

**BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD  
GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL  
NEWS MONITORING REPORT**

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**1<sup>st</sup> May- 7<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

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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.

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- **Joint efforts needed to tackle terrorism: GCC secretary**
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## **SUMMARY**

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Interior Ministers ended here their 11th consultative session on Wednesday headed by Kuwaiti Minister Sheikh Jaber Khaled Al-Sabah (ret.), and also attended by the Secretary General Abdulrahman Al-Attiyah. In a closing joint press statement, the ministers welcomed the return to normality on the bordering region between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, stressing their support of the procedures taken by Saudi authorities in the defence of its lands and stability, and the security of its people as well as those of Yemen. The ministers praised Saudi security forces and their continued successes, which were able to detect terrorist cells and foil their attempts to undermine the security and stability of Saudi Arabia. The ministers furthermore hailed the security forces of the United Arab Emirates, represented by the Dubai police force, for their

successful investigation of the assassination of Palestinian Hamas leader Mahmoud Al-Mabhouh, and the pursuit of those responsible, who breached international laws and conventions. The statement also stated appreciation of Bahraini efforts to develop the GCC, represented in its security strategy presented at the 30th GCC Higher Council session. Ministers of interior from the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) pledged on Wednesday to work together to tackle terrorism, money laundering and organized crime.

“The move to step up security and stability, as discussed by the interior ministers, requires coordination between all nations in the region,” GCC Secretary-General Abdul Rahman Al-Attiyah said after a ministerial meeting in Riyadh. “Gulf states are facing serious challenges in the forms of terrorism and organized crime that call for increased vigilance and intelligence sharing.” The ministers, who were attending the consultative meeting, discussed a whole range of security issues currently confronting the Gulf region, as well as plans and policies to tackle terror cells, drug traffickers, pirates and swindlers. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas who arrived in the Saudi capital on Tuesday starting an official visit held talks shortly after arrival with King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz on regional affairs, it was officially announced. The talks dealt with the Middle East peace process and the efforts that have been exerted at various levels to ensure rights of the Palestinian people namely establishment of an independent state on their national territories, the official Saudi Press Agency said. Visiting Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal held talks on Saturday with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in the resort of Sharm El-Sheikh, a political source said. The source told KUNA the foreign minister would hand over a message from Saudi King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz to President Hosni Mubarak related to issues of joint interest. The talks deal with regional affairs, a meeting of the Arab follow-up committee for the Arab peace initiative due later today at the headquarters of the Arab League to discuss efforts for resuming peace talks between the Israelis and Palestinians. Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed stressed on Tuesday that the UAE supports the development of peaceful uses of nuclear energy as a right of every state party to the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty. However, he emphasised that the development of peaceful nuclear energy should be conducted in a responsible manner. Sheikh Abdullah, who heads the UAE delegation to New York, was addressing The General Debate of the 2010 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty. "States with nuclear capabilities are obligated to assist non-nuclear states in developing peaceful uses of nuclear energy," he said. The relationship between Kuwait and Morocco is "excellent," and is constantly developing under the sound guidance of the leaders of the two countries, said Kuwait's Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah yesterday. In a statement upon arrival here on a three-day official visit, Sheikh Mohammed said that the two countries constantly held political deliberations and coordinated efforts and stances over issues of mutual concern. He said that his visit to Morocco came to exchange views over current Arab and international issues. Sheikh Mohammed said that prominent issues that would feature in Kuwaiti-Moroccan talks include Middle East peace, as well as nuclear issues given the just concluded Nuclear Non-Proliferation (NPT) conference in New York. The regional workshop on 'Enhancing International Cooperation in the Field of Combating Terrorism' will start today at the Grand Regency Hotel. The workshop, organised by the National Committee for

Combating Terrorism in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is held under the patronage of Minister of State for Interior Affairs and Head of National Committee for Combating Terrorism H E Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani. The objective of this workshop is introducing the representatives of the concerned bodies in the GCC and Arab countries the mechanisms of international cooperation prescribed in the universal legal instruments for combating terrorism and the role of Interpol in enhancing the procedures of combating terrorism at international level.

The Ministry of Labour has implemented new mechanism to solve workers' complaints and problems by introducing disputes settlement system, known as Natawasal. Disputes and complaints will be examined and solved within three days from the date of being lodged and registered at the Labour Relations Department. "The move follows the Ministry finding that most of the cases are not based on real or significant reasons, but rather crop up due to misunderstanding or casual reactions between the two parties," said Humaid Rashid bin Deemas, Acting Director-General of the Ministry of Labour at a ceremony held here on Monday for the opening the new headquarters of the Labour Relations Department. The opening ceremony was attended by Qasim Jameel, director of the Department, and CEO for support services at the Ministry, Dr Aysha bin Bishr. A senior official on the issue of statelessness in the NGO Refugees International (RI) said that the Kuwait government is moving backward on resolving the country's bedoon issue. The statement was made during a special interview to Kuwait Times upon the completion of their recent assessment of Kuwait. There have been some changes over the three years that I have been following the issue of stateless people in Kuwait," said Maureen Lynch, senior advocate on stateless initiatives in RI. "One of the things that are becoming clearer during this visit is that over time bedoon individuals themselves are beginning to become a little more willing to behave in a bolder manner, to speak out on their own behalf, and this is a positive step in the right direction," she added. The advocate said that another positive change is that the Kuwaiti government is listening to the voices of bedoons. "Maybe they are not responding to the degree that we would like to see, but there is some listening that is taking place," she explained. Prince Khaled Al-Faisal, Emir of Makkah, says that the voices of extremism in the Kingdom are louder than the voices of moderation and that the Kingdom is coming under "fierce attack" from certain "media" organizations and other "cultures" around the world. Prince Khaled made these comments while attending the signing of two memorandums of understanding between King Abdulaziz University and Imam Muhammad Bin Saud University in Jeddah Wednesday. Prince Khaled said: "The voices of extremism are loud whether the extremism is on the right or left. Regrettably, moderation has no voice as loud as that of extremism." He said there was a great need for the agreements that were signed. "We want to advocate this trend to enlighten the youth of our country. We want to go ahead to give our sons and daughters in the Kingdom correct information – about their history, the method and policies of this country, and the values and principles laid down by our ancestors for the unification of this country."

The Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Abdulrahman Al-Attiyah said Wednesday that GCC ministers of finance and economy will hold a meeting in Riyadh-based GCC Secretariat next Saturday. Al-Attiyah said in a press release that the

