved in strategic and important projects throughout Saudi Arabia and its surroundings. As infrastructure investment in Saudi Arabia has been steadily growing in tandem with its vastly growing economy and population, CPC has been fortunate enough to be involved in the participation of the construction development of Saudi Arabia. We are delighted to be taking part in the 2010 Arabian World Construction Summit and look forward to meeting our peers to discuss numerous opportunities we have to offer." The construction industry in Qatar will also come under close inspection at AWCS where the industry is worth over \$10 billion and investment continues to rise steadily. Oman, at the same time, has launched numerous infrastructure projects including new roads, expansion of Muscat International Airport as well as other smaller regional airports. Abu Dhabi continues to witness a surging economy. In accordance with Abu Dhabi 2030, the UAE capital will continue to invest in numerous construction and infrastructure projects including housing, transport, energy, industrial, healthcare and education. Highlighting these trends, AWCS will be held concurrently with the first Arabian Construction Week (ACW), incorporating three dedicated vertical trade exhibitions as well as the Green Building Middle East Summit. Organized by MECOM Forums/Clarion Events in partnership with MEED, Arabian Construction Week (ACW) will act as a pre-tender sourcing platform for the region's existing and potential construction and infrastructure projects. It will also aim to work towards a better-built environment for the cities of today and the future.

EU-GCC political, economic dialogue in Brussels kicks off next week

The annual political and economic dialogue between the 27-member European Union and the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) will take place in Brussels next week with the aim to foster cooperation and ties between the two regional groupings, sources told KUNA Friday. A big 60-member GCC delegation will be in the Belgian capital for the two very significant meetings on Monday and Tuesday. Kuwait which holds the current GCC Presidency will chair the political dialogue from the GCC side while Spain which holds the current EU Presidency will chair the meeting from the European side. The economic dialogue will be chaired by the GCC's General Secretariat which is based in Saudi capital Riyadh while Spain will chair the meeting from the EU side. The meetings will be held on the level of director generals, directors and ambassadors, said the embassy sources.

US\$2 trillion GCC Projects Market Offers Opportunities for Global Construction and Investment Community

MEED's 2010 Arabian World Construction Summit (AWCS) will turn the spotlight on the US\$2 trillion worth of projects planned or under way in the six GCC countries and the opportunities available for global construction and investment community, the organisers announced today. To be held from 24-26 May 2010 at the Abu Dhabi National

Exhibition Centre (ADNEC) and themed 'Growing in a Challenging Market', AWCS will host over 50 expert speakers from the Arab world highlighting key business opportunities and addressing topical issues that currently impact the industry. Over 400 international delegates are expected to attend the three-day event. Edmund O'Sullivan, Chairman, MEED Events, said: "In 2009, almost US\$52 billion worth of contracts were awarded in the GCC region and we expect this level to rise in 2010. The total value of infrastructure contracts increased by 11 per cent to US\$15 billion in 2009, from US\$13 billion in 2008. There are significant opportunities in key areas such as infrastructure, transportation and housing and they will continue to lead the construction industry for years to come. "Reflecting this trend, AWCS will serve as a forum to discuss the opportunities and challenges in the sector while offering new business prospects. The summit has served as a great information and networking platform for the last two years and we are confident the upcoming edition will offer many business leads to participants." With a population of about 29 million that is expected to reach 33 million by 2020, the Saudi Arabian market offers considerable opportunities for the construction sector. According to Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Commerce and Industry, there will be a shortfall of 160,000 - 200,000 homes a year. The country will require 1.2 million homes by 2015 but will be able to deliver only 900,000 according to latest industry indicators. Furthermore, the country has earmarked US\$69 billion for new projects such as social infrastructure, universities and hospitals, railway lines, airports and ports.

Weekly Economy

Spain is seeking to intensify its relationship with Kuwait in light of the five-year development plan recently announced by the Gulf state, with this strengthening of ties expected to present many opportunities for joint ventures between the two countries, according to Pablo Cascon, the Commercial Attache at the Spanish Embassy in Kuwait. Created in 2006, Investinspain, a government agency dedicated to promoting and attracting foreign investment to Spain, is part of the Spanish Ministry for Industry, Tourism and Trade's Secretariat for Commerce. As a public body, Investinspain informs potential investors about the various green field opportunities for investments, welcoming interest in both public and private investments. With an extended network of offices worldwide, Investinspain is shortly to open an office in Kuwait, its fourth branch in the GCC after Oman, Saudi Arabia and Dubai.

The Syrian government has canceled a deal with Kuwait's AL-Noor Financial Investment Company to build a 140,000 barrel per day refinery in eastern Syria, Oil Minister Sufian Alao said. The announcement is another setback to government efforts to attract investment to the ailing refining sector and meet domestic demand, with the country relying on two old refineries that have a combined capacity of 240,000 bpd. Noor and the Syrian government signed a memorandum of understanding in 2007 to construct the \$ 1.7 bn refinery. Later that year they signed an agreement with British consultants Wood McKenzie for a feasibility study. Alao did not give a reason for ending the deal. He said the government remained in talks with other foreign investors for them to build two other refineries that could double Syria's capacity.

Gulfinvest International said it has defaulted on a AED200mn (\$ 54.47mn) loan to an Abu Dhabi bank, and its guarantor is in talks to restructure it. The loan from Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank and its interest were due end of March and the company was "unable to pay at the time being", Gulfinvest said in a statement. It said the UAE's Shuaa Capital, the guarantor of the loan, has stepped in and was negotiating with the company to restructure the loan. Combined Group Contracting Company (CGC) won a tender for civil works from Al-Ain Farms for Livestock, Abu Dhabi. The contract work AED52.50mn (KD4.15mn), will extend for six months and with one-year maintenance.

A'ayan Capital Investment Company got the approval of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) to buy back or offload up to 10 percent of its issued shares for six months as of the approval date. Amar for Finance and Leasing, listed in the Parallel market, sold investment properties valued at KD1.85mn making a profit of KD85,000. The company reported that the results of the transaction will appear in its 1Q2010 financial statement.

Wataniya Telecom announced that it will be listed in Qatar Exchange within the next two weeks to become the first company outside of Qatar to be listed in the stock exchange. Kuwait and Gulf Link Transport Company announced that its whollyowned KGL Passenger Transport Services Company won a 3 years contract worth KD3.86mn.

All GCC stock markets posted gains by the end of the month of March 2010. In UAE, Dubai Financial Market posted double digits gains of 15.73 percent by the end of the month. KSE concluded the month 2.88 percent higher, as measured by Global Kuwait Index. GCC stock markets also concluded the first quarter of the year 2010 with solid gains that ranged between 2 percent to over 13 percent. The Kuwaiti market came in the lead, up by 13.27 percent by the end of 1Q2010. The Saudi market followed, up by 11.10 percent. Markets' performance will be dictated during the coming months by 1Q2010 corporate results and any sudden announcements that might either push the markets to higher grounds, or set them back, erasing some or even all their profits accumulated during the first quarter of the year.

YEMEN

Southern Yemen provinces hit by civil disobedience

Yemen's southern separatists yesterday observed civil disobedience in the two southern provinces of Al Dhaleh and Lahj where secession sentiments run highest among the country's six southern provinces. A roadside bomb wounded one person in Daleh. A security official said a vehicle carrying explosives was intercepted trying to enter Daleh, 200km south of the capital Sana'a. The bomb that wounded the civilian was planted on the main road to the town, the local government official said, adding a policeman was injured in an accident unrelated to violence. "There were no clashes or gunfire," he said, without specifying the type of accident. Daleh was paralysed by a general strike called by the Southern Movement, a grouping of parties, some of which demand full secession for the former South Yemen. The strike also was observed in the southern towns of Habilain in the Lahej region and Lawder and Moudiya in Abyan, but not in the former southern

capital of Aden or other towns in the Hadramut region, witnesses said. Earlier, authorities warned they would crack down hard on any outlaws trying to prevent people from opening their shops, or trying to block roads. In a statement issued by the Ministry of Interior, authorities called on citizens to ignore the calls issued by the separatists saying "agent forces hostile to unity" were behind the calls. Meanwhile, some parents did not allow their children to go to school for fear of violence. Meanwhile, at least 10 separatists were arrested over the past two days in Lahj where secession sentiment is increasing by the day, a Ministry of Interior statement revealed yesterday.

Yemen releases 236 Al Houthi supporters

A total of 236 men arrested for supporting Al Houthi rebels have been released, according to an official government statement on Tuesday. 161 detainees were released Monday and 75 were released two weeks ago. Al Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdul Salam welcomed the step as a "good sign to bring peace to Sa'ada". The release of prisoners is part of the six conditions for peace framework agreed upon by the government and the rebels.

