

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.

SUMMARY

Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Abdul Rahman Al-Attiyah on Sunday extolled the positive outcome of the tour of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz to Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. Al-Attiyah said in a press statement issued here today that the visit of King Abdullah to these countries have formed an important achievement on the path of the sincere efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to promote and strengthen inter-Arab relations, which emphasizes the wise leadership of the Kingdom which aims to advocate Arab and Muslim issues. He pointed out that the historic tour of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques along with President Bashar al-Assad of Syria to Beirut has strengthened and even revived the Arab hopes in the face of all challenges facing the Arab nation, especially with regard to the Palestinian people and their just cause, in addition to the situation in Iraq and Lebanon and all that would promote unity and Arab solidarity. The United States hoped on Friday that the summit between Saudi Arabia, Syria and Lebanon would recommit to Lebanese sovereignty. Assistant Secretary of State for public diplomacy Philip Crowley told reporters that leaders in the region should "themselves talk about their achievements," commenting on the summit in Beirut today between Saudi King Abdullah, Syrian President Bashar Assad and Lebanese President Michel Suleiman. "There is heightened concern about the situation in Lebanon. We are committed to Lebanon's sovereignty. It is not negotiable ... and we think it reflects the commitment that King Abdullah has to do everything possible to pursue peace in the region," he added. Crowley hoped that there will be "a recommitment to Lebanese sovereignty, there will be an understanding to try to restrain those elements within Lebanon who have precipitated conflict in the past. And we would hope to avoid that in the future." Ambassador Mohammed Saif Hilal Al Shehhi, Director of European Affairs Department at the Foreign Ministry, separately received Ambassadors Dominique Jeremy of Britain in the UAE, and Klaus-Peter Brandes of Germany, and Deputies Chief of Mission Douglas Greene of the US, Vincent Floreani of France and Christian Lungarotti of Italy. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations and aspects of cooperation in different fields between the UAE and the United Kingdom, the United States as well as Germany, France and Italy. Kuwait's Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah asserted Monday importance of Britain's role in security and stability of the Gulf region, as well as its role in the Middle East peace process. Sheikh Mohammad was speaking to KUNA and Kuwait TV following his meeting with British Foreign Secretary William Hague,

during which they talked about the 20th anniversary of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Twenty years ago, forces sent by Iraqi ruler Saddam Hussein occupied Kuwait for seven months before they were ejected by a US-led international coalition. "On this day we remember the ordeal and learn the lessons and look for the future to build relations based on solid foundations that reserve the State of Kuwait, this small country, its security and stability," said Sheikh Mohammad. The Kuwaiti and British sides believe in the importance of "building a safe region in our regional surrounding" coupled with Britain's important role within the UN Security Council, he said as he described Britain "Kuwait's distinguished friend." As for Iraq, Sheikh Mohammad said that Kuwait "is building relations with the new Iraqi on solid basis ... Iraq that believes in human rights and lives in peace and security and stability with its neighbors." He said he and Hague discussed UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's report about Iraq's implementation of UN resolutions. "The issue of Kuwait-Iraq borders demarcation is over and had been endorsed internationally long time ago." Sheikh Mohammad said they have also discussed Iraqi violations against farms in Kuwaiti territories, and the importance of maintaining border signs. Brigadier-General Ahmad Vahidi, Defence and Armed Forces Logistics Minister in Iran, hailed the relations binding his country with the Sultanate. He described the Omani-Iranian ties as the best and a model in the region. Addressing a press conference at the Iranian Embassy here yesterday, Brigadier-General Vahidi said that the audience with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos was constructive and fruitful. The two sides emphasised on the security in the region and maintaining it as the responsibility of all. He also added that the audience touched on enhancing and developing relations between the two countries. "A number of regional and international issues of common concern were also discussed," he said. The Iranian minister pointed out that the relations at the bilateral level between the two countries have a joint understanding towards various regional and international issues and there are many common points that gather both sides. He also underlined the solid relations particularly the economic ties as they are at an excellent stage, citing the historical relations between the two countries. Deputy King Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa yesterday stressed the need for co-operation to reconsider the concept of terrorism and extremism prevailing in the West following the September 11 attacks. On regional developments and relations between the international community and Iran, he underlined the importance of maintaining security and stability in the region. He also called for a surge in investments alongside military co-operation between the US and Bahrain, whereby Bahrain's chances of investing in the US will increase while attracting more US investments into the kingdom. The Deputy King said the partnership between the two countries over the past decades has made the ties stronger and historical, mainly in the military and political domains, enjoying the support of His Majesty King Hamad and the constant follow-up of different US departments to reach strategic coalition. Qatar has condemned and denounced the Israeli aggression against the Lebanese army in Al Adaisseh in south Lebanon as "a blatant infringement of the international borders of Lebanon as well as a clear violation of UN Security Council Resolution No 1701". In a statement issued to Qatar News Agency (QNA), an official source at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs called on the international community, the UN and Unifil forces "to shoulder their responsibility and put an end to such acts of aggression to fully implement the Security Council resolution in order to avoid any negative repercussions that can affect security and stability in the region".

Saudi Arabia is set to suspend BlackBerry services on Friday as concerns spread across the Middle East and parts of Asia over security issues with smartphones. Telecommunications

authorities have not said exactly when the ban will kick in, and BlackBerry users in the ultra-conservative Muslim kingdom were able to access messaging services on Friday morning. "It still works," a user in the western port city of Jeddah told AFP. Saudi Arabia's Communications and Information Technology Commission said Tuesday it ordered the kingdom's three mobile phone providers to block BlackBerry services or face a 1.3-million-dollar fine. The regulator said "the way BlackBerry services are provided currently does not meet the regulatory criteria of the commission and the licencing conditions," in a statement carried by Saudi Arabia's official news agency SPA. BlackBerry's encrypted emails and data are stored on servers in Canada, the headquarters of its maker, Research in Motion, meaning third parties like intelligence agencies cannot monitor communications. There are more than 700,000 BlackBerry subscribers in Saudi Arabia, a highly security-conscious monarchy with a rigid Islamic social code and strictly censored Internet service. The shutdown order came after the United Arab Emirates said it will cut off the messenger, email and web browsing services of BlackBerrys in the Gulf state on October 11 over security concerns. The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) confirmed today that Blackberry Messenger, Blackberry E-mail and Blackberry Web-browsing services in the UAE will be suspended as of October 11, 2010. The suspension is a result of the failure of ongoing attempts, dating back to 2007, to bring Blackberry services in the UAE in line with UAE telecommunications regulations. Both telecommunications operators - Etisalat and du - were informed of the decision earlier today. The notification was delivered with an instruction to ensure minimal consumer disruption in the provision of alternative services. All Blackberry services fall within the UAE regulatory framework developed by the TRA since 2007, however because of Blackberry's technical configuration, some Blackberry services operate beyond the enforcement these regulations. Blackberry data is immediately exported offshore, where it is managed by a foreign, commercial organization. Blackberry data services are currently the only data services operating in the UAE where this is the case. Today's decision is based on the fact that, in their current form, certain Blackberry services allow users to act without any legal accountability, causing judicial, social and national security concerns for the UAE. Scheduled visit by Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam Al-Muhtadee Billah to Kuwait today is aimed at boosting the brotherly and friendly relations between the sultanate and the Gulf state, the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Brunei said yesterday. Ghassan Mohammad Al-Duwaisan, in a telephone statement, said the crown prince plans to get acquainted, personally, with his Kuwaiti counterpart, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, for cementing the brotherly and friendly relations with His Highness, and exploring the developments in the political, economic and social sectors in Kuwait, achieved under leadership of HH the Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.= Al-Muhtadee Billa and his accompanying delegation are scheduled to hold talks with senior Kuwaiti leaders on means of cementing the bilateral relations and visiting landmark economic, scientific and cultural sites in the Gulf state, said Al-Duwaisan in the interview with the Kuwaiti news agency. Elaborating, the diplomat indicated that the Kuwaiti diplomatic mission has been implementing the state policy of openness, sparing no effort for the improvement of the relations with Brunei, namely at the economic level. The Kuwaiti diplomats are guided by the "wide policy of His Highness the Amir, the sheikh of the diplomats, a policy that is based on serving economic and common interests of Kuwait and other states," Al-Duwaisan said, alluding to Sheikh Sabah's service as the foreign minister of the country for many years in the past. The month of May turned out to be by far the worst month of the year for women in Bahrain, with NGOs reporting 153 cases of violence against them from a total 928 registered cases in the first half of 2010. Abuse cases

against men by their women represented 10 per cent of the total recorded cases. The abuses varied from physical and verbal violence, with men hitting their wives being the highest among reported cases. Statistics collected from all women societies by the Bahrain Women's Union revealed that women are the first abuse victims followed by children, while abuses could be classified to economic, psychological and social violence. Fakhriya Sayed Shuber, a social worker at the Union, told the press that the Legal Support Office of the Union, that was established in September 2008, was dedicated to support abused women by offering legal assistance to them to fight for their rights. "Many women seek the office directly, while some are referred by government or NGOS to benefit from its service," she revealed.