meeting was vital because it would tackle several important issues, particularly preparations for the consultation summit for GCC leaders scheduled on May 11th in Riyadh. The meeting will also discuss the result and recommendations submitted by the joint meeting of Customs managers and passport directors to ease restrictions on truck transportation within the six GCC countries, Al-Attiyah said. The Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) said Thursday its delegation to Jordan's Aqaba economic conference was briefed on the proceedings of the Aqaba special economic zone project. The KCCI noted, in a statement issued here, that the delegation was invited by the Jordanian chamber of commerce to participate in the conference showcasing the Aqaba special economic zone project aimed at bolstering economic ties between Jordan and other states. The Kuwait Energy Company has discovered an oil field in Ras Qattarah block in the Egyptian Western desert, the seventh such discovery by the company. Kuwait Energy Deputy Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Managing Director of the company Sarah Akbar said in a press statement yesterday the oilfield was located in Diah-1 well where drilling began last February. The discovery is the seventh of its kind by the said company and the fourth in this field since March last year. Omani-Qatari Joint Business Council held its third meeting in Doha, the capital of Qatar yesterday. The Omani delegation was headed by Khalil bin Abdullah Al Khonji, chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and Chairman of the Omani side in the Council. The meeting comes within the framework of joint cooperation between the two countries. The council holds bilateral meetings constantly to enhance the economic cooperation in multiple areas, to ensure the follow-up of the developments and to discuss what was agreed upon in the previous meetings. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and Industry H E Abdullah bin Hamad Al Attiyah, who is also head of the Qatari delegation to the Qatar-Oman joint committee said the committee's 15th meeting held in Doha yesterday, was fruitful, assuring that the achievements of the committee have exceeded expectations. The joint committee discussed a number of topics, especially in the areas of industry, economy, education and media in addition to the cooperation in the petroleum field, the standards and specifications as well as cooperation in the areas of tourism, environment and fisheries. The Deputy Premier said the committee will hold its meetings annually and alternately between Doha and Muscat to discuss recommendations and results of the previous meeting besides other issues. Attiyah pointed out that the task of the two heads of the committee is to monitor the coordinating committees' activities, which follow up resolutions and recommendations on areas of cooperation. Bahrain's economy should grow around 4 percent in 2010, faster than last year, as government stimulus spending outweighs weak investment and consumption, the country's central bank governor said yesterday. Bahrain was unlikely to issue further sovereign bonds this year, Rasheed al-Maraj also told Reuters on the sidelines of a financial conference in the Gulf Arab state. Bahrain's economy expanded by 3.2 percent in 2009, Maraj said. Bahrain does not release GDP data on a regular basis and had not yet issued a full-year figure for 2009. In March, Bahrain launched an oversubscribed \$ 1.25 billion, 10-year bond, which came at a time of huge pent-up demand for Gulf sovereign issues. No further issues are going to be this year. But we always keep our options open," Maraj said. Unlike other oil producers in the region, Bahrain has to issue bonds to finance spending.

## **GCC**

### **Health adverts appearing in media should be under scanner: GCC meet**

Nasser Al Bodoor, member of the Executive Authority for GCC Countries and director of External Relations and International Organisations at the UAE Ministry of Health, assured that there are practical steps the executive authority for GCC follows regarding the health advertisements being published in the different mass media agencies.

This was announced after the 72nd meeting of the executive authority held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and chaired by Dr Tawfiq Ahmed Bin Koja, Director General-Executive Office for GCC Ministers of Health Council.

Al Bodoor stated that the members discussed many topics to be presented to the GCC Ministers of Health Council noting that the executive office discussed their agenda electronically in a supportive step to the meeting that was held in Abu Dhabi on February to encourage electronic uses in the health field. The meeting also talked about the internet connectivity between the information centres and Ministers of Health Council in the GCC countries currently held to be applied in the forthcoming e-health conference in Riyadh.

Al Bodoor said: "The meeting also dealt with smart health cards, healthcare and patients' safety, means of applying friendly hospitals initiative, patients' safety, anti-diabetes programmes, outcomes of the third conference for GCC diabetes Group under the title: "Time For Action," held in Jeddah. We also highlighted ways of combating non-infectious diseases and confirming the health promotion symposium in Kuwait, anti-smoking campaigns and ratification of legal drafts for tobacco control and marketing."

### **Joint efforts needed to tackle terrorism: GCC secretary**

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states will work together to tackle terrorism, money laundering and organised crime.

"The move to step up security and stability, as discussed by the interior ministers, requires coordination between all nations in the region," GCC Secretary-General Abdul Rahman Al Attiyah said after a ministerial meeting in Riyadh on Wednesday.

"Gulf States are facing serious challenges in the forms of terrorism and organised crime that call for increased vigilance and intelligence sharing," he added. The ministers, who were attending the consultative meeting, discussed security issues currently confronting the Gulf region, as well as plans and policies to tackle terror cells, drug traffickers, pirates and swindlers.

## **GCC legislators conclude meeting**

The secretaries-general of the GCC Ash'shura, National Representatives and Umma Councils concluded their 14th meeting here yesterday. The Sultanate's delegation to the two-day regional meeting was led by Abdulqadir bin Salim al Dhahab, Secretary-General of the Majlis.

The meeting discussed ways of strengthening the monitoring role of the secretariate-general. A committee set up by the meeting will report on the subject to the next meeting. The Sultanate's delegation renewed a request to the meeting for accepting Majlis Addawla as a member of the GCC councils secretariate-general.

## **Gulf states vow combined efforts to tackle terror threat**

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## **GCC Interior Ministers end 11th consultative session in Riyadh**

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In a closing joint press statement, the ministers welcomed the return to normality on the bordering region between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, stressing their support of the procedures taken by Saudi authorities in the defence of its lands and stability, and the security of its people as well as those of Yemen. The ministers praised Saudi security forces and their continued successes, which were able to detect terrorist cells and foil their attempts to undermine the security and stability of Saudi Arabia.

The ministers furthermore hailed the security forces of the United Arab Emirates, represented by the Dubai police force, for their successful investigation of the assassination of Palestinian Hamas leader Mahmoud Al-Mabhouh, and the pursuit of those responsible, who breached international laws and conventions. The statement also

stated appreciation of Bahraini efforts to develop the GCC, represented in its security strategy presented at the 30th GCC Higher Council session.

### **GCC interior ministers to discuss terror, drug smuggling**

Interior ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are meeting in Riyadh Wednesday to discuss security issues, among them combating terrorism and drug smuggling. Discussions will also look at organized crime as GCC states seek to achieve a comprehensive security strategy.

Prince Naif Bin Abdul Aziz, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, will deliver a speech at the opening session in which he will address current security issues and security in GCC countries in the light of the recent regional and international developments.

### **'GCC officials agree on following up Gulf region development resolutions'**

Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Rouhdan Al-Rouhdan said here Monday that GCC officials agreed to follow up on resolutions aimed coordinating efforts for development in the region.

He told the press after the conclusion of the third meeting for the GCC ministerial committee assigned to follow up on GCC resolutions that some resolutions regarding the bolstering of relations between Kuwait and its GCC counterparts should go through parliament before being approved, affirming that coordination on this matter would continue. The GCC Secretariat would continue efforts on developing cooperation amongst GCC states, said Roudhan.

### **GCC nuclear reactor 'vital, strategic necessity'**

Establishing a GCC nuclear reactor for research is a "vital and strategic necessity" in order to improve industry and agriculture, among other developmental fields, said a senior Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) official yesterday.

The establishment of such a reactor is essential for training and supporting regional human resources, and will have a positive impact on developing medical services generally, said KISR Vice Director General for Information Nader Al-Awadhi. The senior official was speaking on the sidelines of a workshop held to discuss the establishment of a nuclear reactor for research and training in the Gulf area.

The workshop, which began yesterday and will conclude later today, sees the participation of Gulf scientists and experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

## **GCC finance, economy ministers meet next Sat. in Riyadh**

The Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Abdulrahman Al-Attiyah said Wednesday that GCC ministers of finance and economy will hold a meeting in Riyadh-based GCC Secretariat next Saturday.

Al-Attiyah said in a press release that the meeting was vital because it would tackle several important issues, particularly preparations for the consultation summit for GCC leaders scheduled on May 11th in Riyadh. The meeting will also discuss the result and recommendations submitted by the joint meeting of Customs managers and passport directors to ease restrictions on truck transportation within the six GCC countries, Al-Attiyah said.