Oman commits \$100m in aid to Yemen

Oman has pledged \$100 million in aid to Yemen in the latest of a series of positive gestures to its neighbour on its southwestern border. According to a report in the local Oman Arabic daily, the grant represents the sultanate's contribution to pledges announced by a number of countries at a Donors' Conference held in London in 2006. Oman's contribution will be managed by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the paper quoted Nabeela Mujahid, a Director General at Yemen's Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, as stating. She said the aid would help meet funding shortfalls in Yemen's Five Year Plan (2006-2010)

Yemen war violations need to be investigated: HRW

The United Nations, the government of Yemen and Al Houthi rebels should investigate violations of laws of war during the recent conflict in the north of the country, Human Rights Watch (HRW) has said. The truce between the Yemeni government and Al Houthi rebels presents an opportunity to investigate violations of laws of war by both sides in order to sustain the fragile truce and ensure that it does not break down, said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at HRW. Violations cited by the report included indiscriminate bombing of civilian areas and the use of child soldiers by the government, and the use of human shields, use of child soldiers and looting by the rebels. Referring to the "impunity" surrounding the suffering of civilians in Yemen, Stork strongly criticized the Friends of Yemen grouping, singling out the United States and United Kingdom for turning a blind eye to the alleged violations. "Both Jeffrey Feltman (US assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs) and (British foreign secretary) David Miliband have made remarks about the conflict in Yemen as being an internal matter. As in 'we are not going to say anything critical'. This concerns us very much," he said. He also said there was no indication from Gulf Cooperation Council states of support for an investigation of the alleged violations. The group released a 54 page report on findings of its two researchers there. One of the researchers, Christoph Wilke, said that while some of the allegations made were not independently verifiable due to difficulties of access to

the affected areas, enough evidence was compiled to call for a UN investigation. The report was released in Dubai because HRW officials were not granted visas to Yemen, said Stork.

Saleh labels exiled secessionist leader a traitor

Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh on Tuesday launched a scathing attack on an exiled secessionist leader describing him as a traitor and agent. "There is no agent who can become a leader, and whoever was a leader and sold his nation and left it. It is impossible for him to return and rule," Saleh said in an obvious reference to the Yemeni secessionist leader Ali Salem Al Baidh. Al Baidh, who is exiled in Germany, has been calling for the south to secede from the north and end a unity deal in place since May 22, 1990. Al Baidh was the second most powerful man after Saleh in unified Yemen until 1994 when he left for Oman after he failed to secede from the north through forceful means. Bid for independence. He maintained silence until May 22, 2009, when he declared from Germany that he would lead the secessionists in southern Yemen in their bid to restore south Yemen's independence. In a speech delivered to a gathering of politicians and clerics in the Hudhramout province east of Yemen, the Yemen President ordered the release of all the province's detainees, including two journalists who were arrested for secession activities. The move was seen as a gesture towards reconciliation and was highly welcomed by local opposition leaders.

Human Rights Watch calls for probe of war violations

The United Nations, the government of Yemen and Al Houthi rebels should investigate violations of the rules of war committed during a recent conflict in the north of the country, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) has said. Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at HRW, said the truce between the Yemeni government and Al Houthi rebels presented an opportunity to investigate violations committed by both sides in order to sustain the fragile truce and ensure that it does not break down. Violations cited by the report included indiscriminate bombing of civilian areas, the use of child soldiers by the government, the use of human shields, the use of child soldiers and looting by the rebels. Referring to the "impunity" surrounding the suffering of civilians in Yemen, Stork strongly criticised the Friends of Yemen grouping, singling out the United States and United Kingdom for turning a blind eye to the alleged violations. "Both Jeffrey Feltman [US assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs] and [British foreign secretary] David Miliband have made remarks about the conflict in Yemen as [being] an internal matter. As in 'we are not going to say anything critical'. This concerns us very much," he said. He also said there was no indication by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states of support for an investigation of the alleged violations.

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UN agencies seek access

UN agencies are asking the government to grant them access to distressed civilians in the former war zone, but landmines still block some roads, said UNHCR spokeswoman Marie Marullaz. Aid agencies have had only limited access to the region, from which the government also bars journalists and diplomats. "Unless there is a prompt response from the donor community, this severe lack of funding will soon have a direct impact on the estimated 250,000 IDPs (internally displaced persons) and 170,000 refugees in Yemen," Marullaz said. The ebb and flow of the long-running conflict disrupted education in the north. Few children attend school regularly. Some of those who fled to Sana'a are now trying to catch up. "The children get extra lessons from private teachers in the afternoon to improve their learning. The parents don't get any government help for this," said Matar, the aid coordinator. For children, the fear of air raids is still vivid, even in the safety of the capital, some 250km south of Sa'ada. Some dive to the ground when they hear the sound of a plane.

Efforts to end Yemen rebellion suspended

Efforts to end the Al Houthi armed rebellion north of Yemen have stopped after alleged violations by the rebels including the kidnapping of 11 soldiers, mediators said yesterday. "We have become convinced that the Al Houthi rebels are not serious in [the] peace process, so we have suspended our work," said a statement by one of the four committees in charge of supervising the implementation of the six conditions set by the government and accepted by the rebels to end the war in Sa'ada. The committee, the one working in Harf Sufyan, said it had stopped because Al Houthi rebels kept delaying and procrastinating over the implementation of the six conditions by breaking promises and committing violations on the ground.

Yemeni tribes warn against killing fugitive

Yemeni tribes on Friday warned the Yemen and US governments from targeting a fugitive put on the CIA 'kill or capture' list. They described the fugitive, Anwar Al Awlaki, who is now wanted dead or alive by the United States, as their son and a 'hero'. The Al Awlaki tribes confirmed in a statement sent to the media that they would not leave Al Awlaki alone, and "whoever [will] touch a hair of his, he [will] not escape from our guns and fire. We [will] not stand watching." The tribes likened themselves to the fire of hell, saying whoever enters hell would surely be burnt. "We are Awlakis, we are the fire of hell, whoever enters it, he will be burnt," the tribes threatened. The Al Awlakis, an influential tribe, also warned against any intelligence cooperation by the Yemeni side with the United States to kill the fugitive. The statement came only hours after the father of Anwar Al Awlaki asked the American administration, through CNN, to give him time to persuade his son to surrender. Al Awlaki, who is believed to be hiding in the mountainous areas of Al Kur in Shabwa province of south east Yemen, recently called for jihad against the United States.

Al Qaida suspect put on CIA wanted list is on the Yemeni government's radar, alleges tribal leader

A Yemeni tribal leader said on Saturday that the Yemeni government knows the whereabouts of Al Qaida suspect who was put on the CIA "kill or capture" list last week.

"We do not know his whereabouts now, but the government knows, and the government can arrest him, and it's responsible for him," said the tribal leader Abu Bakr Bin Fareed, one of the influential tribal leaders of Awlaki tribe in Shabwa. The tribal leader denied the previous reports about a statement by his tribesmen saying they would retaliate if their son is harmed. "We did not hold a meeting about Anwar Al Awlaki, and what was reported by media does not represent our tribe," he said over phone from Shabwa. Abu Bakr, who is a close relative to Anwar, said, "The position of our tribe is the same position of the government, we can not let the government down."

SAUDI ARABIA

International Front

Riyadh-Mumbai new route

nasair celebrated the launch of new route Riyadh - Mumbai - Riyadh as of March 31, 2010 with frequency of 4 flights in week and at a promotional prices starting from SR250. Rajeev Shahare, minister/deputy chief of Indian mission, Riyadh and Bandar Al Mohnna, deputy CEO, National Air Services (NAS) and a number of senior officials of King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh (KKIA) participated in the celebration. Al Mohnna said nasair plan of expanding there routes by operating to three more destinations in India during the next three months, covering the cities of Delhi, Calicut and Kochi. Also, nasair plans to lunch new destination's to Sudan, Turkey and Aleppo - Syria before the end of 2010, bringing the number of destination's domestically and internationally to 30 destinations with more than 400 flights weekly. Al Mohnna further said that while nasair is celebrating its 3rd anniversary, it currently works to continue its ambitious plans that enabled the company to carry more than 3,300,000 passengers during last three years.

India keen to take partnership with Kingdom to higher levels

INDIA and Saudi Arabia are very serious about further developing their strategic partnership after the signing in February of the historic Riyadh Declaration, said Indian Minister of State for External Affairs Shashi Tharoor in an interview with Saudi Gazette. "The momentum has been built up; it will not be allowed to lapse," he said. India and Saudi Arabia decided to raise their existing bilateral cooperation to a strategic partnership covering security, economic, defense and political areas through the Riyadh Declaration signed in the Saudi capital by King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and the visiting Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. "We are not only working on following up the Riyadh Declaration, but there are contacts at a very high level between the establishments of the two countries," said Tharoor. Prince Salman Bin Abdul Aziz, Emir of Riyadh Region, is scheduled to visit India later this month. Tharoor, who is also in-charge of Haj affairs, told Saudi Gazette that he raised the issue of increasing the Haj quota for Indian pilgrims during his meeting with Saudi Haj Minister Fouad Al-Farsy.