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Meanwhile, on Thursday, Aldar posted a second-quarter net loss of more than \$ 129 millions, due to lower property sales and investment values. In addition, it was also hit by a rating downgrade by Standard & Poor's. The company's shares ended 1.6 percent lower, recovering slightly after hitting a 16-month low. "The downgrade reflects our view of the very challenging real estate market conditions in Abu Dhabi," said Standard & Poor's credit analyst Tommy Trask, "and the reliance of Aldar's future earnings and cash flow on continued demand for both sale and rental of property and land." "Moving into H2 2010, Aldar will witness a spike in unit deliveries and the commercial launch of new investment properties — positively impacting the income statement," said Shuaa Securities analyst Roy Cherry. "However, with the prevailing real estate market conditions, the fact that Aldar remains the most leveraged among the top-three listed UAE developers and the connotations of the premature partial settlement of the Abu Dhabi government loan — lead us to remain cautious on this name," he added. Saudi telecom companies will face a fine of \$ 1.3 million if they fail to comply with the regulator's order to suspend BlackBerry services, a company official said on Wednesday. "The companies will comply with the decision as those who don't will be fined SR5 million Saudi (\$ 1.3 million)," the official from one of Saudi Arabia's three telecom companies said. "We will also comply for security reasons," he added. "There are big hopes in convincing" BlackBerry maker Research in Motion (RIM) "to provide Saudi Arabia with a local server," he said, adding the three companies met RIM on Wednesday and that more meetings would follow. However, each of the three telecom providers has its own alternative plan in case negotiations with the Canadian maker of BlackBerry fail, he said, without elaborating. Saudi Communications and Information Technology Commission has ordered the suspension of BlackBerry services from Friday as the company had failed to meet its demands. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) aims to increase its oil production capacity by 29.6 per cent to 3.5 million barrels per day (bpd) by 2018 from 2.7 million bpd now, said a government report released on

Thursday. To boost its oil and gas industry, it said Abu Dhabi had invested \$ 30 billion between March 2009 and 2010. The report from Abu Dhabi's Department of Economic Development also estimated the United Arab Emirates' proven oil reserves at 98.2 billion barrels. That figure is slightly higher than the 97.8 billion number released by the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) earlier this year. Output from Abu Dhabi's offshore oil fields is expected to reach 1.75 million bpd by 2016 from 650,000 bpd now, the report said. "With around 45 per cent of the emirates's oil reserves located offshore, Abu Dhabi's many underdeveloped or young offshore fields will play an important role," it said. Natural gas reserves were pegged at 5.8 trillion cubic metres (tcm). According to a survey, the OPEC member is producing below its capacity, with oil output at around 2.3 million bpd. OPEC has agreed output reductions in December 2008, when the oil price was crashing after a record rally and as global recession took hold. Kuwait-Russian committee members said Tuesday trade exchange and commercial cooperation between the two countries were not as solid at the political ties. Kuwait Minister of Oil and Minister of Information Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Sabah and Russian Energy Minister Sergey Shmatko, at a joint news conference at the end of the committee's two-day meeting that they acknowledged that commercial ties were not as strong as political relations. "We have to work harder than ever," they agreed. They said that both countries need to speed up the formation of two sub-committees, the first dealing with oil, gas and other energies, while the other deals with science and technology. Both ministers said they discussed possible opening of investment offices in the two countries, the exchange of information about these offices and needed feasibility studies before setting them up. Shaikh Abdullah bin Saleh al Saadi, Sultanate's Ambassador to China, has said that trade exchange between the Sultanate and China is on a rising trend and has recently touched more than \$ 12 billion. He added that the economic co-operation between the two countries is witnessing a big leap and is expected to double in the forthcoming stage due to strong ties. Al Saadi said that Oman's pavilion at Shanghai Expo 2010 succeeded in attracting a large number of visitors who showed interest in visiting the Sultanate as tourists and investors. BAHRAIN'S gas imports from Iran will not be affected by UN sanctions against Tehran, says Iranian Ambassador Hussain Amir Abdullahyan. He insisted they would not be impaired because of booming trade between the countries. "Tehran and Manama have lived together peacefully for centuries, and they do not allow any third party to undermine their bilateral ties," he told the GDN. "The UN Security Council sanctions against Iran do not cover the export of Iran's gas to Bahrain." Iran has the world's second largest natural gas reserves after Russia, accounting for around 15 per cent of the world's total reserves. "Iran has expressed readiness to provide Bahrain with its needed gas, in line with the priority of exporting gas to neighbours," said Mr Abdullahyan. "Investment in Iran's upstream oil and gas projects is proposed to any country interested in importing gas from Iran." The US announced new Iran sanctions on Tuesday, targeting senior officials of three organisations for allegedly supporting terrorist groups, including the Taliban in Afghanistan. The US Treasury Department, which announced the sanctions, also named 21 companies that it said were, in effect, front companies for Iran in its pursuit of illicit weaponry, including nuclear arms. By publicly naming the companies, Washington said it was making it easier for US companies to comply with their legal obligation not to do business with the Iranian government.

GCC

- Gulf, Arab, Western countries condemn Israeli attacks on Lebanon
- GCC Chief extolls historic visit of Saudi King to some Arab states
- Oil imports from Gulf constitute 63.3%
- Gulf bourses see mixed trade
- Gulf urged to control spending, shelve projects
- Gulf markets higher on global rally and oil gain
- GCC invested \$ 8bn in Turkey in five years

YEMEN

- Yemeni MPs back Saudi businessmen in land row
- KFAED grants Yemen USD six mln to finance small size projects
- Yemen president calls for launch of national dialogue
- Sana'a Forum FMs confirm support for unity and stability of Yemen
- IMF approves \$ 370m aid package to Yemen

SAUDI ARABIA

International Front

- Saudi, Syrian leaders tackle Lebanese tension
- US hopes Saudi, Syrian summit recommit to Lebanese sovereignty
- Saudi king, Abbas discuss developments of Palestinian cause
- King Abdullah's trip mobilized support for Arab cause
- Saudi Arabia commends security cooperation with Bahrain
- Disunity greatest enemy of Muslims: Abdullah

Social Front

- 1.7m Haj pilgrims expected from abroad: minister
- Saudi Arabia's population exceeds 27 million
- Saudi Arabia to halt BlackBerry services

Economy Front

- Saudi firms face '\$ 1.3m fine' over BlackBerry
- Saudi electricity generation to increase by 64.9% in 2019
- Saudi women sitting on \$ 11.9bn cash mountain
- New fleet to help Saudia meet increase in demand
- TASI logs third-biggest monthly gain in year
- Promising prospects for Saudi corporate sector

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- **Health awareness nonexistent for Saudi women**

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International Front

- **UAE condemns Israeli attack on Lebanese army**
- **UAE discusses bilateral relations with European envoys**
- **Khalifa orders urgent aid for flood-hit areas of Pakistan**
- **UAE sends 57 aid trucks to Gaza**
- **US remarks on BlackBerry issue disappointing: UAE**

Social Front

- **Abu Dhabi to integrate 20 schools in new year**
- **Emirates Identity Card to be tied to residency**
- **UAE to block BlackBerry services**

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- **Abu Dhabi to host World Future Energy Summit in Jan 2011**
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- **UAE banks need to change mindset: Kanoo**
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- **Kuwait envoy underlines foreign diplomacy**
- **Japanese-Kuwaiti cmte to play crucial role in boosting ties**
- **Kuwaiti-Russian talks to help boost relations**
- **Kuwait donates USD 5 mln to victims of Pakistan floods**
- **'Iraq to 'confirm' commitment to UN-demarcated Kuwait-Iraq border'**
- **Kuwait affirms support for Lebanon's territorial sanctity**
- **Kuwait asserts Britain's role in security, stability of Gulf**
- **Kuwaiti Ambassador in Moscow notes relations 'constantly growing**