## **GCC monetary policies should be modified**

The monetary policies, economic statistic and payment systems in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) should be developed and modified to match the requirements set by the monetary council, Masaref magazine said in its May issue.

It is important to have GCC's executive body completed, prepare monetary and administrative regulations for current financial year, it said. It noted the efforts directed towards assigning a temporary building for the council in Riyadh whereas the permanent one will be based at King Abdullah Financial District in Riyadh.

## **YEMEN**

### **Yemen 'bans Arab conference on Darfur crisis'**

Yemen on Wednesday slapped a last-minute ban on a meeting of Arab parliamentarians to discuss the crisis in Sudan's war-torn Darfur region, the head of one group due to attend said. "We were surprised a few hours before the conference began when security men blocked participants access to the hall," Yemen's Social Democratic Forum secretary general Nabil Abdulhafiz said. He cited the security men as saying they had "received instructions to do so."

The government had earlier given the participants "all the facilities including the granting of visas without any restrictions, so we found the decision to ban the conference surprising," Abdulhafiz added. "I think that the Sudanese government has put pressure on the Yemeni authorities to prevent the conference from taking place," he charged.

### **State's option is peace, reconstruction of war damage: Yemen President**

President Ali Abdullah Saleh reiterated on Sunday that the option of the state is peace and the reconstruction of war damage in Saada province. President Saleh pointed to the need for the al-Houthi elements' commitment to the implementation of the remaining six

points, including the return of citizens and displaced persons to their villages and their homes safely and accelerating the reconstruction efforts. This came in the President's speech during his meeting with leaders and members of the popular groups who supported the armed forces during the military operations in the province of Saada and Sofian district.

In the meeting, President Saleh expressed his thanks and appreciation for the popular groups' positions and sacrifices for the sake of duty and their standing by their brothers in the armed forces and security to maintain security and stability and public order and to face the elements of sedition and rebellion in Saada.

He emphasized that all those who have made their national duty would receive all care by the state for their sacrifices, in the forefront of them are the martyrs, the wounded and the disabled.

## **SAUDI ARABIA**

### **International Front**

#### **Japan MP's visit to boost Saudi ties**

Yoshinobu Achiha, an MP, Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) made a visit to SEHAI last Tuesday as part of the delegation that visited Saudi Arabia from May 1 to further strengthen relationship and friendship between Saudi Arabia and Japan.

He is also one of the prestigious members of Saudi-Japan Parliamentary Friendship League. The delegation met Saudi VIPs, such as Prince Salman, Governor of Riyadh; and the president of Shoura Council and the Minister of Economy and Planning, among others.

#### **Saudi Arabia sees no Iran hand in Gulf drugs**

Prince Ahmed Bin Abdul Aziz, Deputy Minister of Interior, has absolved Iran of blame for the spread of narcotics in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, saying it is "difficult to blame Iran as a state and a government for such a thing".

In a press statement after the opening of the Forum for Prisoner and Family Welfare Committees on Tuesday, Prince Ahmed said that "narcotics may pass through its (Iran's) territories from areas of Afghanistan and other regions which produce drugs".

The Prince urged the public to report any drug dealing to the Ministry of Interior and other relevant bodies, and praised the work of authorities working to combat drugs. "Great efforts are being made by the Kingdom's anti-drugs bodies to confront the menace of drugs and preempt smuggling into the Kingdom," he said. "Security coordination already exists between the Kingdom and Yemen to fight drugs smuggling and dealing."

### **Saudi King, Abbas hold talks on Mideast peace efforts**

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas who arrived in the Saudi capital on Tuesday starting an official visit held talks shortly after arrival with King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz on regional affairs, it was officially announced.

The talks dealt with the Middle East peace process and the efforts that have been exerted at various levels to ensure rights of the Palestinian people namely establishment of an independent state on their national territories, the official Saudi Press Agency said.

### **Abbas in Riyadh to discuss talks strategy**

The Palestinian Authority's strategy ahead of indirect Palestinian-Israeli negotiations tops the agenda of talks between King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Riyadh Tuesday.

Abbas will discuss a range of issues, with both sides also looking to strengthen trade, economic and political relations between Riyadh and Ramallah. "The visit is part of a series of important meetings with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to discuss developments in Palestine," Abbas told Okaz/Saudi Gazette. "They reflect the wish of both sides to strengthen relations and push forward political dialogue to support the resolve of the Palestinian people and their legitimate aspirations."

Abbas said that the Kingdom played an "outstanding" role in its "continuous support" for the Palestinian cause and in helping strengthen "resolve and hopes for the creation of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital". "The Kingdom has also worked to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict through the enforcement of international law," Abbas said.

### **Saudi King, Cheney discuss issues of common interest**

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud received here yesterday former US vice president Dick Cheney and the accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, they discussed a number of issues of common interest. The meeting was attended by of number of princes and senior officials.

### **Saudi FM, Mubarak discuss regional issues**

Visiting Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal held talks on Saturday with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in the resort of Sharm El-Sheikh, a political source said. The source told KUNA the foreign minister would hand over a message from Saudi King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz to President Hosni Mubarak related to issues of joint interest.

The talks deal with regional affairs, a meeting of the Arab follow-up committee for the

Arab peace initiative due later today at the headquarters of the Arab League to discuss efforts for resuming peace talks between the Israelis and Palestinians.

## **Social Front**

### **Saudi Arabia under 'fierce attack': Khaled**

Prince Khaled Al-Faisal, Emir of Makkah, says that the voices of extremism in the Kingdom are louder than the voices of moderation and that the Kingdom is coming under “fierce attack” from certain “media” organizations and other “cultures” around the world.

Prince Khaled made these comments while attending the signing of two memorandums of understanding between King Abdulaziz University and Imam Muhammad Bin Saud University in Jeddah Wednesday.

Prince Khaled said: “The voices of extremism are loud whether the extremism is on the right or left. Regrettably, moderation has no voice as loud as that of extremism.”

He said there was a great need for the agreements that were signed. “We want to advocate this trend to enlighten the youth of our country. We want to go ahead to give our sons and daughters in the Kingdom correct information – about their history, the method and policies of this country, and the values and principles laid down by our ancestors for the unification of this country.”

### **Officials punished for not hiring Saudi nurses**

The Ministry of Health has cracked down on health officials who were involved in refusing to hire 44 qualified Saudi women nurses at King Abdullah Hospital in Bisha Governorate, when there were 41 posts available.

According to directives from Dr. Aqeel Bin Jam’an Al-Ghamdi, Assistant Undersecretary for Curative Medicine, it was decided to remove the Assistant Financial and Administrative Director from his post and not to assign him with any important tasks in future at the hospital or at the Directorate of Health Affairs. In addition, it was decided to transfer the Deputy Supervisor General of the hospital to the Directorate of Health Affairs.

Al-Ghamdi based his decision on the recommendations of the Committee for Evaluating Health Services in Bisha, under the chairmanship of the Director General of Hospitals at the ministry.

### **KACARE OFFICIALS TAKE OATH**

King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, congratulates Dr. Hashim Bin Abdullah Yamani, President of King Abdullah City for Atomic and Renewable Energy, after administering him the oath of office in Riyadh, Monday. KACARE Vice President

for Atomic and Renewable Energy Dr. Walid Bin Hussein Abu Al-Faraj and KACARE Vice President for Renewable Energy Affairs Dr. Khalid Bin Mohammed Al-Sulaiman also took the oath of office.