KSA, Vietnam mull rice cultivation

Vietnam will sign an agreement with Saudi Arabia to encourage Saudi Aramco to invest in two refineries to be built in the Asian country, and welcomed Saudi firms' interest in investing in rice cultivation in Vietnam. Like other Gulf Arab countries that rely on food imports, Saudi private firms have intensified efforts over the last two years – with the blessing of their government – to buy or lease land in developing nations to ensure supplies after a spike in commodities prices in 2008. The Kingdom is among the world's top five rice importers while Vietnam is the world's second-largest rice exporter. Vietnam's President Nguyen Minh Triet Saturday began a rare visit to Saudi Arabia flanked by officials from state oil units Petrovietnam and Petrolimex. Triet met King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, Saturday. He is likely to hold talks with officials at Saudi Aramco Sunday. Triet also met Saudi business leaders who asked for flexible investment regulations and access to Vietnam's farmlands and for its abundant pool of workers to be brought over to the Kingdom. "We certainly want to invest in Vietnam's rice cultivation," Mohamed Al-Rajhi, a member of the Saudi Council of Chamber, told the gathering.

No meddling in Iraq affairs

The Kingdom does not interfere in the internal affairs of Iraq, Prince Saud Al-Faisal, Foreign Minister, said here Saturday. Talking to reporters after opening a five-day general meeting of Saudi Ambassadors and Heads of Missions abroad, Prince Saud said the Kingdom maintains equal relationship with different political blocs in Iraq. Earlier, in his opening speech, Prince Saud said a comprehensive strategic plan has been developed and will be discussed during the meeting. The plan is titled "Five-year strategic plan for Saudi diplomatic work and the role of the ministry and missions in implementing it". The plan is based on the objectives of the 9th Five-Year Development Plan, he added.

Saudi cleric announces on-air plans to visit Occupied Jerusalem

A Saudi cleric has announced on his television show that he will visit occupied Jerusalem next week to bolster Muslim claims to the city. If Shaikh Mohammad Al Areefi goes ahead with his plan, it would be an unprecedented trip for a prominent Saudi. Occupied Jerusalem is the third holiest site in Islam, but most Muslim countries - including Saudi Arabia - observe a boycott of Israel and ban travel there. Al Areefi told his viewers on Sunday on the religious satellite channel Iqra the next episode of his show would be about Muslim claims to Jerusalem and Palestine. Al Areefi said he would visit the city next week, though he did not specify when. Al Areefi is viewed as a comparative moderate among Saudi Arabia's conservative clergy.

Islamic preacher may not visit Occupied Jerusalem

Saudi preacher Shaikh Mohammad Al Areefi may not go ahead with his announced plan to visit occupied Jerusalem next week, according to sources. Gulf News has learnt that the scholar was not willing to violate Saudi regulations and the government's directive in this respect. A source very close to the scholar said that Shaikh Mohammad is not going to occupied Jerusalem. At the same time, a number of Saudi writers and political analysts expressed their doubts about the seriousness of the announcement made by Shaikh Mohammad regarding his planned visit to occupied Jerusalem. They demanded that he

should withdraw the controversial announcement, which involves an aberration of Sharia principles, and should apologise to Muslims.

Saudi cleric should apply for visa: Israel

Israel said on Tuesday that a Saudi cleric could apply for a visa from the consulate in Amman if he wants to visit occupied Jerusalem. "Throughout the years many people from countries like Libya, Indonesia and other countries that don't have relations with Israel have visited [occupied] Jerusalem," Foreign Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor said. "All these visits were naturally coordinated with Israeli authorities." The Saudi cleric Shaikh Mohammad Al Areefi announced on Monday on his television show that he will visit occupied Jerusalem next week to bolster Muslim claims to the city. If he goes ahead with his plan, it would be an unprecedented trip for a prominent Saudi. Occupied Jerusalem is the third holiest site in Islam, but most Muslim countries — including Saudi Arabia — observe a strict boycott of Israel and ban travel there. Al Areefi told his viewers on Sunday on the religious satellite channel Iqra that the next episode of his show would be about Muslim claims to occupied Jerusalem and Palestine. Al Areefi said he would visit the city next week, though he did not specify when. He said he was not afraid of any "treachery from the Jews", as he had put his trust in God. Al Areefi is viewed as a comparative moderate among Saudi Arabia's conservative clergy. He is currently visiting Jordan.

Social Front

GPYW chief orders investigation into reporter's beating

Prince Sultan Bin Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz, President of the General Presidency of Youth Welfare (GPYW) in Saudi Arabia, has ordered a full investigation of the beating of a TV reporter during a major soccer match, an official source at the presidency said on Friday. Security guards at the King Fahd International Stadium were shown live on TV as they beat up Badr Rafea, a TV reporter who was covering final match of the Prince Faisal Bin Fahd Cup in Riyadh on Wednesday night. Rafea, a reporter for the sports channel of prominent broadcaster Arab Radio and Television (ART), was seen by millions being kicked and beaten by at least 15 security guards during the match between Saudi teams Al-Nasr and Al-Hilal, which the latter lost 2-1. The Saudi Press Agency (SPA) quoted the unidentified source as saying that confrontation began when Rafea was making a TV interview while carrying an expired identification card which is against the instructions.

"The supervisor of security and safety at the stadium asked him to leave the area but the reporter refused, insisted on staying and asked the supervisor to stay away in order to continue his work," the source said. "After that, the supervisor of security and safety asked one of the security (personnel) to seize the card of the reporter (after he) said harsh and impolite words." The source added that after receiving the results of the investigations, the President of Youth Welfare issued the following decisions:

- 1- The personnel of the industrial security company who caused this incident will be banned from working or participating in the sports events at GPYW facilities.
- 2- Industrial security companies should be obligated to train their personnel to the highest levels of awareness and good manners.

3- ART should assign reporters who have high morals and are able to adhere to regulations and instructions.

Call to set up specialist hospitals across the Kingdom

The 8th National Meeting for Intellectual Dialogue called for the establishment of specialist hospitals in all provinces of the Kingdom and increase in the number of beds in hospitals. The meeting also called for the implementation of specialized mobile health service units. These recommendations were put forward at the concluding session of the meeting here Saturday. Stressing the need for maintaining high standards and quality in the health sector, participants of the meeting also underlined the importance of defining concepts and terminologies pertaining to medical errors and educating people as how to tackle medical errors. The final session of the three-day event titled “What does the citizens expect from the health sectors” was held with Faisal Bin Abdul Rahman Bin Mu’ammam, Secretary General of the King Abdul Aziz Center for National Dialogue, in the chair. The participants of the meeting underscored the importance of training of persons associated with the health sector. They also called for increasing the number of specialized physicians. They said that in order to improve the health sector in the Kingdom it was necessary to increase allocation of medical studies and to promote research activities at universities. Representatives of the public health sector backed the suggestions from the participants of the meeting. They said that the suggestions could be implemented within the Ministry of Health national project of integrated and comprehensive health care, and called on the participants to support it. The ministry’s project is compatible with the country’s health strategy, which focuses on developing hospitals and primary health care centers and generating a balance in distributing health care services across the Kingdom.

Desert chase fetches 15 illegals in Riaydh

Police arrested 15 illegal immigrants and a Saudi driver after observing a vehicle speeding through the desert south of the capital on Saturday. Officials said the vehicle was stopped following a high-speed chase across the sands, and that the 15 passengers were all persons of Arab nationality. They also found in the car a firearm and ammunition.

Economic Front

Saudi shares increase to 18-month high

Saudi shares climbed to a closing high best of more than 18 months, led by Saudi Arabian Fertilizers Co which posts better-than-expected first-quarter results. The Tadawul All-Share Index gained 1.4 percent to 6,869 points, its highest close since Sept 28, 2008. Shares in Safco rose 6.4 percent after higher prices helped it make the highest quarterly net profit since the start of the global slowdown. Market heavyweight Saudi Basic Industries Corp, which holds a near 43-percent stake in Safco, gained 3.3 percent. “Safco’s quarterly result is a clear indication that the rising oil prices are stimulating earnings growth for (the) petrochemical sector in Saudi Arabia,” said Mohammed Ishaq Ali, who manages a Saudi equity fund at Al-Rajhi Capital. Shares in Almarai fell 0.5 percent after the dairy firm posts in first quarter its lowest quarterly net profit in a year.

Select buying hits stocks, KSE ekes out gains

The Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE) was able to regain last week's loss as investors were picking up some selected stocks based on revealed investment intentions. Also the cleared year end corporate results along with the concluded 1Q2010 period which gives some heads up of what to expect wheeled investors motion. As measured by Global's weighted General Index, the Kuwaiti market closed the week adding 1.77 percent, at 214.10 point. On a year-to-date basis, the index gains reached 14.97 percent. Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE) price index was also up by 94.40 points (1.26 percent) and closed at 7,569.5 points. Total market capitalization reached KD35.13bn. Market breadth was skewed towards advancers as out of 158 shares traded this week, 74 shares advanced against 58 declining. Trading activity was higher this week with major allocation changes in certain stocks. Total traded volume was up by 4.33 percent reaching 1.88bn shares changing hands at a total traded value of KD381.23mn (+0.86 percent compared to the week before). High volume was seen on the Services sector, accounting for 29.80 percent of the total traded volume in the market with 561.08mn shares traded. Mubarrad Transport Company was the highest volume traded for the week with 103.06mn share traded on its stock. The company was traded with its new increased capital of 29.188 percent this week. On the value list, the Services sector took the lead as well with KD117.37mn traded, accounting for 30.79 percent of total traded market value.