Political Front

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- **No contract extensions for expatriates over 60 in Kuwait**
- **Kuwaiti MPs criticize appointment of seven deputies**

Social Front

- **Remembering Iraqi invasion, Kuwait cabinet urges firmer national unity**
- **Kuwait helps protect Islamic art heritage**

Economy Front

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- **Kuwaiti, Arab economists call for activating joint investment plan**
- **Experts stress importance of Kuwait economic summit**
- **Kuwait hires Citigroup for airline privatisation**
- **Kuwait, Russia seek stronger commercial ties**

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International Front

- **Action team formed to liaise with neighbouring countries: Oman**
- **Mideast girl guides gather in Oman to boost ties**
- **Sultanate-Iran relations strong, model for region**
- **Iranian defense minister to hold talks in Oman on cooperation**

Social Front

- **Campaign to improve Oman's public sector services**

Economy Front

- **Oman-China trade at \$ 12bn**
- **Omani, Chinese trade delegates explore JV possibilities**
- **Power sector regulator targets major reduction in electricity losses: Oman**
- **BlackBerry services to customers in Oman continues**
- **Oman Finance Ministry okays deals worth RO72m**
- **London report affirms Sultanate witnesses economic prosperity**

Health Front

BAHRAIN

International Front

- 'Partnership between Bahrain and US has made the ties stronger'
- Bahrain condemns terrorist attack on Jordan
- Saudi Arabia commends security cooperation with Bahrain

Social Front

- Young Bahrainis urged to vote carefully
- We have no intention of blocking BlackBerry: Bahrain TRA
- Rise in violence against women in Bahrain
- Bahrain witnesses decline in number of employed
- Wages boost for Bahrainis

Economy Front

- Bahrain's financial services sector grows 4pc
- Outlook for Bahrain' banking is maintained
- UN sanctions 'won't affect gas imports from Iran'
- Bahrain's Unicorn CEO to leave over strategy
- Expo city on way in Bahrain

Health Front

- Bahrain barbers advised to wear masks

QATAR

International Front

- Emir pledges support in Beirut meeting
- Qatar slams 'Israeli aggression'
- Talks explore ways to boost Qatar, Algeria ties
- Qatar, South Africa discuss bilateral issues
- Qatari Amir hopes Lebanese internally resolve squabbles

Political Front

- Qatar against any military action in region, says PM

Economy Front

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- **Al-Attiyah opens Qapco facility at Tripoli**
- **Residential rents expected to decline further in Qatar**
- **Qatar Airways receives one more long-range Boeing 777**

GCC

Gulf, Arab, Western countries condemn Israeli attacks on Lebanon

Gulf, Arab and Western countries condemned the Israeli attack against the Lebanese army in southern Lebanon earlier on Tuesday killing and wounding several servicemen. Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Abdulrahman Al-Attiyah described the Israeli attack as a blatant violation of UN resolution 1701 because it was breaching the UN-drawn blue line. The Israeli hostile acts against Lebanon was in violation of the UN Charter, the international law and UN resolutions, he said. These attacks are dangerous escalation in the region of which Israel is the sole to blame, said Al-Attiyah who called on the international community to intervene immediately to stop the Israeli aggression. He said the GCC countries were fully backing Lebanon and its people. Jordan, meanwhile, condemned the Israeli violations of UN resolution 1701 and rejected breach of Lebanese sovereignty. A statement by the Jordanian government expressed deep concern over the "dangerous escalation" on the Lebanese borders. It said Jordan was firmly backing Lebanon's security and stability.

The Arab League also condemned the Israeli cross-border violations and said they were "unacceptable." Chief of staff Hisham Yusuf told reporters Arab League secretary general Amr Moussa was holding intensive contacts with the Lebanese leaders to deal with the Israeli violations. He said a complaint would be lodged with the UN Security Council against the Israeli violations. Germany also expressed worries over the military clashes between the Israeli and Lebanese army forces. Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said in a statement he was deeply worried because of the clashes and felt sorry for the loss of lives.

GCC Chief extolls historic visit of Saudi King to some Arab states

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Oil imports from Gulf constitute 63.3%

Bilateral trade between Japan and the six GCC countries declined by 40.6 percent in 2009 to \$ 98.3 billion, compared to 171.7 billion in 2008. While Japan's imports from the GCC shrank by 44.02 percent to \$ 80.72 billion, exports contracted by 36.28 percent to \$ 17.56 billion. This decline in the trade value is attributed mainly to the decline in the price of crude oils - which fell by an average 40.5 percent in 2009, and partly to the economic recession that followed the global financial crisis. The value of crude oil imports from GCC to Japan covered 63.3 percent or \$ 62.25 billion of the total value of trade between the two sides. In spite of a steep fall in price, the volume of crude oil imports to Japan had also declined nearly by 9 percent, indicating the economic slowdown in Japan. Japan's trade with all GCC countries have declined in varying degrees during 2009. While UAE-Japan trade declined by 51.09 percent, trade with Saudi Arabia declined by 40.65 percent. Japan's imports from the GCC countries covered 14.6 percent of its total imports from the world over, whereas, its exports to the GCC covered just more than 3 percent of the total exports. Saudi Arabia topped the Japan-GCC trade, with a share of 35.20 percent, while UAE came second with a share of 29.74 percent. Qatar stood in the third place with 17.88 percent, followed by Kuwait with 10.42 percent. Oman and Bahrain had shared with trade at the rate of 5.78 percent and 0.98 percent respectively. The value of Japan's imports from Bahrain increased by 26.1 percent to \$ 524.1 million last year fuelled by increased import of petroleum and petroleum products, according to a report.

Import of crude oils and light oil preparations increased 72.1 percent (\$ 44.1 million) and 61.7 percent (\$ 427.5 million) respectively, said a report from the Japan External Trade Organization. The volume of import of light oil preparations rose by 160.8 percent to 6.93 million barrels, from just 0.26 million barrels in 2008. Under foodstuff, import of frozen crab, termed as "swimming crab" increased 36.3 percent to \$ 7.02 million. The volume of frozen crab import from Bahrain has been increasing constantly for the past few years. Against an import of 656,615kg of frozen crabs in 2007, the import increased to 1.4 million kg in 2008 and 1.7 million kg in 2009. Import of another traditional item - semi-finished aluminum, however, declined by 57.9 percent to 33.7 million in 2009 caused by decline in price as well as a decline in the volume of import. The import volume of unwrought aluminum decreased 43.80 percent and that of unwrought aluminum alloy 32.99 percent. Similarly, the average price of aluminum had also declined from \$ 2.79 per kg to \$ 2.02 per kg for unwrought aluminum and from \$ 2.83 per kg to \$ 1.81 per kg for unwrought aluminum alloy. Japan's export of machinery and equipment that covered 89.5 percent of Japan's total exports to Bahrain suffered a setback where the value was reduced to \$ 390.5 million in 2009 against 862.7 million in 2008. Though export of electrical machinery remained stable, export of general machinery and transport equipment recorded declines. Some of the items that recorded increase in exports were seamless pipes of iron or steel, non-ferrous metal products and non-metallic mineral products such as brake linings and brake pads.

Gulf bourses see mixed trade

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Gulf urged to control spending, shelve projects

A prominent Saudi newspaper on Sunday criticised Gulf oil producers for sharply boosting public spending and warned their economies could suffer given their heavy reliance on volatile crude export earnings. The Arabic language daily Aleqtisadiah, one of the largest business newspapers in the Middle East, said Saudi Arabia and its partners in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) need to heed IMF calls and control spiralling expenditure on the grounds they can not guarantee oil prices will remain strong. The paper singled out Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which it said have kept public expenditure at high levels "in times of both global prosperity and recession". While part of the excess spending is needed for development, another part is "close to consumption expenditure," it said in a rare critical editorial. "During crises, governments normally control expenditure until the picture becomes clear and fears and risks are dissipated...it is true that the GCC countries have been less affected by the global fiscal crisis , but it is also true that oil constitutes the pillar of their economies," it said. "We know that Gulf nations are not reeling under heavy fiscal deficits and debt as is the case of developed countries...but that does not mean the policy of high spending should continue all the time as this carries great risks in the absence of any guarantees oil will remain the main source of energy and prices will stabilise at the fair and logical level set by Opec at \$ 75 a barrel." The paper said the current oil price levels support GCC budgets but warned that they are not viable and could fall short of increases in budgeted spending. "We are not calling for paralysing public expenditure but for adapting actual spending to the actual income until the picture becomes clearer. when the IMF urges GCC states to rationalise expenditure, it is taking into consideration a bad experience in Western countries, where spending could go out of control and lead to a crisis that could bring down firm and veteran economies," it said.