### **King receives honorary doctorate from Arabian Gulf University**

King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, has received an honorary doctorate for Service to Science and Medical Education from the Arabian Gulf University in Bahrain. The doctorate was presented during the King Abdullah's reception of the university's Council of Trustees at the Royal Court at Al-Yamama Palace in Riyadh Tuesday. In April this year the King pledged SR1 billion for the construction of a medical city in Bahrain to be an affiliate of the university.

### **Minster approves Makkah development**

Prince Mansour Bin Mit'eb Bin Abdul Aziz, Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs, has approved a comprehensive development study on the region of Makkah. Fareed Bin Ibrahim Shira, Acting Deputy Minister for City Planning, said the study looked at the general framework of the five-year plans, strategic urban plans, and the Kingdom's overall rural development. "The regional development study was based on fundamental data collected through secondary data sources and social, economic and urban surveys, as well as surveys from transport, traffic and public services authorities, to form a statistical geographic database on the region," Shira said.

According to Shira, the study analyzed through the database the region's potential for development in natural, social, economic, urban and environmental terms, and looked at fundamental development planning issues. "The study suggested a general framework for development in Makkah over the next 19 years and provided estimations of future population increase and distribution, as well as the distribution of basic services and infrastructure," he said

### **Economy Front**

#### **Philippine, Saudi firms clinch agricultural deal**

A Philippine-owned agricultural company AgriNurture, Inc. (ANI) has signed a memorandum of agreement (MoA) with Far Eastern Agricultural Investment Company (FEAICO) of Saudi Arabia for huge food crop plantations and processing plants in the Philippines, a Philippine daily reported on Wednesday.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange Wednesday, ANI chief finance officer Kenneth Tan said that, based on the MoA, FEAICO shall pursue projects involving the establishment of a commercial sized pineapple, banana, rice and corn plantations and processing facilities, the Manila Bulletin reported. It will also jointly work with ANI for all the needed resources such as land, labor, farm technology and systems.

ANI and FEAICO will establish demo plantations initially and grow gradually through contract growing up to a core area of 50,000 hectares total for pineapple, banana, rice and corn.

### **Saudi petrochem income to rise five-fold**

New projects will ally with higher prices to boost Saudi Arabia's petrochemical earnings by nearly five times in 2015 as the Gulf kingdom is pushing ahead with a major drive to diversify its oil-reliant economy, according to a local study. The country's petrochemical companies, most of which are controlled by the government, earned about SR11.6 billion (Dh11.36bn) in 2009, one of the lowest income levels in nearly 20 years because of post-crisis decline in prices, said NCB Capital, an offshoot of National Commercial Bank, the largest Saudi bank. Their income could more than double to nearly SR29bn this year as a surge in oil prices boost those of petrochemicals and new projects come onstream in the kingdom, said the study, sent to Emirates Business yesterday.

"We expect the kingdom's petrochemicals revenue in 2010 to increase to SR29bn from about SR11.6bn in 2009 for the six stocks we look at in this note. The drivers for this revenue growth include the start of production at two of the companies, an increase in volumes produced, as well as improving prices of petrochemicals," said NCB Capital, a key Gulf investment firm.

### **Chinese auto companies eye Saudi market**

Chinese trucks will be seen in greater numbers in the days to come going by the deals some of the manufacturers have been striking, their manufacturers told the media on Monday night. "We have already signed some agreements for our trucks and buses of all sizes and some more are in the pipeline," Yousuf Al-Jedaie, central area manager of Al-Jedaie Motors, told Arab News on behalf of JAC Motors, adding the deals could run into upward of SR100 million.

JAC Motors - Anhui Jianghuai Automobile Co. Ltd., which had a strong presence at the autocare Arabia, an international event for automotive aftermarket that ended in Jeddah over the weekend, displayed a wide range of its heavy-duty, medium and light trucks that drew a large number of visitors. "Chinese automobile vehicles are competitively priced and they are equally good and that's why they are welcomed here and all over the world," he said.

### **Saudi Kingdom, India plan mutual fund**

Faisal Bin Tarad, the Saudi Ambassador to India, has said that the Saudi and Indian governments are planning to set up a mutual fund with capital of between \$ 500 million and \$ 750 million for private sector joint investments. "The Saudi government will provide two thirds of the fund, and India a third," Tarad said. The fund is expected to be operational within a year once all the legal aspects related to its signing have been finalized. Tarad also revealed that contracts worth over SR1 billion had been signed with

Indian companies to provide pilgrim buses. "Saudi Arabia is beginning to take more interest in India," Tarad said. "There are real opportunities for economic cooperation, although Indian investors have been more active than their Saudi counterparts, investing \$ 2.5 billion, a figure far higher than that for Saudi investments in India."

### **Malaysia sees Saudi Arabia as strategic ally**

Saudi Arabia and Malaysia have set out a new vision of relationship in Islamic finance, money market and trade. Al-Rajhi Bank is currently discussing plans to tie-up with a Malaysian entity to develop sukuk, while Khazana Malaysia, the Malaysian government's investment arm, has invested 10 percent in Jadwa Investment and Maybank, Malaysia's largest bank.

This was disclosed by Raja Nazrin Shah, crown prince of Perak (Malaysia), in an interview with Arab News here on Friday. Shah said: "Cagamas Berhad, our mortgage corporation and securitization house, is currently collaborating with Al-Rajhi Bank to develop the first-of-its-kind sukuk that is not only widely accepted and tradable in the secondary market but also meets the most discerning investors' requirements."

Shah was speaking at the event organized by Malaysia International Islamic Financial Centre (MIFC). Shah, who is also the MIFC's ambassador, is currently visiting Riyadh, where he will hold official talks with senior government officials including Prince Salman, Riyadh governor, Amr Al-Dabbagh, governor of Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA), and SAMA (Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency) officials.

## **UAE**

### **International Front**

#### **UAE, USA discuss draft judicial agreements**

Visiting UAE Minister of Justice Dr. Hadeef Al Dhahiri held expanded talks yesterday with US Attorney General Eric Holder over draft agreements the two countries are intending to conclude on judicial and legal fields. Ways of boosting bilateral judicial cooperation including training of members of judiciary and public prosecution in the US universities and institutes of law were discussed during the talks.

The UAE minister and his accompanying delegation visited Office of the Attorney General to learn about best legal practices. The delegation will tour the State Justice Institute and federal courts.

#### **Iran summons UAE envoy over islands spat**

Iran summoned the United Arab Emirates charge d'affaires in Tehran over a war of words about three Gulf islands that both countries claim as their territory, a foreign ministry spokesman said yesterday.

“The UAE’s charge d’affaires was summoned to the foreign ministry and was issued a stern warning,” Ramin Mehmanparast told reporters at a weekly press briefing in response to a question. “There was also a meeting held in the UAE, and they were conveyed the displeasure of our officials towards their unmeasured statements,” he said.

### **UAE backs peaceful nuke plan**

Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed stressed on Tuesday that the UAE supports the development of peaceful uses of nuclear energy as a right of every state party to the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty. However, he emphasised that the development of peaceful nuclear energy should be conducted in a responsible manner.

Sheikh Abdullah, who heads the UAE delegation to New York, was addressing The General Debate of the 2010 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty. "States with nuclear capabilities are obligated to assist non-nuclear states in developing peaceful uses of nuclear energy," he said.

### **Khalifa reiterates UAE support for Palestinians**

The President, His Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, reiterated the support of the UAE to the efforts that could achieve permanent and just peace in the region.

This came during the reception of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas by Shaikh Khalifa at Al Bateen Palace on Sunday in the presence of General Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces and Shaikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Representative of President in Western Region and other Shaikhs and top officials.