Saudis, Vietnamese mull rice cultivation and oil refining deals

Vietnam will sign an agreement with Saudi Arabia to encourage Saudi Aramco to invest in two refineries to be built in the Asian country, and welcomed Saudi firms' interest in investing in rice cultivation in Vietnam. Like other Gulf countries that rely on food imports, Saudi private firms have intensified efforts over the last two years – with the blessing of their government – to buy or lease land in developing nations to ensure supplies after a spike in commodities prices in 2008. The kingdom is among the world's top five rice importers while Vietnam is the world's second-largest rice exporter.

UAE

International Front

UAE's Humanitarian Mobile Hospital performs Bosnia's 1st endoscopic open heart surgery

The Emirates World Humanitarian Mobile Hospital has performed the first successful open heart surgery in Bosnia and Herzegovina using a minimally invasive endoscopic technique to repair a damaged mitral valve of a Bosnian lady in her thirties. In the 3-hour robotically-assisted heart procedure, considered as one of the latest advances, was performed by a team of surgeons from UAE, France, Bosnia led by consultant cardiothoracic surgeon Adel Al-Shameri, and executive director of the hospital as part of a joint UAE-Bosnian Heart Program.

Enhancing UAE-Swaziland relations discussed

UAE Ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to South Africa and UAE non-resident ambassador to Swaziland Ismael Obaid Al-Ali here met with senior Swaziland officials including Deputy Prime Minister Themba Masuku, Min. of Health Benedict Xaba, Minister of Economic Planning '&' Development , Prince Hlangusemphi and Parliament Speaker Prince Guduza. The meetings discussed ways to further promote bilateral relations between the UAE and Swaziland and explored venues of cooperation on matters of mutual interest. Al-Ali stressed the UAE's interest in furthering relations with the member states of Southern African Development Community, or SADC, in areas such as trade, investment and tourism. The UAE is making its expertise in development available for African friendly countries to serve their economic growth and social prosperity, Al-Ali noted. Swaziland is a member of SADC along with Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Economic Front

New laws to maintain UAE's competitive edge: Mansouri

The Ministry of Economy will introduce new laws to address the existing gaps in commercial regulations and arbitration and promote efficiency, transparency, and investor confidence in the business sector. The new laws will cover Foreign Investment, Competition, Certificate of Origin, Arbitration, Industry Affairs Regulation, Amendment of Industrial Ownership, Anti Commercial Fraud, Auditors Profession Regulation and Companies' Law. The Competition Law will lay down the mechanisms governing healthy competition in business while the Law of Commercial Arbitration will plug the gaps in the existing one. "The UAE is revamping its legal system to reflect the changes in the global economic landscape and maintain its competitive edge as a centre of business. It is a thorough process that will fulfill specific conditions and requires a lot of time, research and consensus among all parties involved," said Minister of Economy Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansouri. Various other ministries and federal agencies are involved in drafting the laws, with the Ministry of Economy being responsible for specific stages and preparations in the process. "The Ministry of Economy has its own strategy for strengthening the national economy and retaining the competitive edge of the UAE as a global business centre and investment destination," Mansouri said.

UAE-Norway trade up to US\$339 million in 2009

Trade exchange between the UAE and Norway reached US\$ 339 million in 2009, up from a mere US\$ 87 million in 2005, according to a recent study by the UAE Ministry of Foreign Trade, or MoFT. The 334% growth of trade between the two countries is consistent with the missions and visions of MoFT which are based on the government's strategy in terms of openness to the world through concluding economic and trade agreements, searching for new export markets, increasing the competitiveness of UAE's exports and providing the adequate environment to encourage the private sector to export, said the study. According to the study, Norway ranks 54th in terms of total UAE's trade with countries in the world with a total value of 338 million U.S. dollars in 2009 forming 0.19% of the total UAE trade with the world with a decrease of 5.6% from the year 2008.

It ranked 114th in terms of UAE's non-oil exports to the world with a total value of approximately 2 million U.S. dollars and a decrease of 37.6% from the previous year. Norway also ranked 47th among the countries exporting to the UAE so that it declines by 5 positions from the previous year (42th rank) with nearly 328 million U.S. dollars with a 5.3% decrease from the previous year. It ranked 107 to progress thus by 4 positions from the year 2008 of UAE's re-export to the country with a total value of 8.5 million U.S. dollars and a decrease of 5.2% from 2008. On the other hand, the UAE is considered the twenty-eighth partner in terms of Norwegian non-oil exports to the world with a percentage of 0.3%, and ranked 74th in terms of Norwegian imports from the world. The economic relations between the United Arab Emirates and Norway witnessed a steady development over the last past five years what was reflected on the volume of trade and investment between the two countries with a rise in the volume of trade from 77.9 million U.S. dollars in 2005 to 338.5 million U.S. dollars in 2009 with a growth rate of 334%.

KUWAIT

International Front

Kuwait denies reports it allowed Israelis into the country

Kuwait has denied reports that Israeli nationals have been allowed into the country and challenged those who support the allegation to present their evidence. "The reports that Israeli citizens using Israeli passports have been allowed into Kuwait are baseless and lack credibility," the interior ministry said. "Anyone seeking to visit Kuwait using a passport that has an Israeli stamp is barred from entering the country. Whoever has evidence about Israelis allowed into the country should present it to the relevant authorities to avoid confusion," the ministry said in a statement on Sunday evening. Last month, Eldad Beck, an Israeli journalist with Israel's daily Yedioth Aharonot said that he was able to enter several Arab and Muslim countries without revealing his identity. However, he did not mention Kuwait as one of the countries he visited. The journalist said that he hid his true identity by using a non-Israeli passport and strolled unnoticed in marketplaces and mosques and sat at several cafés. The interior ministry's denial came in the middle of a bitter standoff within Kuwaiti society over the merit of the participation of three Kuwaiti athletes in a world championship race in Poland alongside three Israeli runners. Several MPs have blamed the sports authorities for their participation, claiming that it was helping the normalization of ties with the "Zionist entity." However, sports officials said that they were not aware of the Israeli participation and did not receive instructions to withdraw. In another denial, the interior ministry said that media reports about shots fired at a Kuwaiti border patrol from Iraq were not true and insisted that relations between the two countries were "good and cordial." The Kuwaiti-Iraqi borders have been secure, and there is full cooperation between the border forces on maintaining security on both sides of the frontier, the ministry said.

Kuwaiti artist sparks furore over singing in Hebrew at local club

A Kuwaiti singer and composer has sparked a furore in Kuwait after she sang a song in Hebrew at a local club. Performing at the Alumni Club in Kuwait City, Emma Shah sang "Come ... Let us rejoice, be happy, enjoy" as part of a recital of anthropologist songs.

However, she was immediately accused of promoting Zionist ideas and of being used to push for normalisation of relations with Israel. Emma said that she was shocked by the negative reaction to a song that called for peace and co-existence. "The same song had been performed by Dalilda in French and in Hebrew. I just followed her example, and in fact, I knew the exact meaning of the words only after the negative reaction," she was quoted as saying in media reports.

Kuwait arrests Egyptians planning support group for Al Baradei

Manama Kuwait has arrested seven Egyptian expatriates for planning to set up an association to support Mohammad Al Baradei, the former head of the UN nuclear watchdog, and potential contender in the 2011 presidential elections in Egypt. Kuwaiti media on Saturday reported that security officials have prevented around 30 Egyptians from holding a meeting on Friday evening to launch a Kuwaiti branch of the newly formed National Association for Change, the formation seeking to build a consensus for constitutional amendments and change in the Egyptian political establishment. Under the current constitution, Al Baradei has to join a political party to run for president, an option that the 61-year-old former nuclear watchdog chief vehemently rejects. As an independent candidate, Al Baradei must have the endorsement of at least 250 elected officials including members from the upper and lower houses of parliament and municipal councils. "The police were aware of electronic messages sent by four Egyptians calling for a meeting at the beach front Sultan Restaurant in Salmiyah," Kuwaiti security sources said. "The police went to the restaurant and told around 30 Egyptians that the meeting could not proceed on the grounds that it was political activism and expatriates could not set up political associations. Eventually, seven from the group were transferred for investigation," the unnamed sources told Al Rai daily. The wife of one of the arrested said that the police came to her flat with her husband and asked for clothes. "They assured me that it was just a matter of routine investigations," she said, according to the paper. "They were very polite and behaved nicely. I know that my husband is innocent. He has been in Kuwait for seven years and has never been involved in any political activity. He just follows news on the Internet," she said.