Gulf markets higher on global rally and oil gain

Saudi Arabia's shares rose to the highest in more than a month, helping lead an advance in Gulf markets, as global equities rallied and earnings in Europe boosted investor confidence. Oil gained to a three-month high. Saudi Basic Industries Corp., the world's biggest petrochemical maker, closed at the highest in almost three weeks. Saudi Arabian Mining Co., the state-controlled metals producer known as Ma'aden, climbed for a fifth day. The Tadawul All Share Index advanced 0.3 per cent to 6,332.45 at the 3:30 p.m. close in Riyadh. Qatar's QE Index gained 0.4 per cent and the Bloomberg GCC 200 Index rose 0.3 per cent. European stocks surged to a three-month high as BNP Paribas SA and HSBC Holdings Plc led a rally in banks and basic-resource producers climbed with base metals. Asian shares and US index futures advanced. Crude oil increased as China's economic outlook and the rally in equities reassured investors the global recovery is on track.

GCC invested \$ 8bn in Turkey in five years

Gulf oil producers have invested nearly \$ 8billion in Turkey over the past five years, largely exceeding the nearly \$ 6.3 billion pumped by the United States into the Turkish market, according to official figures. "Investment and economic relations between Turkey and the Arab countries, mainly those in the Gulf, have largely developed over the past years," the Beirut-based Union of Arab Banks (UAB) said, citing Turkish government data. "Between 2005 and 2010, Gulf countries pumped nearly \$ eight billion into Turkey, compared to around \$ 6.3 billion invested by the US in that country.the Gulf investments accounted for 12 per cent of the total foreign capital in Turkey." In a report issued after organising a banking conference in Istanbul last month, UAB said Turkey also maintains strong trading ties with the Arab region, with their commercial exchange reaching nearly \$ 120 billion during 2005-2010. Turkey's exports to the Arab world totaled around \$ 80 billion during that period while its imports from the region stood at \$ 40 billion. In 2009, Turkey's exports to the Arab nations peaked at around \$ 21.3 billion, nearly 21 per cent the country's total exports. Its imports from Arab states were put at about \$ 7.6 billion last year, nearly 5.5 per cent of its total imports. According to the report, published in UAB's July magazine, around 2,073 Arab companies operate in various sectors in Turkey, covering industry, transport, farming, water, tourism, hotels, financial services and real estate. Nearly 1.46 million Arabs visited Turkey in 2009, constituting 5.4 per cent of the total number of tourists to that country, the report showed.

YEMEN

Yemeni MPs back Saudi businessmen in land row

Hadramaut MPs have refused to return to Yemen's Parliament until land seized in Mukalla is returned to a group of Saudi businessmen. Mabkhout Bin Madhi, speaking on behalf of the 16 revolting politicians, told Arab News that they would continue to boycott Parliament until the businessmen got their land back. "We suspended our membership in Parliament as an objection to the violations of judicial decisions that stated the land belongs to the businessmen," he said. The dispute began when two influential Yemeni businessmen allegedly claimed ownership of part of the land.

Bin Madhi warned that the dispute could have an impact on investment in Yemen. "The delay of the case could undermine the investment climate. We want to encourage Saudi entrepreneurs to invest heavily in Yemen, not to stand in their way," he added. The MPs sent a memorandum to Parliament on July 7 claiming that no action had been taken over the dispute. The memo referred to eight verdicts announced by the primary court in Mukalla, the Hadramaut Appeals Court and the Supreme Court in favor of the Saudis. The Saudi businessmen believed affected by the dispute include Mohammed Hussein Al-Amoudi, Abdullah Ahmed Bougshan, Issa'a Mohammed Awadh Bin Laden, Ahmed Othman Al-Amoudi, Alawi Mohammed Baroum, Suleiman Bin Laden, Mohammed Nasser Habtour and Mohammed Bamflah. The MPs have given Parliament 10 days to resolve the issue before they suspend their membership.

KFAED grants Yemen USD six mln to finance small size projects

An Agreement was signed on Tuesday in Sanaa between Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) and the Republic of Yemen, whereby the Fund would grant USD six million to help finance small projects through KFAED's Decent Life Resources Department which is run by the Fund. KFAED's department will utilize direct and indirect financing to small size projects like food production, support services like marketing and food storages. Kuwait's Embassy Acting Charge D'Affairs in Yemen Saud Al-Harbi told KUNA the grant was based on the initiative made by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in the fourth Islamic Economic Forum held in Kuwait in May 1st, 2008. The grant aims to support the social and economic development of the country. Al-Harbi expressed content for the level of bilateral cooperation with Yemen, including the developing and exceptional relations between the two countries.

Yemen president calls for launch of national dialogue

President Ali Abdullah Saleh has called on the national dialogue committee to hold its first meeting next Wednesday. The committee consists of the General People Congress (GPC) and the opposition alliance of the Joint Meeting Pastries (JMP). Under the auspices of President Saleh, the Yemeni parties, represented in the Parliament, have signed a joint minutes to implement the 2009 February agreement. In order to carry out the agreement of 23 February 2009, the GPC and the JMP agreed on the formation of a preparatory committee and the preparation of a comprehensive national dialogue, as stipulated in the 2009 February Agreement. The agreement's first article states the following: All political parties and civil society organizations shall be given the chance to discuss the constitutional amendments necessary to develop the political and electoral system of the nation, including the proportional system.

Sana'a Forum FMs confirm support for unity and stability of Yemen

Foreign ministers of Sana'a Forum for Cooperation confirmed on Sunday support of their countries for unity and stability of Yemen. They also affirmed impotence of enhancing cooperation between member states of the forum to serve interests of the peoples of the bloc. In the opening session of the 12th meeting of the foreign ministers of the forum in Sana'a, Foreign Minister of Ethiopia Seyoum Mesfin praised wise leadership of President Ali Abdullah Saleh to

deal all internal and external challenges facing Yemen, affirming support of his country for the unity and stability of Yemen. He said that the forum promised to respect of peace and stability of African horn and south region of Red Sea as peace and security are important assurance for cooperation in development fields.

For his part, the Foreign Minister of Djibouti Mahamoud Ali Youssouf also affirmed support of his country for unity and stability of Yemen, congratulating Yemen on signature of the agreement between the General People Congress and opposition parties. He called for offering support for the Somali government headed by President Shiekh Sharif Ahmed. Sudanese State Minister for Foreign Affairs Kamal Hassan Ali highlighted way of president Saleh to deal with problems by dialogue in order to create factors of stability in the country, valuing unlimited support of president Saleh for the activities of the Sana'a forum. He also urged international community to support efforts of achieving peace in Somalia. He confirmed commitment of Sudan to carry out peace agreement in south of Sudan, saying that the Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir pledged to respect choice of citizens of south to determine their fate with unification or separation.

IMF approves \$ 370m aid package to Yemen

The International Monetary Fund on Monday announced it would provide Yemen with a three-year loan package of 369.8 million dollars aimed at supporting the impoverished nation's economic reforms. "An initial disbursement equivalent to \$ 52.8 million is available to the Yemeni authorities immediately, with subsequent disbursements subject to semi-annual reviews," the IMF said in a statement. "The goal of the authorities' economic program is to achieve high and sustained growth and reduce poverty," it added. The country on the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula is among the poorest in the world, and its government is struggling to maintain security and political stability as it cracks down on extremist networks. Militants are known to be regrouping in Yemen, the ancestral homeland of Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, and the country has witnessed repeated attacks claimed by the jihadists on foreign missions, tourist sites and oil facilities. The IMF cautioned that Yemen faces significant challenges in overcoming "recent unfavorable economic and security developments," and said authorities need to wean the economy off of oil revenues - which constitute 70 per cent of state revenues - as it embarks on a three-year economic programme. "Yemen is confronted with a range of difficult economic challenges related to its heavy dependence on declining oil revenues, widespread poverty, and water shortages," acting IMF chair Naoyuki Shinohara said in the statement.