The UAE President called on the international community to shoulder its responsibilities regarding resumption of the peace process in the region. He was briefed by Abbas about non-direct contacts between the Palestinians and Israelis, as well as on the Palestinian’s stance on the resumption of talks.

### **Hamdan bin Zayed, Allawi review the latest developments in Iraqi scene**

H.H. Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler's Representative in the Western Region, received yesterday at Al Nakheel Palace Ayad Allawi, former Iraqi Prime Minister and Chairman of Iraq's List, which won the recent parliamentary elections. Sheikh Hamdan and Allawi reviewed bilateral ties and latest developments in Iraqi scene.

### **Khalifa in list of world's 25 most powerful leaders**

UAE President His Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan has been named among the 25 powerful leaders in the world in 2010 by the Arabic edition of US Time

magazine. Shaikh Khalifa's ranking went up from 51 in the initial nomination announced early this year to 23 in the annual world list of the most influential leaders.

This is the second time in just one year an international leading publication has selected the UAE President among the top world leaders. The Arabic edition of the US Newsweek magazine had named Shaikh Khalifa as Personality of the Year after the international edition placed him in the elite of the world's most 50 influential leaders for 2009.

The Time magazine said Shaikh Khalifa, as an honest custodian of the nation's wealth, is planning for the post-oil era to turn Abu Dhabi into a world centre for sustainable energy.

### **UAE to attend Arab peace committee meeting**

The UAE will attend an extraordinary meeting of the Arab Peace Initiative committee on Saturday (today) to be held at the General Secretariat of Arab League. The foreign-minister level meeting will be held in the presence of Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa.

Ahmed bin Helli, Deputy Secretary of the Arab League, said all committee members have agreed to attend the meeting. It is expected that Dr Saeb Areqat, head of the Palestinian delegation, would present a paper. Views will be exchanged about peace efforts being made by US Middle East Peace Envoy George Mitchell.

### **Social Front**

#### **UAE Labour ministry sets up system to settle disputes**

The Ministry of Labour has implemented new mechanism to solve workers' complaints and problems by introducing disputes settlement system, known as Natawasal. Disputes and complaints will be examined and solved within three days from the date of being lodged and registered at the Labour Relations Department.

"The move follows the Ministry finding that most of the cases are not based on real or significant reasons, but rather crop up due to misunderstanding or casual reactions between the two parties," said Humaid Rashid bin Deemas, Acting Director-General of the Ministry of Labour at a ceremony held here on Monday for the opening the new headquarters of the Labour Relations Department. The opening ceremony was attended by Qasim Jameel, director of the Department, and CEO for support services at the Ministry, Dr Aysha bin Bishr.

#### **Preachers call on employers to grant rights to workers**

The preachers, in their unified Friday sermon, has called on the sponsors and companies to give labourers their full rights, especially on the limitation of working hours and appropriate wages.

On the occasion of International Labour Day celebrated on May 1, the preachers asked the companies and sponsors not to deprive the workers of their weekly offs and annual leave, in addition to the other rights identified by the labour laws and the contract between the worker and the sponsor.

The General Authority of Islamic Affairs and AWQAF (Endowment) said during the Friday sermon that Islam grants workers their natural rights with a view to establishing social justice and to provide a decent life for themselves and their families.

## **Economy Front**

### **UAE, Korea to strengthen ties**

Sultan Bin Saeed Al Mansouri, UAE Minister of Economy, discussed with the South Korean Ambassador in the UAE the importance of strengthening the trade relations between both countries.

The discussions which also focused on encouraging investments, were held during the 2nd joint committee meeting between UAE and South Korea, and attended by Mohammed Ahmed Al Shehhi, Director General of the Ministry and other senior executives. The UAE- Korean Joint Economic Committee was established in 2007 and held the first meeting in Abu Dhabi. The second joint committee meeting concentrated on enhancing cooperation across various sectors, especially in the fields of SME, healthcare and energy.

### **Dubai to open world's biggest airport for cargo next month**

Dubai's second airport, designed to be the world's largest when completed, will open in June for cargo only, with plans to receive passengers in spring next year, Dubai Airports chief said Tuesday.

"Dubai will no longer be a single airport city," chief executive officer, Paul Griffiths, told a press conference on the sidelines of the annual Arabian Travel Market held in Dubai. He set June 27 as the date for the start of operations at Al Maktoum International Airport.

He said that the passenger terminal is scheduled to be ready by the end of the year and that it will enter service at the beginning of the summer season in 2011, towards "the end of March." The airport, which is designed to have six runways and handle 120 million passengers when fully completed, was supposed to be operational by the end of 2008. Its runway has been ready since 2007.

### **UAE and NZ to strive for stronger cooperation**

The UAE Minister of Economy Sultan Al Mansouri, and New Zealand Minister of Trade Tim Groser issued a joint statement in Abu Dhabi marking the close of the third meeting of the UAE-New Zealand Joint Economic Committee.

The two ministers expressed satisfaction over the meetings and stated it would be strategic step to enhancing economic cooperation between the two countries and elevating it to the level of their excellent bilateral relations in the political sphere. They also stressed the significance of concluding the free trade agreement negotiations between the GCC and New Zealand.

The UAE has welcomed the formation of the New Zealand Middle East Business Council in New Zealand and promised to convey this information to the concerned authority. Exchange of visits by business delegations and mutual support for initiatives of the business communities in both countries was also discussed. Both sides exchanged views on ways to strengthen economic and technical cooperation in numerous areas, including, trade, investment, tourism, intellectual property rights (IPR), aviation, SMEs and agriculture.

## **KUWAIT**

### **International Front**

#### **Kuwait finds mass grave for 55 Iraqi soldiers**

Kuwait on Thursday announced the discovery of a mass grave for 55 Iraqi soldiers killed during the 1991 war in which a US-led coalition force evicted Saddam Hussein's forces from the Gulf emirate. Interior ministry spokesman Brigadier Mohammed Al Saber said in a statement cited by the official KUNA agency that the grave was found in the north of the country near the border with Iraq.

Saber said that representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, coalition forces, the Iraqi human rights ministry, Iraqi forensic experts and Kuwaiti interior ministry officials were present at the site. He said the remains of the soldiers were identified from their uniforms, adding that the bodies also had Iraqi military IDs and death certificates issued by coalition forces.

#### **'Kuwaiti FM's visit to Rabat opens horizons for greater cooperation'**

The visit of Kuwait's Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah to Morocco opens up new horizons for cooperation, said Moroccan State Minister Mohammad El-Yazghi. "This visit opens up new horizons for fruitful cooperation in all areas, and will guarantee that relations continue in the same spirit of understanding upon which it was built in the 1960s," El-Yazghi said.

He said that bilateral cooperation could be further boosted, given the will of the Kuwaiti and Moroccan sides under the wise guidance of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Morocco's King Mohammad VI.

#### **Kuwait firm on peaceful use of nuclear energy**

The relationship between Kuwait and Morocco is "excellent," and is constantly developing under the sound guidance of the leaders of the two countries, said Kuwait's Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah yesterday.

In a statement upon arrival here on a three-day official visit, Sheikh Mohammed said that the two countries constantly held political deliberations and coordinated efforts and stances over issues of mutual concern. He said that his visit to Morocco came to exchange views over current Arab and international issues.

Sheikh Mohammed said that prominent issues that would feature in Kuwaiti-Moroccan talks include Middle East peace, as well as nuclear issues given the just concluded Nuclear Non-Proliferation (NPT) conference in New York.