Kuwait projects in Lebanon to help improve economy

Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development's projects in Lebanon are aimed at developing the infrastructure here, said the Fund's Director General Abdulwahab Al-Bader yesterday. Al-Bader said on the conclusion of his weeklong visit to Lebanon that the fund had contribute \$300 million in 45 projects in Lebanon, adding that the fund thoroughly follows up on projects here. Al-Bader said that his visit to the country had helped him to witness the opening of several projects, adding that the fund would continue its efforts in Lebanon. Meanwhile, Lebanese Socialist Progressive Party leader, MP Walid Jumblatt on Friday evening voiced his great appreciation of Kuwait's political and economic support for Lebanon. Jumblatt was speaking during a reception for a visiting delegation of KFAED officials, headed by Al-Bader, at Al-Mukhtara Palace in Mount Lebanon.

NATO, Kuwait agree on holding joint courses

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the State of Kuwait have reached an unprecedented agreement according to which the two sides would organize joint courses and Kuwaiti lecturers would educate NATO personnel on some regional issues. Lt Gen Wolf-Dieter Loeser, the head of the Nato Defense College (NDC), in a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Saturday, said NATO and a visiting Kuwaiti delegation, including heads of military academies chaired by Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Deputy Chief of the Kuwaiti National Security Apparatus, agreed on organizing several joint activities very soon. NATO officials agreed with Sheikh Thamer that Kuwait would dispatch more cadets to take part in special courses on the Middle East. The academy would send its 80 enlistees of several member states of the western organization to the Gulf country for follow-up courses on regional issues. He also expressed readiness to host academic lecturers from Kuwait and indicated at preparations for a week-long course to be held at the NATO academy headquarters. Such an unprecedented integrated workshop would certainly be beneficial for the NATO, he said. Lt Gen Loeser indicated at the necessity for joint cooperation between the NATO and allied states for action against global challenges, namely terrorism, spread of weapons of mass destruction, threats caused by "rogue states," energy security and combating cyber attacks and crimes. In line with the approach to face such global threats, the NATO has been involved in the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), with Kuwait, the UAE and Qatar, for cooperation on such issues, namely non-proliferation of nuclear arms, the Iranian nuclear file and the energy security, he said.

Political Front

Sectarian controversy over Abdalli border incident

A recent incident at the northern Abdalli border checkpoint has reignited fears of a resurgence in sectarianism, with MPs already disagreeing over the handling of the case. The incident began when a customs official searching a convoy of Shiites returning from a pilgrimage to Najaf in Iraq confiscated two books from the pilgrims, submitting them to the Ministry of Information. This led to three MPs intervening to demand that pilgrims not be subjected to such searches, with the situation calmed somewhat when finance minister Mustafa Al-Shamali stepped in to order that the two books be returned to their owners. The incident led to protests from the three MPs, Adnan Al-Mutawa, Faisal Al-Duwaisan and Saleh Al-Ashour, with Al-Mutawa insisting that the intensive search process which the travelers were subjected to was unnecessary, given that they were returning from a pilgrimage. Al-Mutawa said that while he acknowledged the importance of the customs officials' efforts to protect Kuwait from efforts to smuggle illegal goods into the country, the officers should refrain from imprudent actions such as subjecting pilgrims to searches since these could cause sectarian antagonism to resurface. Other MPs, however, complained that the intervention of parliamentarians and a minister in the incident was an illegal attempt to circumvent the law. MP Mohammad Hayef expressed disappointment in his parliamentary colleagues' intervention, saying that they had abused their position to put pressure on state officials in order to overrule the decision to send the books for inspection in direct contradiction of the customs legislation on such incidents, reported Al-Watan. Another MP, Jamaan Al-Harbish said that the MPs' and minister's

actions in this case were an unacceptable breach of the regulations, strongly criticizing the minister for preventing the customs officials from carrying out their duties properly in the correct legal manner. Hussein Al-Qallaf, the head of the group of pilgrims, accused the customs official who seized the books of breaking the law and damaging national unity, saying that the officer had insisted on carrying out the search and confiscating the two books despite receiving assurances that the pilgrims had complied with all the regulations and the books did not contain any controversial material.

Bid to empower women in law field

Kuwaiti and Arab women have been trying for five years to increase the number of female law figures who hold decision making posts. The Arab Women's Legal Network (AWLN) was launched in Jordan in 2010 with the participation of 16 Arab countries including Kuwait to exchange expertise and information. Head of AWLN Judge Ihsan Barakat of Jordan said that the network increases cooperation among Arab legal figures and supports them. AWLN supervises professional development programs for women in the law field in the Arab world, she said. Kuwait took part in the network's establishing ceremony that was held in 2005, she said, adding that Kuwait is represented at AWLN by Fatma Al-Khalifa. On April 14, the network will hold a lecture that will be given by Dr Mashael Al-Hajri of Kuwait University, she pointed out. AWLN is led by a council of six members from Jordan, Bahrain, Libya, Algeria, Palestine, and Yemen, she noted. AWLN's member countries are Kuwait, Algeria, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. The network has 500 members from 18 Arab countries.

Ministers fall out over naturalization list

A disagreement has arisen between the Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister of Defense Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, and the Minister of Interior Sheikh Jaber Al-Khalid Al-Sabah, regarding the naturalization of a number of Bedoon military personnel, according to reports. The dispute began after the Ministry of Defense (MoD) had prepared a list of 300 Bedoon servicemen and finalized all the procedures for them to be granted Kuwaiti citizenship. After this was submitted to the interior minister, however, he insisted that all the cases should be reassessed individually, supporting his recent statements to the press in which he indicated that he alone can make final decisions on any case of naturalization. On hearing about Sheikh Jaber Al-Khalid's decision, Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak reportedly expressed some irritation, pointing out that as well as being defense minister, he chairs the Supreme Committee on Citizenship, which he said has the final word in all citizenship-related issues. The MoD has made it known that it regards the interior minister's decision to reassess the files as an insult to the integrity of the intelligence services and senior military officers who drew up the list, since it indicates that Sheikh Jaber Al-Khalid does not trust those officials. A senior MoD official asserted that all those included on the aforementioned naturalization list are wholly worthy of Kuwaiti citizenship, pointing out that some of them fought in Kuwait's liberation war of 1990-91, while others fought in the 1967 and 1973 Arab wars.

Kuwaiti lawyers call for major judicial reforms

Kuwaiti lawyers have called for a number of major judicial reforms in the country. Among the most important and necessary reforms, they said, are the unification of different bodies' prosecution departments, and adopting legislation allowing complainants to bring lawsuits against judges. The lawyers made their calls during a seminar held at the Kuwait Bar Association's headquarters on Tuesday evening, with the high-level participants including academic experts, lawyers and a visiting delegation from Egypt's supreme judicial committee. Kuwaiti lawyer Bassem Al-Muthaffar said that Kuwait's current legal system contains numerous inconsistencies, with many parts of it needing to be reconsidered. Currently, there are no standardized procedures for the recognition of lawyers," he said. "We suggest adding a certification examination that law school graduates should pass before being allowed to practice law. Al-Muthaffar also criticized the fact that at present, there is no legislation giving a court the right to estimate lawyers' fees, as well as no clear policy on the issue of law school professors practicing law outside university. Ubaid Al-Wasmi, a Kuwait University professor of procedural law said that any legal reform intended to fight corruption must start by making the right reforms to the judicial authority. One of the most important reforms is to unite the different prosecution bodies and departments, he asserted. Currently, misdemeanors are handled by the Ministry of Interior, while felonies are handled by the Ministry of Justice," he said. Al-Wasmi asserted that this is not only unfair on prosecutors who are doing the same job under two different authorities and with different degrees, but can also compromise the independence of judicial system. In the meantime, the KU professor cautioned that some individuals go to far when considering providing more independence for the judicial system. "There are some suggestions that are said to be aimed at providing more independence for the judicial system, that sound more like a draft of a constitution for an independent country," he said.

Social Front

Controversial Kuwaiti TV channel could be back on air soon

A television channel owner at the centre of a bitter controversy in Kuwait has vowed to broadcast from a new provider after the information ministry had taken his station off Noor Sat. "Al Sour Television will be back on air within two days," Mohammad Juwaihah said. "The information ministry convinced Noor Sat to suspend our subscription by sending a delegation that pledged to pay the compensation costs for the cancellation of our contract, but we have other ways to reach out to the people," he was quoted as saying in Kuwaiti media reports. Juwaihah, a former parliamentary candidate, sparked uproar in Kuwait last year after Al Sour (The Wall) beamed a talk show in which hosts allegedly denigrated Bedouins living in Kuwait and accused them of breaking the law by holding dual citizenship. Angry tribesmen who make up about half of Kuwait's native population and members of parliament staged several rallies. The government took the station off the air and launched legal procedures against Juwaihah for allegedly eroding national unity. However, the pressure on the government continued unabated and the information minister was eventually grilled and made to face a no-confidence vote after 10 MPs filed a motion. The minister survived the motion by only one vote, but pledged to keep a vigilant eye on controversial media, including Al Sour. However, Juwaihah criticized the information ministry for claiming that Al Sour TV was a threat to national unity and

social cohesion. "Is broadcasting patriotic songs a cause of social division? Or do such songs hurt the feelings of those who have dual citizenship? I am afraid there are people within the information ministry who are hypersensitive and the minister had better not listen to them," he said.