SAUDI ARABIA

International Front

Saudi, Syrian leaders tackle Lebanese tension

The Custodian of The Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia and Syrian President Bashar Al Assad met Lebanon's rival leaders yesterday to stave off a crisis over a tribunal that may indict Hezbollah members in the killing of Lebanese statesman Rafik Al Hariri. Hariri's 2005 assassination set off a huge political tremor in Lebanon, where the

repercussions are still playing out five years later. The dramatic joint Saudi-Syrian visit to Beirut demonstrated urgent Arab concern to calm tensions in Lebanon. A statement from the Lebanese presidency said the leaders had discussed “ways to reinforce national accord and Lebanon’s stability” and stressed the need to avoid violence. Assad and King Abdullah are alarmed by the political ferment set off by Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah this month when he said Prime Minister Saad Al Hariri had told him the tribunal would indict “rogue” Hezbollah members for his father’s killing. Nasrallah says Lebanon must reject any such indictments from the tribunal, which he calls “an Israeli project”. Hariri, a Saudi ally whose unity cabinet includes Hezbollah and other pro-Syrian factions, supports the UN-backed tribunal’s efforts to bring his father’s assassins to justice. The Hague-based tribunal says talk of indictments is speculation and the prosecutor will file them when he is ready. Disputes between a Hariri-led alliance and Hezbollah brought Lebanon close to renewed civil war in 2008, when the Shia guerrillas briefly overran Beirut. But a Qatari-brokered deal backed by Damascus and Riyadh has produced relative calm since. Lebanese political analyst Suleiman Taqi Al Deen said the Saudi-Syrian visit was “important, exceptional and pre-emptive”. “It is the first time it happens before a situation in Lebanon explodes. It is an understanding to defuse the Lebanese problem because if it explodes its consequences will be very dangerous on the region,” he told Reuters.

US hopes Saudi, Syrian summit recommits to Lebanese sovereignty

The United States hoped on Friday that the summit between Saudi Arabia, Syria and Lebanon would recommit to Lebanese sovereignty. Assistant Secretary of State for public diplomacy Philip Crowley told reporters that leaders in the region should “themselves talk about their achievements,” commenting on the summit in Beirut today between Saudi King Abdullah, Syrian President Bashar Assad and Lebanese President Michel Suleiman. “There is heightened concern about the situation in Lebanon. We are committed to Lebanon’s sovereignty. It is not negotiable ... and we think it reflects the commitment that King Abdullah has to do everything possible to pursue peace in the region,” he added. Crowley hoped that there will be “a recommitment to Lebanese sovereignty, there will be an understanding to try to restrain those elements within Lebanon who have precipitated conflict in the past. And we would hope to avoid that in the future.”

Saudi king, Abbas discuss developments of Palestinian cause

King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, met Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, here at his palace Wednesday evening. Earlier on his arrival, Abbas was received by Prince Khaled Al-Faisal, Emir of Makkah, at King Abdul Aziz International Airport in Jeddah. The Palestinian president commended King’s efforts to unify Arab ranks and mobilize international support for the Palestinian cause. Commenting on the King’s recent visits to Canada, the US, Morocco, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, he said those trips have not only helped boost Arab unity but have also mobilized international support for Palestine, which is among King Abdullah’s top priorities. The two leaders discussed the Palestinian issue and sufferings of the Palestinian people as well as international efforts to restart the peace process to reach a just and comprehensive solution to ensure the right of Palestinians to establish their independent state on their soil with Al-Quds as its capital, in accordance with the legitimate international resolutions and the Arab peace initiative.

King Abdullah's trip mobilized support for Arab cause

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah on Monday briefed the Council of Ministers on the outcome of his six-week-long foreign tour, which took him to Canada, the United States, Morocco, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. Presiding over the weekly Cabinet meeting at Al-Salam Palace here, King Abdullah expressed his appreciation of the tremendous cooperation extended by Arab leaders during his tour to strengthen Arab unity and unify Arabs on major global issues. The king said his foreign tour was instrumental in mobilizing international support to achieve progress in the Middle East peace process and restore Arab rights, especially the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent Palestinian state. "The Cabinet highly appreciated the efforts of King Abdullah and other Arab leaders to strengthen Arab unity to confront challenges, especially the Israeli challenge," Culture and Information Minister Abdul Aziz Khoja told the Saudi Press Agency. The Cabinet commended the "historic visit" of King Abdullah and President Bashar Assad of Syria to Beirut on Friday and their meeting with Lebanese President Michel Suleiman. The Cabinet referred to the international Islamic conference organized by the Muslim World League in Makkah on the occasion of its 50th anniversary. Second Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior Prince Naif opened the conference on Saturday on behalf of the king.

Saudi Arabia commends security cooperation with Bahrain

Saudi Second Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz commended Sunday security cooperation with Bahrain which would ultimately secure safety of citizens. Prince Nayef, in a statement during a meeting with Bahraini Interior Minister Sheikh Rashed Al-Khalifa, said the security cooperation between Riyadh and Manama would restore order in both Gulf countries. Sheikh Rashed, quoted by state-run news agency (SPA), hailed the Saudi approval of a proposal to developing King Fahad Causeway. "The care and interest of the leaderships of the two countries push us to provide all means of comfort for citizens of both countries," he said. The Bahraini minister, who arrived here earlier today, commended the high level of security cooperation and coordination with Saudi Arabia. The Saudi and Bahraini ministers held official talks on security collaboration.

Disunity greatest enemy of Muslims: Abdullah

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah on Saturday described disunity as "the greatest enemy" of Muslims and called upon Islamic scholars across the world to work for unity. In his keynote speech at the opening of an international Islamic conference here, he commended the Muslim World League's (MWL) efforts to spread the message of Islam and confront extremism and terrorism. "Disunity is the beginning of downfall ... rather it is the greatest enemy of people ... Muslims should beware of division and improve their relations," he said quoting a speech made by King Abdul Aziz at the first Makkah conference 86 years ago. Second Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior Prince Naif opened the three-day conference, organized by the MWL to mark its 50th anniversary, on behalf of King Abdullah and read out the king's speech.

King Abdullah wished success for the conference, which will review the MWL's activities and

programs and set out its future strategy. It will also discuss the situation of Muslim minorities in different parts of the world and the problems facing them. The king urged participating scholars to focus on three important issues: spreading the moderate teachings of Islam, strengthening Muslim unity by improving their relations and trying to solve problems facing the world. "We are happy over the contributions made by the MWL to treat Muslims' problems, unify their ranks, spread the true picture of Islam and confront epidemics such as extremism and terrorism that have sneaked into some Muslim societies," the king said. King Abdullah also noted the organization's efforts in promoting dialogue between religious faiths and cultures. He was apparently referring to the MWL's role in organizing the international interfaith dialogue conferences in Makkah, Madrid and Geneva. The king's speech referred to Saudi Arabia's efforts to strengthen Muslim unity and solidarity. "Ever since its formation, the Kingdom has given priority to Muslim unity. Our father King Abdul Aziz said he loved Muslim unity more than anything else."

Social Front

1.7m Haj pilgrims expected from abroad: minister

The number of pilgrims from abroad arriving for Haj this year will be 1.7 million, according to Fouad Abdulsalam Al-Farsy, Minister of Haj. Al Farsy made the announcement while inspecting the ministry's offices in the holy city of Madinah and inaugurating a unified electronic housing contract for pilgrims. Al Farsy said that he announced the number after it was included in a report submitted to Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz, Second Deputy Prime Minister. He said that compared to last year, 70,000 more Umra visas have been issued this year.

Saudi Arabia's population exceeds 27 million

Kingdom's total population reached 27,136,977 including 18,707,576 Saudis, according to the preliminary results of a general census. A statement issued Wednesday by the General Statistics and Information Department said of the 18, 707, 576 Saudi citizens, 9,527,173 (50.9 percent) are males and 9,180,403 (49.1 percent) are females. The statement said that there are 8,429,401 expatriates in the Kingdom, including 5,932,974 (70.4 percent) males and 2,496,427 (29.6 percent) females. Statistics show that there are 4,643,151 housing units in the Kingdom. As per the last general census conducted in September 2004, the total population of the Kingdom stood at 22,673,538 including 6,144,236 expatriates. It estimated the number of houses and residential flats in the Kingdom at 3,990,559. Detailed results of the census will be published as they are completed, said the statement.