### **Kuwait urges Iran to dismiss fears over nuclear program**

Kuwait called on Iran Wednesday to brush aside all fears regarding its nuclear program and to prove it was peaceful to pave way for a settlement to achieve security and stability in the region. Kuwait permanent representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi, addressing the high-level Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference that opened here two days ago, asserted meanwhile Iran's right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. "We call upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond to the international endeavors to assure the international community and brush aside any fears about the nature of its nuclear program," he said.

He also called on Iran to "affirm the peaceful nature (of the nuclear program) to pave way for a settlement achieving security and stability in the region, and contribute to supporting efforts aim at making the Middle East region free of weapons of mass destruction."

### **Kuwait, Italy discuss means to bolster bilateral relations**

Italian President Giorgio Napolitano held an official reception for His Highness the Kuwaiti Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the accompanying delegation yesterday, and the top leaders exchanged cordial statements at the formal meeting.

The discussions focused on means to bolster bilateral relations as well as issues of mutual interest in addition to happenings on the regional and international levels. Deputy Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the accompanying delegation were present at the meeting.

Napolitano, in his address to the top-level Kuwaiti delegation, noted his country's efforts for restoration of peace to the Middle East and Afghanistan. He also praised identical efforts that had been exerted by the Gulf State in this respect.

## **Social Front**

### **Kuwaiti MPs plan to grill PM over public sector pay dispute**

The Kuwait Trade Union Federation held a demonstration on Tuesday evening to protest against what it said is the government's selective method of awarding salary increases to specific groups of public sector workers while neglecting others. The event was attended by a number of parliamentarians who denounced the government's actions, threatening to grill His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah if he "fails to correct the situation." Controversial MP Musallam Al-Barrak urged the audience to strike until their demands are met.

Do not expect this corrupt government to do you justice; this government only listens to those who have loud voices. Couple your voices with action; hold a strike," he said to an audience that exploded into applause at his words. Al-Barrak continued, saying that Kuwaiti citizens have every right to enjoy the luxuries their government is "wasting" by spending on aid to other countries. "This corrupt government is most generous when foreigners come and ask for money. He promised the protestors that he will do all he can until justice is served. MP Khaled Al-Tahous echoed Al-Barrak's sentiments, lauding the protestors for speaking up and demanding their rights.

### **Kuwaiti lawmakers propose all-female police stations**

MPs have proposed that each governorate should have at least one all-female police station in a bid to deter abuse and sexual harassment against women detainees. Members of the parliamentary human rights committee presented the proposal to the interior minister after a noticeable rise in cases of abuse against females held in police stations' detention centers.

Committee member MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei said that the panel such police stations would be completely managed an all-female force. In his part, MP Faisal Al-Duwaisan made a proposal for the Ministry of Interior to allow for recruiting female Bedoon police officers and security guards to work at police stations in guarding female detainees. "Panel members further asked the minister to establish a department concerning with human rights, which would be consulted before putting any suspect under arrest," the lawmaker told Al-Watan

### **Kuwait going backward on issue of stateless**

A senior official on the issue of statelessness in the NGO Refugees International (RI) said that the Kuwait government is moving backward on resolving the country's bedoon issue. The statement was made during a special interview to Kuwait Times upon the completion of their recent assessment of Kuwait.

There have been some changes over the three years that I have been following the issue of stateless people in Kuwait," said Maureen Lynch, senior advocate on stateless

initiatives in RI. "One of the things that are becoming clearer during this visit is that over time bedoon individuals themselves are beginning to become a little more willing to behave in a bolder manner, to speak out on their own behalf, and this is a positive step in the right direction," she added.

The advocate said that another positive change is that the Kuwaiti government is listening to the voices of bedoons. "Maybe they are not responding to the degree that we would like to see, but there is some listening that is taking place," she explained.

## **Economy Front**

### **KCCI delegation briefed on Jordan's Aqaba special economic zone project**

The Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) said Thursday its delegation to Jordan's Aqaba economic conference was briefed on the proceedings of the Aqaba special economic zone project.

The KCCI noted, in a statement issued here, that the delegation was invited by the Jordanian chamber of commerce to participate in the conference showcasing the Aqaba special economic zone project aimed at bolstering economic ties between Jordan and other states.

### **Kuwait Energy Co discovers seventh oilfield in Egypt**

The Kuwait Energy Company has discovered an oil field in Ras Qattarah block in the Egyptian Western desert, the seventh such discovery by the company. Kuwait Energy Deputy Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Managing Director of the company Sarah Akbar said in a press statement yesterday the oilfield was located in Diah-1 well where drilling began last February. The discovery is the seventh of its kind by the said company and the fourth in this field since March last year.

## **OMAN**

### **International Front**

#### **Oman-Pakistan environment co-operation in focus**

Pakistan Minister of Environment, Hameed Allah Jan Afreidi, arrived here yesterday on a five-day visit to the Sultanate during which he will meet with senior Omani officials and get a close look at the government's efforts in environment protection and nature conservation. Afreidi will hold separate meetings with Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Buasidy, Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs, and Shaikh Abdullah bin Salim al Rowas, Minister of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources.

The Pakistani minister will also visit regions of the Sultanate that have special environmental importance, including Bandar Khairan in the Governorate of Muscat, the

Turtle Reserve at Ras al Hadd in the Sharqiyah region. He will also tour key historical and archaeological areas.

### **Oman's pavilion opened at Shanghai World Expo**

Hundreds of thousands of people flooded into Shanghai's World Expo yesterday at the start of a six-month showcase of culture and technology seen as the latest sign of China's growing economic might. The Omani pavilion at the expo was opened yesterday under the auspices of Mohsin bin Khamis Al Baloushi, advisor of the Commerce and Industry Ministry and the General Commissioner of the Sultanate's pavilion.

The opening ceremony was attended by Sheikh Abdullah bin Saleh Al Sadi, the Sultanate's ambassador to the People's Republic of China, Hassan bin Mohammed Al Lawati, director-general of museums and monuments at the Ministry of Heritage and Culture and deputy general commissioner of the Sultanate's pavilion. The pavilion showcases the life of Omani man, his society, way of living and the traditional crafts he practices through audio, visual and print media.

### **Social Front**

#### **Omani youth urged to take positive role**

Al Sha'an The Sultanate's Grand Mufti has called upon the youngsters not to spoil the primetime of life in meaningless entertainments but to spend in piety and obedience to Almighty. His Eminence Sheikh Ahmed Bin Hamad Al Khalili, Grand Mufti of the Sultanate, delivered a religious lecture on 'Youths: Pillars of the present and promises of the future' on Thursday at Sayyid Al Zahid Mosque in Al Shariah village in Samad Al Sha'an in the Wilayat of Mudhabi.

In his speech, Al Khalili elaborated on the positive role of the youths in the society, their orientation, objectives in life and challenges they face. "Life is one of the most important bounties that the Almighty bestowed on man," he said. "Therefore Man has an obligation to thank God and live according to His instructions." "Man goes through different stages in his life from infancy to old age. Youth is one of the most important of these stages in human life. It is the peak of his strength, creativity and dynamism," said Al Khalili.

He urged the youngsters not to spoil the prime of life time in meaningless entertainments and pleasure but to spend it in piety and obedience to God. He called on them to abide by the instruction of God and keep away from forbidden things. Quoting the sayings of Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him), he said man can achieve in his youth what he cannot achieve in any other stage of his life.