Chinese man arrested in Kuwait for '34 bogus wives'

A Chinese man is in Kuwaiti police custody after he used forged marriage contracts to bring in 34 bogus wives into the country. The man was arrested after an immigration official had doubts about his frequent visits to the immigration office to get entry visas. Following an investigation, officers discovered that the Chinese national had submitted 34 requests for family reunion, presenting every time a fake marriage contract to allow the "bogus" wife to stay in Kuwait for three months. He later confessed that he took 1,500 Kuwaiti dinars (\$5,200) from each of the women for the visit visa. Once inside the country, every "wife" was taken to a flat in Kuwait City where she was hosted. An accomplice said that the women left early in the morning and went back to the flat late in the evening and that most of them earned money working as masseuses and prostitutes. The accomplice and nine girls were also arrested. Last week, officers from the Immigration General Department arrested the Section Head of Jahra Immigration Department for assisting a GCC national owning a bogus company and his Egyptian representative with visa trafficking. The suspects reportedly transferred visit visas to work permit for KD 1200 and completed 54 transactions in one month with the help of the immigration officer.

Jihad on Israelis 'duty' of every Muslim: Al-Nashim

A prominent Muslim theologian has stated that declaring jihad (defensive holy war) against the Israelis is the duty of every Muslim, while supporting the sacred Al-Aqsa Mosque is the duty of leaders, as well as ordinary Muslims. Dr. Ajeel Al-Nashim, the chairman of the Shariat Scholars' Society in GCC States, told local daily Al-Anba that the Western wall of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the ground in front of it is the sole property of Muslims. While this has been internationally agreed, he said, the Israelis continue to pay no attention to international law whenever it is not in their favor. Al-Nashim emphasized that all Muslims, both leaders and ordinary members of the public, are responsible for protecting Al-Aqsa Mosque, adding that doing so is not only the concern of Palestinians or the people of Jerusalem. Using political, diplomatic and commercial pressure, the threat of oil embargoes and a refusal to accept the Middle East Peace Initiative are duties for all Muslims, said the distinguished theologian and scholar, adding that Israel aims to destroy Al-Aqsa Mosque and build a Jewish temple on the site in order to ensure that Jerusalem becomes an exclusively Jewish city. Asked about the need for jihad in occupied lands, such as Palestine, Al-Nashim said that waging jihad alongside the Palestinians is an obligatory duty on all Muslims, whether through arms, money, political activism or other forms of support. According to Islamic theology, he explained, jihad can be declared by some Muslims on behalf of the Muslim Ummah if these individuals are capable of facing and defeating the enemy on their own without the need for involving others. If one woman in a Muslim state came under attack, for instance, all Muslims would be compelled to defend and support her. In Islamic lands, all Muslims, wherever they originally came from, have the right to be there, while the distance

between any Muslim's nation of origin and a Muslim country under occupation is no excuse for their not joining the jihad to defend the latter nation in whatever way they can do so. All Muslims are obliged to provide whatever support they are able to depending on their own circumstances.

'Only 90,000 bedoons in Kuwait'

The numbers of people in Kuwait registered as bedoon (stateless) residents has been sharply revised downwards, with a parliamentary official stating that the number has fallen to 90,000 from the 250,000 recorded before the 1990 Iraqi invasion. The official claimed that around two-thirds of the previous bedoon residents had fled to their home countries during or after the invasion, with a further 30,000 who remained receiving Kuwaiti or other citizenship after the country's liberation. Another parliamentary insider accused the government of failing to detect bedoon residents' name changes after neglecting to observe the correct procedures to check the civil status of bedoons applying to join the military, only focusing on their criminal records.

New English syllabus indicates 'openness'

Kuwaiti Minister of Education and of Higher Education Moudhi Al-Humoud said on Sunday that the updated English syllabus being taught in Kuwaiti schools indicated the country's increased "openness" to the rest of the world. Speaking to journalists while opening the second 'For Creativity' festival which celebrates the English language, the minister praised the joint efforts of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Education Zone and the ministry's department of general guidance in the English language. The minister said that the festival showcased the creativity of kindergarten and high school students, including their mastery of the English language and consideration of others' feelings, adding, "This really indicates a positive openness to the world. The Director of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Zone Badriya Al-Khaldi said that supporting talented students is one of the Ministry of Education's (MoE) primary objectives, given that these students represent the future of society. Another of the senior officials present, Sakina Ali, the director of the MoE's department for general guidance in the English language, stressed that the second "For Creativity" festival reflects the ministry's eagerness to develop students' abilities and talents in order to enable them to become active members of society.

Development plans await implementation

Indications suggest that Kuwait's state bodies are still not ready to effectively implement the government's development plan, according to local experts. The most recent demonstration of this lack of preparation was a recent massive accidental disconnection of landlines, with the Ministry of Communications (MoC) failing to act to prevent this from taking place, with the Ministry of Social and Labor (MSAL) also experiencing major problems with the introduction of the computerized system there, which has caused substantial setbacks in the already-slow work rate. Many service users say that poor planning and coordination are the norm at the ministry's labor offices in the Capital, Jahra and Farwaniya governorates, with frustration at bureaucratic incompetence and lengthy, fruitless queuing being widespread, reported Al-Qabas. Users of the labor offices' services also said that many of the staff in them leave long before the end of the work day, resulting in the long-suffering clients waiting for hours in lengthy queues for

transactions to be completed by the overworked remaining staff. Clients also expressed their frustration at the labor offices' failure to complete simple transactions the same day, despite the introduction of the computerized system.

Environment Front

Ignoring ban, people frequent beaches

The sea front that extends from Salmiya to Fintas was polluted as a result of the Mishref sewage plant leak that took place last year. Official authorities have prohibited swimming and fishing in this area. Also, environmental organizations warned the public against taking up activities, even consuming local fish. Although several months have passed, the sewage station has not been completely restored. Pollution continues to persist and the ban has not been lifted. Most Arabic and English local dailies have reported extensively on this environmental issue. The Anjifa beach is the most polluted in the area, as it lies in close proximity to Mishref . Foul smell emanates from the area, especially when water is contaminated, lending it a brownish hue. A large red sign board warns people against swimming or fishing in this area. However, few have been paying heed to it. Visitors flock to the area even before the onset of summer. During the past weekend, several Arab men and women were seen swimming and fishing here. Some children were also seen swimming in this polluted water. Seemingly, people do not realize the potential dangers the area poses to human health. The Ministry of Health has issued warnings against the dangers of pollution which may lead to many serious infections and diseases. Also, environmental organizations have come forward to spread awareness.

Waste Management Conference tackles environmental issues

Environmental issues, especially pollution, is among the most-debated topics in the country. The third Kuwait Waste Management Conference and Exhibition addresses common problems. The ongoing event is being held from April 6-8 at the Radisson BLU Hotel, Al Hashimi ballroom, under the patronage of Minister of Public Works and State Minister for Municipality Affairs Dr Fadhel Safar. Perplexing environmental problems were caused by large-scale industrial development and the needs of comfort and entertainment. These needs have resulted in an increase of the earth's temperature and also cause various previously unknown diseases that are caused as a result of air, water, and soil pollution. It's time for human beings to make peace with the environment," said Minister Dr Fadhel Safar during the conference's launch yesterday. In the past, people lived in a safer environment. "The water, air, and land were all clean in the past, when our forefathers had to only meet the needs of water, food, and safety. With the advancement in technology, agriculture lands have shifted, huge factories were set up, high buildings, running trains, cars, and planes. The world has turned into a smoke ball, and human beings are inhaling polluted air and diseases instead of clean, fresh air," he added. People weren't aware of the danger of pollution on environment until this century. "Environment pollution has turned into an international problem. Even developed countries suffer from industry-induced pollution, including nuclear pollution and smoke emitted from factories. Also, developing countries are severely polluted as a result of the

overuse of industrial and technical machines and the waste it caused. One person causes a wastage that amounts to 1.4 kilograms in Kuwait," Safar pointed out.

Economic Front

Kuwait records KD6bn budgetary surplus

Kuwait recorded a KD 6 billion budgetary surplus in 2009, according to the government's newly released figures. Despite the finance minister's efforts last year to increase Kuwait's non-oil revenue, however, the statistics show that the income from these sources came to no more than six percent of the total state revenue, with 94 percent of the income coming from oil. Finance minister Mustafa Al-Shamali is scheduled to review the 2009/2010 budget during today's weekly cabinet meeting, including the value of revenues, expenses and surpluses. In the meantime, the cabinet is set to launch the preliminary stages of the recently announced development plan, beginning by reviewing a report regarding the progress of work, reported Al-Watan. Today's meeting will also feature discussion of all the legal and financial legislation that the parliament needs to adopt, while commerce minister Ahmad Al-Haroun is to present two reports, one regarding the measures taken to combat price increases and the other on the ministry's adherence to the rules and regulations governing it.