Saudi Arabia to halt BlackBerry services

Saudi Arabia is set to suspend BlackBerry services on Friday as concerns spread across the Middle East and parts of Asia over security issues with smartphones. Telecommunications authorities have not said exactly when the ban will kick in, and BlackBerry users in the ultra-conservative Muslim kingdom were able to access messaging services on Friday morning. "It still works," a user in the western port city of Jeddah told AFP. Saudi Arabia's Communications and Information Technology Commission said Tuesday it ordered the kingdom's three mobile

phone providers to block BlackBerry services or face a 1.3-million-dollar fine. The regulator said “the way BlackBerry services are provided currently does not meet the regulatory criteria of the commission and the licencing conditions,” in a statement carried by Saudi Arabia’s official news agency SPA. BlackBerry’s encrypted emails and data are stored on servers in Canada, the headquarters of its maker, Research in Motion, meaning third parties like intelligence agencies cannot monitor communications. There are more than 700,000 BlackBerry subscribers in Saudi Arabia, a highly security-conscious monarchy with a rigid Islamic social code and strictly censored Internet service. The shutdown order came after the United Arab Emirates said it will cut off the messenger, email and web browsing services of BlackBerrys in the Gulf state on October 11 over security concerns.

Economy Front

Saudi firms face ‘\$ 1.3m fine’ over BlackBerry

Saudi telecom companies will face a fine of \$ 1.3 million if they fail to comply with the regulator’s order to suspend BlackBerry services, a company official said on Wednesday. “The companies will comply with the decision as those who don’t will be fined SR5 million Saudi (\$ 1.3 million),” the official from one of Saudi Arabia’s three telecom companies said. “We will also comply for security reasons,” he added. “There are big hopes in convincing” BlackBerry maker Research in Motion (RIM) “to provide Saudi Arabia with a local server,” he said, adding the three companies met RIM on Wednesday and that more meetings would follow. However, each of the three telecom providers has its own alternative plan in case negotiations with the Canadian maker of BlackBerry fail, he said, without elaborating. Saudi Communications and Information Technology Commission has ordered the suspension of BlackBerry services from Friday as the company had failed to meet its demands.

Saudi electricity generation to increase by 64.9% in 2019

Saudi Arabia will account for 16.04 percent of Middle East and Africa (MEA) regional power generation by 2014, with a growing theoretical supply surplus if there is sufficient additional investment in capacity, Business Monitor International (BMI) said in its latest “Saudi Arabia Power Report” released on Tuesday. BMI’s MEA power generation estimate for 2009 is 1,225 terawatt hours (TWh), representing an increase of 1.9 percent over the previous year. “We are forecasting an increase in regional generation to 1,572TWh by 2014, representing a rise of 23.2 percent between 2010 and the end of the period,” the report noted. Thermal power generation in 2009 is estimated by BMI at 1,064TWh, accounting for 86.9 percent of the total electricity supplied in the region. “Our forecast for 2014 is 1,293TWh, implying 18.8 percent growth in 2010- 2014 that reduces the market share of thermal generation slightly to 82.3 percent - thanks in part to environmental concerns that should be promoting renewable such as hydro-electricity and nuclear generation.” Saudi Arabia’s thermal generation in 2009 was an estimated 199TWh, or 18.67 percent of the regional total. By 2014, the country is expected to account for 19.46 percent of thermal generation. Oil was the dominant fuel for Saudi Arabia in 2009, accounting for an estimated 61.9 percent of primary energy demand (PED), followed by gas at 38.6 percent, the report further said. Regional energy demand is forecast to reach 1,075mn tons of oil equivalent (toe) by 2014, representing

19.3 percent growth over the period since 2010. Saudi Arabia's estimated 2009 market share of 21.32 percent is set to ease to 20.85 percent by 2014.

Saudi women sitting on \$ 11.9bn cash mountain

A large portion of the Kingdom's wealth is in the hands of its women who are believed to be sitting on cash totaling \$ 11.9 billion. "The Kingdom has a veritable treasure trove of human and financial capital in the form of its women who control a large portion of the country's wealth," said a report released on Monday by the Cayman Islands-based asset management firm Al-Masah Capital. Women constitute almost 45 percent of the country's population, and have a literacy rate of 79 percent. Yet, only 65 percent of them are employed, revealing the huge potential for women employment. In fact 78.3 percent of unemployed women are university graduates. The report, titled "The Saudi Woman — A catalyst for change," stated that women could become a major growth driver for the country's diversification policy with their considerable wealth, which is lying idle, being channeled into the country's money supply. "Increasing the contribution of women in key economic sectors can speed up economic diversification. Effective channeling of the huge funds held by Saudi women that currently yield negligible returns into enterprises or investment activities can earn profitable returns as well as boost money supply," said Shailesh Dash, founder of Al-Masah Capital.

Saudi women are not alone. Women in the Middle East controlled 22 percent or \$ 0.7 trillion of the region's total assets under management (AUM) in 2009. The region, consequently, ranked fifth globally in terms of AUM controlled by women. "Women in Saudi Arabia account for a potential pool of human and financial capital with the power and ability to bring about significant social and economic change. But, this can only be done within the right parameters," he said, adding that the change ought to be evolutionary. "This will not be effective and long lasting if it is done outside the current norms and social etiquettes of Saudi Arabia. For this change to be effective, it needs to grow and develop organically within the boundaries of what is acceptable and understandable in Saudi society. "The true potential lies in this development happening in parallel with positive growth in the mindset of society. Only then will we see the real impact of the Saudi woman," said Dash. Saudi Arabia also had the lowest national women labor participation rate, which was put at 20.1 percent in 2009 compared to neighboring countries like Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. Toward that end, establishing a just workplace for both men and women can generate significant economic value. Greater educational support for women to take up jobs in IT and communications can increase the government's return on investments in the country's education system. While the government was the largest employer of women in the country, their exposure to the private sector was minimal accounting for a mere 0.8 percent of total private sector employees. Women resources can help aid Saudi Arabia in its diversification efforts from oil wealth, fostering employment opportunities on the one hand and a business-enabling environment for women entrepreneurs on the other. This is the need of the hour given their significant human capital and financial muscle, said Dash, adding that public and private sector policy should be targeted toward it.

New fleet to help Saudia meet increase in demand

Saudi Arabian Airlines (SAA) announced Friday that the arrival of a new fleet of planes will make extra seat capacity available and help it meet the increasing demand for both domestic and international flights. According to Abdul Aziz Al-Hazmi, Assistant Director General of SAA, the airline has put 17 Airbus 320 aircraft into service. "These aircraft have 24 seats in business class and 96 seats in economy, and they are an important addition to the SAA operational system," Al-Hazmi said. He added that three larger Airbus 330 aircraft, each with 36 seats in business class and 262 seats in economy, have also been added to the service. "This plane is one of the newest aircraft in the world with outstanding operational performance, providing comfort and luxury, in addition to dozens of audio and video programs to satisfy all tastes," he said. "Another feature of this plane is that it allows passengers to use their mobile phones and enjoy surfing the Internet," Hazmi said, adding that there are also services for patients and disabled people. Al-Hazmi also pointed out that SAA will be receiving 39 Airbus aircraft by the end of this year. He hoped that the awaited fleet would help the airline meet the increasing demand on domestic and international flights. "It will also help us operate additional flights when needed," he said.

TASI logs third-biggest monthly gain in year

Saudi Arabian shares rose, with the Tadawul All Share Index recording the third-biggest monthly gain in a year on Saturday, closing 0.27 percent higher at 6,283.73 points. The 143-company gauge rose 0.3 percent to 6283.73, the highest since June 28, at the 3:30 p.m. close in Riyadh, after falling as much as 0.2 percent. Al Rajhi Bank, the biggest publicly traded lender in Saudi Arabia, was the leading mover, while Samba Financial services, the Kingdom's second biggest lender by market value, drove lagging movers. Tadawul gained 3.1 percent in July, the highest monthly gain since March. "Today's small uptick is nothing to call home about," said John Sfakianakis, chief economist at Banque Saudi Fransi in Riyadh. "Oil has been hovering in the high \$ 70s and global equities have been rather flat as the summer lull is taking hold in Europe and the US." European, US and developing-nation markets declined this week. The Stoxx Europe 600 Index slipped 0.2 percent, as the S&P 500 fell 0.1 percent. The MSCI Emerging Markets Index, which tracks developing- nation equity markets, declined 0.2 percent on Friday, paring its monthly gain to 8 percent. Crude for September delivery settled at \$ 78.95 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange yesterday. Futures gained 4.4 percent in July and 18 percent in the past year. Saudi Arabia holds one-fifth of the world's proven oil reserves.