#### **HM issues RO200m royal grant**

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has issued a Royal Grant allocating RO200 million to complete all social housing applications till 2009. This was announced by Ahmed bin Abdul Nabi Macki, national economy minister and deputy chairman of Financial Affairs and Energy Resources Council.

To mark the 40th Anniversary of His Majesty the Sultan's assumption of power, His Majesty has allocated RO200 million to complete all pending housing applications for those who meet the conditions for housing applications which are registered in the Ministry of Housing till the end of the year 2009.

He told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the Royal Grant of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said specified that the amount of RO40 million will be encashed annually throughout the 8th Five-Year Plan from 2011 till 2015.

### **Economy Front**

#### **Oman considers French study of national railway linking GCC countries**

Oman is considering a comprehensive study conducted by a specialized French company on the railway the Sultanate is planning to build as a part of a GCC railway project, Omani Minister of National Economy and deputy chairman of the Financial Affairs and Energy Resources Council Ahmad Bin Abdunabi Makki said.

In remarks to the Omani "Al-Roya" newspaper, published on Saturday, Makki said that this project would make a radical change in the country's land transportations, stressing that the Sultanate would execute the project as soon as the studies finish.

Oman examines all the aspects of the railway study, including the types of trains, and energy to be used- diesel or electricity.

#### **Omanoil pact with Matrix Marine**

Following its acquisition of a licence from Sohar Industrial Port Company (SIPC) to provide the port with marine bunkering fuel services in January 2010, Oman Oil Marketing Company (Omanoil) signed an exclusive agreement with Matrix Marine to establish Omanoil Matrix Marine Services LLC. The new joint venture will enhance efficiency of bunkering services at one of the world's largest port development projects.

#### **Oman-Qatar trade meet held in Doha**

Omani-Qatari Joint Business Council held its third meeting in Doha, the capital of Qatar yesterday. The Omani delegation was headed by Khalil bin Abdullah Al Khonji, chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and Chairman of the Omani side in the Council. The meeting comes within the framework of joint cooperation between the two countries.

The council holds bilateral meetings constantly to enhance the economic cooperation in multiple areas, to ensure the follow-up of the developments and to discuss what was agreed upon in the previous meetings.

## **BAHRAIN**

### **International Front**

#### **Bahraini premier hails strong UK links**

Bahrain's historic relations with Britain will fuel even greater ties and growth in economic links, His Royal Highness the Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa said yesterday.

"This historic depth that characterises bilateral ties is a catalyst for relations to grow steadily", he said as he received Prince Andrew, Duke of York and UK's Special Representative for International Trade and Investment.

The Premier and Prince Andrew discussed mechanisms to promote economic and trade co-operation and also reviewed regional and international developments.

### **Social Front**

#### **Bahrain's plan to support women in polls**

A national programme to support women in this year's municipal and parliamentary elections in Bahrain was launched here on Wednesday. Women who met with a poor response in the previous two elections in Bahrain will be promoted through a host of activities, including training programmes, awareness campaigns and partnership deals. Bahrain has only one elected woman parliamentarian who was elected unopposed in 2006 from a constituency having relatively small population.

Organised by the state-run Supreme Council for Women (SCW) in association with the United Nations Development Programme, the National Political Empowerment of Women in Election aims to promote female candidates. SCW's Assistant General Secretary, Hala Al Ansari, told a press conference that the programme would offer support within the SCW's capabilities. "Through the programme we want to promote women as suitable candidates who are able of creating positive changes."

#### **Bahraini MPs protest remark on 'flawed' laws**

An accusation that parliament was coming up with catastrophic legislations yesterday sparked an argument between a number of MPs and a government minister. Justice and Islamic Affairs Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ali Al Khalifa accused parliament's legislative and legal affairs committee of playing around with laws, saying that their amendments to the judiciary law were disastrous. However, he was cut short by

committee chairman and Al Wefaq bloc vice-president Khalil Al Marzooq, who said that the minister's attack was uncalled for. "We can't accept being described as children playing around with laws as if they were toys, because we are not," said Mr Al Marzooq. "We are trying our best to ensure more powers for judges and accusing us of coming up with catastrophic legislations is something out of proportion."

### **Bahrain votes to ban alcohol for Muslims**

Bahrain yesterday inched closer to imposing a ban on Muslims drinking or trading in alcohol in the kingdom. Its all-appointed upper chamber adopted an amendment to the penal code, banning imports and consumption of alcohol for and by Muslims, in a move subject to King Hamad's approval. The council authorised Bahraini authorities to decide where alcohol can continue to be served to non-Muslims. Bahrain's elected parliament last month voted for a total ban on alcohol. But the move stirred an angry reaction from the chamber of commerce and from Bahraini liberals, who warned that the proposed ban would harm the economy and the country's tolerant image.

### **Bahrain to continue defending and supporting the Press**

Bahrain pledged yesterday to continue defending and supporting the Press as it carries out its national duty. Such efforts are what makes the country unique in dealing with the media, said Culture and Information Minister Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa. "The government carries out its duty and role in supporting the Press," she said at the opening of the Future of Print Press in the Age of Satellites Conference, at the Arts Centre, Manama. It was held under the patronage of His Majesty King Hamad to mark World Press Freedom Day.

### **Economy Front**

#### **BCCI signs key deal to attract UK investment**

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed yesterday to strengthen business ties between Bahrain and the UK.

The Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) and the Bahrain British Business Forum (BBBF) will outline areas for improving co-operation and mutual interest. The MoU, which also aims to attract investment to Bahrain, was signed at the BCCI office by its chairman Dr Essam Fakhro and BBBF chairman Khalid Al Zayani.

Mr Al Zayani said that the MoU was an historic achievement of which the BBBF was very proud. "There are clear synergies between our two business groups which we hope to capitalise in order to forge stronger business ties between Bahrain and the UK," he said.

#### **Bahrain economy may grow 4% in 2010**

Bahrain's economy should grow around 4 percent in 2010, faster than last year, as government stimulus spending outweighs weak investment and consumption, the country's central bank governor said yesterday. Bahrain was unlikely to issue further sovereign bonds this year, Rasheed al-Maraj also told Reuters on the sidelines of a financial conference in the Gulf Arab state.

Bahrain's economy expanded by 3.2 percent in 2009, Maraj said. Bahrain does not release GDP data on a regular basis and had not yet issued a full-year figure for 2009. In March, Bahrain launched an oversubscribed \$ 1.25 billion, 10-year bond, which came at a time of huge pent-up demand for Gulf sovereign issues.

No further issues are going to be this year. But we always keep our options open," Maraj said. Unlike other oil producers in the region, Bahrain has to issue bonds to finance spending.

## **QATAR**

### **International Front**

#### **Qatar, Gambia sign labour agreement**

Qatar and Gambia signed an agreement on regulating Gambian labour following talks between HH the Heir Apparent Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Gambian President Al-Haji Yahya Jammeh who arrived in Doha earlier yesterday on a working visit.

Talks during the meeting, which was held at the Emiri Diwan, dealt with bilateral relations and means of enhancing them in various fields in addition to a number of regional and international issues. Following the meeting, the Heir Apparent and the Gambian president witnessed the signing of an agreement between the governments of Qatar and Gambia on regulating means of hiring Gambian workers in Qatar.

#### **South Korean university seeks research tie-up with Qatar**

The reputable Konkuk University in South Korea, headed by the country's former deputy prime minister and minister of science and technology Myung Oh is seeking partnership with Qatar for research and development in cutting edge information and communication technology, nuclear power generation and stem cell treatment.