Oil and Gas

Price of Kuwaiti crude oil reached \$ 81.07 per barrel (pb) on Tuesday, April 6, an increase of \$ 3.89 per barrel compared to a week earlier, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said. The hike in crude prices this week comes on the heels of announcement of data in the US indicating increase in new jobs, which means an easing of the global financial crisis and a certain level of recovery which would revive demand. Member countries of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) aim to keep oil prices between \$ 70-\$ 80 pb to achieve balance between the interests of producers, who need continuous funding for developing and exploring new oil fields, and consumers, who suffer from great economic decline due to the economic crisis. Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) is planning to execute a project to install 31 oil wells at a cost of KD75mn in the Al-Manaqeesh and Om Qadeer oilfields. KOC is planning to dig 20 oil wells in the Al-Manaqeesh field in the west of Kuwait, in addition to the collection pipelines. The project has an estimated cost of KD54mn. As for the Om Al-Qadeer oilfield, also in the west of Kuwait KOC will dig 11 other well with accompanying collection pipelines at a cost of KD21mn.

BAHRAIN

International Front

Palestinian envoy urges Bahrain to go ahead with football match in Palestine

The Palestinian ambassador to Bahrain has urged the local sports authorities and the national football team to go ahead with a match scheduled for May 28 in Palestine, assuring them that they would not deal with Israelis and that their passports would not be

stamped by Israel. "Media reports claiming that the Bahraini passports would have the Israeli stamps are not true," Ahmad Ramadan said. "The Israelis will have nothing to do with the Bahraini team, particularly that the football match will be held under the auspices of FIFA, the international football federation, and Israel will not take the risk of a standoff with them," he said. An intense debate over the merit of the football match in Palestine has gripped Bahrain, particularly after four players have published statements saying that the game was a form of normalization with the "Zionist entity" and "did not want to play any role in it." An anti-Israel society, several columnists and MPs supported them and called upon the Bahraini authorities to dismiss the game or, as a second option, hold it either in "liberated Gaza" or in Manama. However, the Palestinian envoy said that he was "shocked by the inaccurate premises" upon which several people developed their positions against the match. "We were not pleased with the reports in the local media about the game. Even if we assume there were good intentions in the published statements, we must stress that they are not based on facts surrounding the game," the ambassador said. "We wish that that people stop producing subjective and biased analyses based on speculations and not on facts."

Envoy assures players that passports will not be stamped by Israel

The Palestinian ambassador to Bahrain has urged the local sports authorities and the national soccer team to go ahead with a match scheduled for May 28 in Palestine, assuring them that they will not have to deal with Israelis and their passports will not be stamped by Israel. "Media reports claiming that Bahraini passports will have the Israeli stamps are not true," Ahmad Ramadan said. "The Israelis will have nothing to do with the Bahraini team, particularly that the football match will be held under the auspices of Fifa, the international football federation, and Israel will not take the risk of a standoff with them," he said. An intense debate over the merit of the soccer match in Palestine has gripped Bahrain, particularly after four players published statements saying that the game was a form of normalisation of ties with the "Zionist entity" and they "did not want to play any role in it." An anti-Israel society, several columnists and MPs supported them and called upon the Bahraini authorities to dismiss the game or, as a second option, hold it either in "liberated Gaza" or in Manama.

Bahrain MPs call for cancellation of match in Palestine

Bahrain's parliament has ignored a plea by the Palestinian ambassador to go ahead with a match scheduled for May 28 in Palestine and called for its cancellation. "We do not want the national team to travel to play the game and have their passports stamped by the Israelis," the lower chamber said. "That would be a form of normalisation that we utterly reject." Ibrahim Bu Sandal, MP representing Al Asala, said that allowing the Bahraini players to go through the Israeli border procedures would be recognising the "Zionist entity." "We do not recognise Israel and having the Bahraini players and sports officials go through Israeli procedures and receive their approval means that we recognise and accept their existence," he said. Several other MPs and societies have opposed the match in Palestine and called upon the Bahraini authorities to dismiss it or, as a second option, hold it either in "liberated Gaza" or in Manama. Ahmad Ramadan, the Palestinian envoy in Manama, had pleaded with the Bahraini authorities to go ahead with the game and told those who said that Bahraini passports would be stamped by Israel to correct their

information. "We are not pleased with the reports in the local media about the game. Even if we assume there were good intentions in the published statements, we must stress that they are not based on facts surrounding the game," the ambassador said. "We wish people would stop producing subjective and biased analyses based on speculations and not on facts." For instance, the game will not be held in occupied Jerusalem, but in Al Ram, the ambassador said. The stadium at Al Ram near Ramallah was inaugurated in October 2008 when Palestine hosted its first international match at home since becoming affiliated to Fifa in 1998.

Bahrain lawmakers say no to game in Palestine

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Palestinian envoy in Manama under fire for encouraging Bahrainis to play in Palestine

The Palestinian ambassador to Bahrain is under fire for urging the local authorities to go ahead with a football match next month in Palestine. "We are shocked that while our people are suffering from the onslaught of those who promote normalisation of ties with the Zionist enemy, the Palestinian ambassador adds fuel to the fire by claiming that the planned football match is not a form of establishing contact with the Zionists," Abdullah Abdul Malek, the spokesperson for the Bahraini Society for Resisting Normalisation with the Zionist Enemy, said. "The ambassador has the right to remain committed to the policies promoted by the Palestinian National Authority, but he has no right to promote any form of normalisation to Arabs in general and to Bahrainis in particular," he said in a statement on Saturday. All entry points into Palestine, except that of Rafah, are controlled by "Zionists" and none can enter without their approval and inspection, Abdullah said. "In all cases, the issue is not just stamps, but the very visit to occupied Palestine with the approval of the Zionists. The Zionist entity has been pushing hard for Arab delegations to use those entry and exit points to reinforce the culture of accepting its existence," the spokesperson said. Several activists, MPs and players have objected to the friendly between Bahrain and Palestine on May 28 on the grounds that "it amounted to a form of normalisation with the Zionist entity" and that "the Bahraini passports would have the Israeli border police stamps." Several Arab countries do not allow visitors with passports carrying the Israeli stamp.

Social Front

Higher Education Council to hand out 355 'controversial' degrees

Bahrain's Higher Education Council on Monday endorsed 355 "controversial" private university degrees upon a request from the prime minister. The accreditation puts an end to a long standoff between the universities and the council following claims of irregularities in the attribution of the credits. The council has accused some of the 17 private universities of granting degrees without students fulfilling all the requirements

and following a long probe, it transferred more than 360 diplomas to the public prosecution for further investigation. However, the prosecutor said that it had doubts about only 33 degrees. Disgruntled students, mainly from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, said they wanted to receive their degrees to take up jobs or secure higher positions and that they should not be involved in the bitter standoff between the council and the universities. Some of them formed a Facebook group to press for their rights. On Sunday, Prime Minister Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa requested the council to make an exception and hand out the degrees in a gesture that would put an end to the students' concerns and woes.

Local news on BlackBerry banned in Bahrain

Bahrain is imposing a ban on BlackBerry sharing of local news, saying that users needed an official licence. Abdullah Yateem, the culture and information ministry assistant undersecretary for press and publication, said that the decision was taken to avoid confusion and chaos. "News about incidents and other issues was disseminated in Bahrain through mobile phones and some newspapers over the last few days," Yateem said. "In view of the chaos and confusion caused by such news among the public, especially since the source is individuals and groups that did not have official permission from the ministry, we have summoned those individuals and informed them that we will be taking legal action against the offenders who broke the regulations and laws," Yateem was quoted as saying by the official Bahrain News Agency (BNA) on Wednesday evening. An immediate result of the ministry's action was the suspension of daily news provided by "Breaking News", started by Muhannad Sulaiman, a Bahraini journalist, to more than 13,000 BlackBerry subscribers. A daily feature provided for free by Breaking News was a 6am summary of the front pages of the six daily newspapers.

OMAN

Social Front

Call to safeguard against fire outbreaks in Oman

With the onset of summer, Oman's Civil Defence authorities are urging people to be vigilant against fire mishaps that claimed a total of 53 lives during 2009. Electrical short-circuiting was the principal culprit behind roughly a third of all fire incidents reported across the sultanate last year, totalling 2946 cases, according to statistics released on Sunday. Leaking cooking gas cylinders, negligent disposal of burning cigarette butts, and igniting cars, also contributed to significant fire mishaps last year. The populous Batinah region of the sultanate, one of the country's fastest growing industrial zones, accounted for a disproportionately high volume of the fire mishaps. The province of Sohar, home to the country's biggest industrial port and a major free zone, gained top billing as the most fire-prone in the sultanate with a total of 475 cases. Significantly, authorities also reported a dramatic drop in the number of arson cases involving the use of flammable fuels last 2009. Arson attacks slumped from a record 987 cases in 2008 to a mere 28 incidents last year, a fall attributed to an intensified crackdown against arsonists by the Royal Oman Police.