Al Rajhi rose 0.6 percent to SR79.5, the highest since June 14. Samba declined the most since July 25, losing 1.2 percent to SR60. Riyadh Bank, Saudi Arabia's third-largest lender by market value, slid 1.4 percent to SR28.6. Saudi Basic Industries Corp., the world's largest petrochemical maker, was unchanged at SR86.5. Saudi Electricity Co. rose 0.7 percent to SR14.15, the highest since April 2008, after the state-controlled power producer awarded a SR223 million contract to Mohammed Al-Ojaimi Contracting to link a transformer station in northern Riyadh with the electric grid. Saudi Investment Bank rose to the highest since October 2009, gaining 2.2 percent to SR20.65, as the Kingdom's third-smallest publicly traded bank reduced provisions on bad loans by 4.2 percent in the second quarter.

Promising prospects for Saudi corporate sector

Saudi Arabia's listed companies basked in a staggering 47 per cent growth in their half yearly net income, reflecting promising prospects for the business environment in the kingdom, its largest bank said on Tuesday. Despite the surge, some sectors recorded a decline in net profitability while second quarter earnings were generally below expectations. The combined profits of 133 of the 143 banks and other local companies listed on the Saudi bourse totaled around SR38.5bn in the first half of this year, an increase of nearly 47 per cent over the second half of 2009, National Commercial Bank (NCB) said in a study sent to Emirates Business. "The corporate results demonstrate an environment where fundamentals are promising. Companies have delivered a strong 47 per cent net-profitability growth amounting in the first half of 2010," NCB said. But it noted that the kingdom's 11 listed bank recorded a decline of around 9.5 per cent in their net earnings to nearly SR11.72bn in the first half of this year from SR12.94bn in the same period of 2009. Putting together NCB's net-earnings of SR2.69bn with those of 11 banks, the Saudi banking industry appeared to have reached a point of equilibrium with a still mild soft patch of 5.3 per cent shrinkage to profitability growth in an unusually uncertain economic environment, the study said.

Health Front

Health awareness nonexistent for Saudi women

Although access to health information is easy and available through magazines and websites, Saudi families are still living unhealthy lives, according to health experts. The majority of Saudis are still indulging themselves in unhealthy food and habits. According to the experts, there is still a huge lack of awareness of basic health principles, while many have called for the introduction of health-related subjects at schools as early as the elementary stage. Research from several local and international health organizations, including the national First Care and Preventive Medicine, confirmed that Saudi Arabia is ranked as one of the worst countries in terms of obesity, diabetes, blood pressure, osteoporosis and cancer rates. The World Health Organization's (WHO) latest report in 2008 focuses on the importance of primary health care. "The majority of Saudi women are careless about protecting their health. This carelessness is also affecting children. Most Saudi children become victims of their unhealthy mothers," said Dr. Munirah Balahmar, consultant of community medicine and head of the health awareness unit at the First Care and Preventive Medicine Department. "The Saudi mothers' lack of health education affects their lifestyle negatively. Large numbers of Saudi children are suffering from obesity and diabetes at early age." She added that Saudi women are ignoring basic health activities such as eating a balanced diet and exercise.

Dr. Wafa Faqih, director general of the First National Association for Women's Care in Jeddah and assistant professor for King Abdul Aziz University's Faculty of Medicine, agrees there is an absence of health awareness among women. "Women have ignored advice on how to protect their health. Most Saudi women are suffering from osteoporosis, cancer and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The absence of awareness on how to safeguard themselves have increased the risk of women contracting these diseases," she said. She claimed 30 percent of women are risking death because of osteoporosis, while 90 percent were ignoring advice on how to avoid

sexual diseases. “Many Saudi women are suffering from STDs but they do not know how to avoid catching them. Some sexual diseases can lead to infertility,” Faqih said, adding that some Saudi women are also indulging in illegal drugs, herbs, and online medication. “This trend is mostly visible in women who want to lose weight, prevent hair loss, treat their skin, and generally look younger without consulting specialist physicians,” she added. “These women are basically tired and do not consult a doctor. They discuss their problems with friends and receive advice from the Internet, via television programs and buy drugs over the counter. “To avoid this dangerous behavior, there is an urgent need to change Saudi society’s perspective on health care. It is also vital that periodic health checkups are made compulsory in all regions of the Kingdom, including remote rural areas.” She called on the Ministry of Education to implement a new syllabus on health care for primary school students.

UAE

International Front

UAE condemns Israeli attack on Lebanese army

The UAE on Wednesday condemned Israel’s attack on the Lebanese army in south Lebanon as a flagrant infringement and blatant violation of the UN Security Council resolution No 1701. Sultan Al Ali, Director of Media Affairs and Government Communications Department at the Foreign Ministry, expressed the UAE’s solidarity with Lebanon, calling for implementation of the UN Security Council resolution to avoid any repercussions that impact security and stability in the region.

UAE discusses bilateral relations with European envoys

Ambassador Mohammed Saif Hilal Al Shehhi, Director of European Affairs Department at the Foreign Ministry, separately received Ambassadors Dominique Jeremy of Britain in the UAE, and Klaus-Peter Brandes of Germany, and Deputies Chief of Mission Douglas Greene of the US, Vincent Floreani of France and Christian Lungarotti of Italy. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations and aspects of cooperation in different fields between the UAE and the United Kingdom, the United States as well as Germany, France and Italy.

Khalifa orders urgent aid for flood-hit areas of Pakistan

The President, His Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan ordered urgent delivery of relief materials to shelter displaced people in the flood hit areas of Pakistan. This came as General Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, received here on Sunday Pakistan president Asif Ali Zardari, who made a short visit to the UAE en route to Europe. Shaikh Mohammed conveyed Shaikh Khalifa’s condolences on the victims of floods. Gen. Shaikh Mohammed expressed his sympathy with the families of the victims and reiterated UAE’s support to Pakistan in these difficult times. The meeting was attended by National Security Advisor Shaikh Hazza bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Shaikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan. President Zardari expressed appreciation to Shaikh Khalifa and Gen.

Shaikh Mohammed and praised the UAE's unlimited support and efforts to alleviate suffering of the people affected by the floods. The meeting also discussed bilateral relations and ways to enhance them, as well as regional developments and issues of mutual of interest. Over 1,000 people have been killed and 500,000 displaced by the floods in Pakistan — the worst in the country since 1929.

UAE sends 57 aid trucks to Gaza

A UAE humanitarian convoy consisting of 57 trucks laden with essential food items and medical supplies left here on Sunday heading for Gaza. The aid convoy was sent by UAE Red Crescent Authority (RCA) as per the directives of the President, His Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, and General Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces.

US remarks on BlackBerry issue disappointing: UAE

The UAE Ambassador to the United States, Yousef Al Otaiba, described on Monday the US State Department's comments on UAE's announcement to suspend certain BlackBerry services from October 11 as "disappointing and contradicted the US government's own approach to telecommunications regulation". Al Otaiba said: "In fact, the UAE is exercising its sovereign right and is asking for exactly the same regulatory compliance, and with the same principles of judicial and regulatory oversight, that BlackBerry grants the US and other governments and nothing more." He said: "Importantly, the UAE requires the same compliance as the US for the very same reasons: to protect national security and to assist in law enforcement. It is regrettable that after several years of discussions, BlackBerry is still not compliant with UAE regulatory requirements even as it complies with similar policies in other countries." Earlier, the State Department said the United States is "disappointed" at the decision by the UAE to halt key BlackBerry messaging services because of security concerns. "We are disappointed at this announcement," Philip J. Crowley, spokesman for the State Department, said. "We will be clarifying with the UAE" the reasons for announcement. "It sets a dangerous precedent," said Crowley.

Meanwhile, foreign visitors with BlackBerry phones will not be able to use the device for e-mail, messenger and web browsing in the UAE after October 11 when the country will be suspending these services to domestic customers. "Roaming for BlackBerry messenger, e-mail and web browsing will also be suspended as on October 11. This means that even visitors from abroad will not be able to use their BlackBerry phones from that day for these services. Whatever services that are being suspended within the country will be BARRED to roaming services as well," a spokesperson for the Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA) said here on Monday. The TRA announced its decision on Sunday to suspend these services of BlackBerry as Research In Motion (RIM), the Canadian firm which makes the device, failed to comply with the telecommunication regulations of the UAE. But it was not clear on Sunday whether the suspension would affect the visitors from abroad, and the latest clarification from the TRA is

likely to have an impact on the global customer base of BlackBerry as well, according to telecom analysts.