A high-profile delegation from the University led by Myung Oh left Doha yesterday after a short visit to Qatar during which they met with senior officials from the Ministry of Environment, Qatar Foundation, ictQatar and the Qatar University. Speaking to The Peninsula before departure, Myung Oh said there was tremendous potential for co-operation between the two countries, with a visionary leadership in Qatar and the great achievements South Korea had made over the past few decades in science and technology.

### **Qatar, Portugal sign accords**

Qatar and Portugal signed agreements following a round of official talks chaired by HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani and Portuguese Prime Minister Jose Socrates here yesterday.

HE the Premier and Portugal's Foreign Minister Luis Amado attended the signing of an agreement between the governments of both countries on the cancellation of entry visa for holders of diplomatic and special passports. The official talks, which were held at the Portuguese Cabinet, covered bilateral ties and several issues of common concern.

### **Qatar, Greece cement ties with agreements**

Qatar and Greece signed yesterday an air transport agreement and several memoranda of understanding following a round of official talks chaired by HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani and his Greek counterpart George Papandreou at Maximo Palace here.

The two premiers discussed the bilateral relations and reviewed aspects of co-operation in various areas. Following the talks, the two prime ministers witnessed the signing of agreements.

### **No single nation can combat terrorism alone - Qatari Min.**

A single nation cannot defeat or combat terrorism by itself, Qatari Minister of State for the Interior Affairs Sheikh Abdullah Bin Nasser Al-Thani affirmed here on Sunday. Al-Thani said at the inauguration of a two-day regional workshop discussing international cooperation to combat terrorism, "in light of the growing power of terrorist organizations, and the strengthen of their activities and expansion (cross-border to regional countries) it has become difficult for any single nation, regardless of the available means and resources to adequately combat this growing terrorist activity." Cooperative efforts from different regional and international countries is the only way to combat terrorism, he added.

### **Qatar, Syria underscore significance of confronting Israel's aggressive policies**

Syria and Qatar underscored on Sunday the need to confront Israel's aggressive policies by which they threaten security and stability in the region. This came during a meeting here between Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr al-Thani and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

A presidential statement said that the talks between the two men dealt with the distinguished bilateral relations between the two countries and the great development achieved by these relations as well as developments on the Arab arena, especially in the occupied Palestinian territories. Both sides said that confronting the Israeli aggressive

policies come through activation of solidarity and joint Arab action in order to achieve a unified Arab stance rise to the challenges facing the Arab nation.

### **Qatari PM holds talks with Hezbollah chief**

HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani yesterday met Hezbollah's secretary general Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah. The meeting dealt with the outcome of the Doha agreement and the political situation in Lebanon. The Prime Minister and Foreign Minister also met Lebanese parliament member Bahia al-Hariri and former Lebanese prime minister Najib Mikati.

### **Qatar to host anti-terror workshop**

The regional workshop on 'Enhancing International Cooperation in the Field of Combating Terrorism' will start today at the Grand Regency Hotel.

The workshop, organised by the National Committee for Combating Terrorism in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is held under the patronage of Minister of State for Interior Affairs and Head of National Committee for Combating Terrorism H E Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani.

The objective of this workshop is introducing the representatives of the concerned bodies in the GCC and Arab countries the mechanisms of international cooperation prescribed in the universal legal instruments for combating terrorism and the role of Interpol in enhancing the procedures of combating terrorism at international level.

### **Qatar Emir, Ki-moon discuss relations**

HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani yesterday received a telephone call from United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. The contact dealt with relations between Qatar and the global organisation as well as regional and international issues of mutual concern.

### **Social Front**

#### **Portacabins must go, schools told**

All private schools in Qatar including kindergartens using portacabins as classes have been asked by the Supreme Education Council (SEC) to replace such structures with permanent concrete buildings in two years' time. The specifications about school buildings are part of a set of new standards laid down by the SEC for all private schools in the country.

The school building "must be made of cement and not wooden material in keeping with the requirements of the Civil Defense Department," according to guidelines issued by the SEC to private schools. The SEC has made it mandatory for new schools seeking a

licence to have purpose-built premises, while the existing schools that are using portacabins as classes have been asked to do away with such structures within the given time frame.

### **SEC to oversee hiring of schoolteachers**

Following the transformation of all state schools to independent status, the Supreme Education Council (SEC) has decided to utilise the services of professional recruitment agencies to find competent teachers.

The SEC will oversee the hiring process of teachers in rare disciplines like physics, chemistry and biology to ensure they meet the rules and regulations set by the SEC. With this option, the SEC is assured that operators will have the opportunity to select the best educational option from the local market or through these companies which are committed to provide skilled, qualified and professional teachers from Arab and foreign countries.

Selection through the companies will ensure professional and the best application of the internationally benchmarked curriculum standards, the SEC said yesterday. The teacher should hold teaching positions and have at least five years experience in an educational corporation in their respective countries and should succeed in the probation period. The teacher must obtain a teaching license in the first year of the contract in accordance with the rules and regulations set by the Evaluation Institute of the SEC.

### **SCH allays fears on children's medicine**

The Supreme Council of Health (SCH) has clarified that the children's medications Mortin and Benadryl that have been recalled from the markets by the US-based manufacturer McNeil are not permitted to be sold in Qatar.

Qatar is not importing any medicine from McNeil, Dr Aysha Al Ansari, director of the Pharmacy and Drugs Control Department at SCH said in a statement yesterday. Two other medicines, Tylenol and Zyrec that are also being recalled from the US market are available in Qatar but are not imported from the US. These medicines registered in Qatar are coming from Belgium and Switzerland, said Al Ansari.

### **Economy Front**

#### **Qatar-Oman talks fruitful: Attiyah**

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and Industry H E Abdullah bin Hamad Al Attiyah, who is also head of the Qatari delegation to the Qatar-Oman joint committee said the committee's 15th meeting held in Doha yesterday, was fruitful, assuring that the achievements of the committee have exceeded expectations.

The joint committee discussed a number of topics, especially in the areas of industry,

economy, education and media in addition to the cooperation in the petroleum field, the standards and specifications as well as cooperation in the areas of tourism, environment and fisheries.

The Deputy Premier said the committee will hold its meetings annually and alternately between Doha and Muscat to discuss recommendations and results of the previous meeting besides other issues. Attiyah pointed out that the task of the two heads of the committee is to monitor the coordinating committees' activities, which follow up resolutions and recommendations on areas of cooperation.

### **Made in USA-Qatar to be held in October**

Doha Enterprises has announced that the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE) has become a strategic partner of the Made in the USA-Qatar 2010.

ACCE will take the lead in administering the exhibitions chamber programme, through its network of 7,800 professional members in 1,400 chambers of commerce; identify small and medium enterprises looking to export to the Gulf. The 2nd Annual Made in the USA-Qatar 2010 exhibition, will take place from October 12 to 15 at the Doha International Exhibition Center. The event is one of the biggest and the most important International Trade Exhibition in the Gulf States.

The show will attract visitors from the entire Gulf and the Middle East. Doha Enterprises anticipate attracting over 300 exhibitors and over 35,000 high level business people, government officials, dignitaries and interested citizens from Qatar and around the Gulf.

“Lots of US businesses have things that could be profitably exported but they often lack the connections to make the sale,” said Mick Fleming, president of ACCE. “Working through trusted chambers of commerce and their national association, ACCE, potential exporters can meet the right people in fast-growing markets.”