Oman unveils cyber-security outfit

Oman unveiled on Sunday a new cyber-security agency tasked with defending the nation's rapidly expanding IT and e-governance infrastructure from criminal attack. The outfit, dubbed the 'Oman National Computer Emergency Readiness Team (OCERT)', has been established at Knowledge Oasis Muscat, a dedicated Information Technology Park set up at Rusayl on the outskirts of the capital. Underscoring the significance of its establishment, top government officials attended its opening, including Lt. General Malik bin Sulaiman al Maamari, Inspector General of Police and Customs, Mohammed bin Nasser al Khusaibi, Secretary-General of the National Economy Ministry, and Dr. Salim bin Sultan al Ruzaiqi, CEO of the Information Technology Authority (ITA). Speaking at the event, Lt. General Al Maamari described OCERT as a key building block in the nation's e-governance strategy. It will also serve as a command-and-control centre from where cyber threats will be dealt with, online risks mitigated, and safety advisories issued to public and private sector organizations, as well as the general public.

Experts in Gulf discuss strategy to combat red tide

Marine experts from Oman and the Gulf region on Monday began three days of deliberations aimed at hammering out a strategy to deal with periodic outbreaks of toxic algal blooms or red tide in Oman's coast. The forum, under way at Sultan Qaboos University, has been organised by Oman's Ministry of Fisheries in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs. Scientists and researchers from Iran and the Regional Organisation for Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME) are also taking part in the seminar. Although red tide outbreaks are a natural occurrence along the Arabian coast, Oman has been hit particularly hard by the phenomenon in recent years. An occurrence of toxic algal blooms that first broke out in November 2008 dragged on for several months, menacing much of Oman's northern and eastern coastline during the early part of last year. The blooms, triggered by a phytoplankton called *Cochlodinium polykrikoide* were responsible for incidents of fish mortality and a pervasive foul odour that drove away swimmers and strollers from several beachfront hotspots along the coast.

Oman police bust Asian visa racket gang

The Royal Oman Police have caught a gang of visa racketeers who allegedly obtained residency visas, which are mandatory for foreign workers, through fraudulent means. The 10-member gang of Asians was arrested from the central desert region of Al Wusta, the local Al Watan Arabic daily quoted police as saying. They were accused of forging passports, as well as the official seals and forms of the ministries of Manpower and Health – whose permits are an essential prerequisite for expatriates seeking residency visas to work or reside in the Sultanate. Police raided the gang's hideout in Hamriyah in Muscat and seized computers, forging accessories, and other incriminating material used by the gang, the newspaper said. The group has been handed over to the Public Prosecution pending their trial in a Muscat criminal court, the report added. The arrests come as Oman's government intensifies a crackdown against expatriates continuing to live and work in the sultanate on expired visas or without proper documentation. Last week, the Ministry of Manpower announced a two-month extension in its general amnesty for so-called 'overstaying expatriates', enabling them to seek exit permits to leave the country without having to pay hefty fines or suffer prison terms.

During the 2003 Census, Oman became the first country in the world to introduce Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) for data collection

A landmark count of Oman's population will be held in December, the government announced through a Royal Decree proclamation here on Tuesday. The general census of the population, residential buildings and commercial establishments was originally scheduled to be held during April, but was postponed to enable a more efficient and accurate count, officials said. The mammoth exercise, which is only the third major census in Oman's modern history, will be conducted over a 10-day period during December. Overseeing this undertaking is the Directorate General of Statistics at the Ministry of National Economy, which is mobilising an army of enumerators, crew leaders, supervisors and other field staff, for the count. In a significant departure from the last general census in 2003, this year's count will be a completely high-tech affair. Satellite imaging and Geographical Information System (GIS) technology have been employed to map out villages and towns across the breadth of the sultanate ahead of the count. Enumerators will be armed with hand-held computers, hooked by wireless to a central server in the capital, when they fan out across the country later this year. During the 2003 Census, Oman became the first country in the world to introduce Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) for data collection in place of traditional paper questionnaires.

Doha to host Arab and non-Arab cultural weeks

Doha, the 2010 Arab culture capital, will host Arab and non-Arab cultural weeks in the next three months, the culture, arts and heritage minister has said. "We are not alone and we live with others. The world is a mixture of cultures and we want to appreciate that," Hamad bin Abdul Aziz Al Kuwari said at a press conference to review the assessment of the first three months of the year and talk about the second quarter of the "Doha, Capital of Arab Culture 2010" festival. "One thing we learned for instance is that we should not have more than one cultural activity in one day. "We will be holding one event per day, unlike in the first quarter. When we held more than one per day, many events attracted audiences at the expense of others." The festival organizers will also launch a different type of media campaign in the second quarter of the cultural celebration to attract more audience to the events, he said. Under an agreement with Qtel, the telecoms company will send 10,000 random text messages per day, in addition to the 3,000 listed individuals, while the dedicated website will offer more services to all users. All the events will be promoted on billboards. "We will also advertise in malls and cinemas and we will be holding some of the events in the malls, during the hot summer months," the minister was quoted as saying by Qatari daily Gulf Times.

QATAR

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Women expatriates in Qatar can now sponsor their husbands and children

Women expatriates on independent work visas can now sponsor their husbands and children, Qatari media reported on Wednesday. "The new sponsorship law allows women workers to sponsor their families. Earlier, only female expatriate working for Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and the Ministry of Education were allowed to sponsor their families," a senior labour official was quoted as saying by Qatari daily The Peninsula. However, the new privilege is extended to women working in the private sector as well to those who have independent work visas who earn a monthly salary of at least QR7,000 (\$1,920). The minimum salary clause does not apply to government employees who are provided with family accommodation. According to the unnamed labour officials, the minimum salary may be reviewed based on living costs. Activists from Qatar's National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) have often called for the amendment of the law regulating the sponsorship system to help put an end to arbitrary practices by some employers. Dr Ali Al Marri, NHRC secretary general, said that the committee persistently called for changing the current sponsorship system to make it more respectful of human rights. The sponsorship system has invariably come under harsh criticism, with Bahrain's labour minister calling it a form of modern-day slavery. While supporters say that the system is an effective form of immigration control, opponents say that its rules and regulations are so strict that the employers fully rule the employees and dictate their movements.

Qatar is drafting new media law

Qatar is drafting a new media law that will cover all forms of information dissemination, the minister of culture, arts and heritage has said. "The information sector in Qatar has seen great changes and is no longer confined to traditional media," Hamad Al Kawari said. "Today, it includes electronic media and other modern ways of communication, so there is a need to draft a new media law that regulates all aspects of information dissemination," the minister said in London. The new legislation that will supplant the 1979 law will be a milestone for freedom of the press and expression in the Arabian Gulf state. "The new law will provide legislative protection for freedom of expression in Qatar. The law will be the only arbitrator in all cases," he said. Al Kawari said there was no censorship of information in general in Qatar after it was officially abolished in 1997 and that "restrictions existed in only very exceptional cases". Qatar in 1998 made history

in the Arab world by taking the unprecedented step of abolishing the information ministry, established in 1972.

Visa on arrival ended for US and UK visitors

Qatar has revised its visa-on-arrival scheme, making it mandatory for British and US citizens to obtain entry visas before travelling to Doha. Nationals from countries that do not offer Qataris a visa upon arrival will have to apply for visas to enter Doha, Qatari media reported. The new visa regime will be applied from May 1. No reason was given for the change in regulations or the insistence for the reciprocity principle.

Oil and Gas

Qatalum plant to be launched tomorrow

Qatar Aluminium (Qatalum), the world's most efficient and environmentally friendly aluminium smelting plant, will be launched during a historic ceremony tomorrow in Mesaieed Industrial City. The event under the auspices and presence of the Emir, H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, will be attended by Prince Haakon Magnus of Norway, along with other dignitaries from Qatar, Norway and abroad. Qatalum is positioning Qatar at the forefront of the global aluminium industry with among the lowest operating costs in the business and strategic market access. Qatalum's product Casthouse, the largest of its kind in the world, will have an output of 585,000 tonnes of premium-quality aluminium products per annum once fully operational. "Qatalum was established as a long-term investment Qatar in realisation of the strategy set by the Emir for the optimal utilisation of the country's natural resources," said Abdulla Salatt, Chairman on the Qatalum Board of Directors and Senior Advisor to the Deputy Premier, Minister of Energy and Industry. "Our competitive advantages in the global aluminium industry will allow us to withstand market conditions that might put other producers out of business. Many major industries depend on a steady supply of aluminium and we are confident that Qatalum is leading an industry that will prove very profitable for the country in the long term." The Qatalum plant is expected to be fully operational in 2010, with a design capacity to produce 585,000 tonnes of aluminium products every year. The plant's main products will be extrusion ingots and foundry alloys, although the Casthouse will also be capable of producing standard primary ingots. These value-added aluminium products can be used in an unlimited variety of manufacturing applications and products in building and construction, transportation, general engineering, household durables, leisure and more. Most of these products are also fully recyclable and their aluminium content can be reused endlessly.