Social Front

Abu Dhabi to integrate 20 schools in new year

The Abu Dhabi Education Council will integrate 20 government schools and will open 11 new school buildings in Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and Al Gharbiya for the 2010-2011 academic year. The decision was part of ADEC's 10-year strategic plan that was created for the improvement of the educational system infrastructure through construction of modern schools as well as the renovation of some existing buildings. "The integration of the schools was aimed at upgrading safety and security of the students, in addition to ensuring the ideal geographical distribution of students," said Mohamed Salem Al Dhaheri, executive director of School Operations at ADEC, noting that in previous school terms, some schools had only 180 students. "According to the strategic plan developed by the Council, the total number of students shall be approximately 1,000, as per the designs of the new schools, provided that the capacity for each class does not exceed 30 students," Dhaheri said. Some of the new schools will be divided into separate sections for male and female, but will remain under one management.

Emirates Identity Card to be tied to residency

The Emirates Identity Card will be required for residents to renew their residency visas in the UAE, a senior official has said. The Emirates Identity Authority (EIDA) will begin to introduce the requirement gradually in the coming months, starting from the northern emirates and moving across the country. Around six million residents have yet to register their details with the authority, and the deadline is December 2010. Dr Ali Al Khouri, Deputy Head of the Higher Committee at EIDA, said the plan would be introduced in Umm Al Quwain, and then in Abu Dhabi, Ajman and Fujairah. "It's a gradual implementation to start within those particular emirates, then the rest," said Al Khouri. The news comes as the deadline for registering 6million residents on the ID card scheme draws nearer. Al Khoury said there were already signs of a last-minute rush. "For the past four years, the authority had been able to register around a million residents," he said. "Lately 500,000 residents have been registered in only six-months.

UAE to block BlackBerry services

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) confirmed today that Blackberry Messenger, Blackberry E-mail and Blackberry Web-browsing services in the UAE will be suspended as of October 11, 2010. The suspension is a result of the failure of ongoing attempts, dating back to 2007, to bring Blackberry services in the UAE in line with UAE telecommunications regulations. Both telecommunications operators - Etisalat and du - were informed of the decision earlier today. The notification was delivered with an instruction to ensure minimal consumer disruption in the provision of alternative services.

All Blackberry services fall within the UAE regulatory framework developed by the TRA since 2007, however because of Blackberry's technical configuration, some Blackberry services

operate beyond the enforcement these regulations. Blackberry data is immediately exported off-shore, where it is managed by a foreign, commercial organization. Blackberry data services are currently the only data services operating in the UAE where this is the case. Today's decision is based on the fact that, in their current form, certain Blackberry services allow users to act without any legal accountability, causing judicial, social and national security concerns for the UAE.

Economy Front

UAE among top 20 medical tourism destination

The UAE is among the world's top 20 destinations for medical tourism, according to a health tourism survey that has also revealed that the industry has yet to reach its full potential. The survey done by a UAE-based health travel consultant has revealed that 94 per cent of medical tourism industry insiders believe their sector has yet to reach its full potential. The report shows that confusion, a lack of information and fear about complications following surgery are the main reasons for patient reluctance to cross international borders for health services. The findings are particularly significant for the region, as the UAE appears at number 11 for countries identified with medical tourism.

“The medical tourism industry is going through an exciting phase where international and intra-regional activities are taking place within this sector of the health market,” said Dr Prem Jagyasi, architect of the survey and an experienced consultant in the healthcare travel sector. “The responses received clearly revealed that there is an overwhelming perception among industry leaders that there is so much more that can be achieved,” he added. The purpose of the health tourism survey, according to Dr Jagyasi, was to gain valuable insights into aspects of medical tourism from professionals who are closely involved with the industry.

Abu Dhabi to host World Future Energy Summit in Jan 2011

The fourth edition of the World Future Energy Summit (WFES) will take place in Abu Dhabi from January 17, 2011. Held under the patronage of Shaikh Muhammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, and hosted by Masdar, the four-day WFES is being organised by Reed Exhibitions. The annual event launched in 2008 has evolved into a must-attend programme for world leaders, investors, policy makers, researchers, financial institutions and experts dedicated to renewable energy. The focal theme for the ensuing edition of WFES will be ‘Enabling Future Energy Solutions’, and a key topic of discussion will be how to utilise the MENA region's enormous potential to become one of the world's largest producers of renewable energy, according to a statement issued by the organisers. MENA region is receiving increasing global attention as its potential as a source of renewable energy production emerges. “Recent research from Booz & Company indicates that as a result of high solar radiation levels and good wind resources, the region has the potential to offer 45 per cent of the world's total renewable energy generation based on measurement of existing generation capacity,” the statement said. The research showed that if this resource is fully harnessed the region could be capable of producing three times the world's total current power demand, the statement said.

UAE to boost oil output capacity by 30 per cent

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) aims to increase its oil production capacity by 29.6 per cent to 3.5 million barrels per day (bpd) by 2018 from 2.7 million bpd now, said a government report released on Thursday. To boost its oil and gas industry, it said Abu Dhabi had invested \$ 30 billion between March 2009 and 2010. The report from Abu Dhabi's Department of Economic Development also estimated the United Arab Emirates' proven oil reserves at 98.2 billion barrels.

That figure is slightly higher than the 97.8 billion number released by the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) earlier this year. Output from Abu Dhabi's offshore oil fields is expected to reach 1.75 million bpd by 2016 from 650,000 bpd now, the report said. "With around 45 per cent of the emirates's oil reserves located offshore, Abu Dhabi's many underdeveloped or young offshore fields will play an important role," it said. Natural gas reserves were pegged at 5.8 trillion cubic metres (tcm). According to a survey, the OPEC member is producing below its capacity, with oil output at around 2.3 million bpd. OPEC has agreed output reductions in December 2008, when the oil price was crashing after a record rally and as global recession took hold.

Etihad Airways to launch 'all economy class' plane

Etihad Airways will introduce its first 'all economy' class aircraft into its fleet in October this year as a part of its strategy to be more competitive in markets, which have high demand for economy class seats. The Abu Dhabi-based airline has plans to launch such 'all economy' services initially to Alexandria, Calicut, Colombo, Damascus, Doha and Thiruvananthapuram, according to an official release received here on Thursday. Etihad will configure two of its Airbus A320s to carry 162 economy class passengers, an increase of 42 from the current economy capacity. "We have not finalised which of those destinations will be the first to have the newly configured 'all economy' class aircraft," a spokesman for Etihad told Khaleej Times here.

The all economy cabin aircraft will operate to short haul Etihad destinations, which have high demand for economy traffic and low demand for premium traffic. Plans are in place to expand the all economy fleet to 10 A320 aircraft which will enable the airline to launch new short haul destinations which have low demand for premium travel and also to existing Etihad destinations. "Etihad has grown at a remarkable pace during the past six and a half years. We have built a strong brand and a robust business, and it is the right time to challenge the way we serve our various markets and segments," the release said quoting James Hogan, Etihad Airways' Chief Executive Officer.

UAE banks need to change mindset: Kanoo

The UAE's economy should see an upturn from the end of Q3 or the beginning of the Q4. However, much of this upturn hinges essentially on the UAE banking sector that needs to be more flexible in terms of extending credit line to businesses, large and small, according to the

head of one of the largest family firms in the UAE and the GCC. "There is an urgent need for banks to start supporting businesses by extending credit. Although, at present it seems difficult for banks as their balance sheets are under pressure and are waiting for the economic turnaround, but if banks don't pump in liquidity at this critical time it would impact their profitability as well as the whole economy," Mishal Kanoo, Deputy Chairman, the Kanoo Group, told Emirates 24|7. "Therefore, we need banks to change that mentality. If banks wish to jumpstart the real estate sector, all they have to do is lower their interest rates and extend the mortgage repayment period for borrowers, and when the market returns to a bit normal condition they could rollback these stimulus measures," he said.

Kanoo Group has a range of business verticals across the UAE as well as the GCC. Although Saudi Arabia is the fastest growing market for the group as a whole, the UAE continues to be the largest market for its travel business segment. "Our travel business is doing better in the UAE, compared to other markets in the Gulf," he said. The UAE, especially Dubai, is the largest travel destination in the Middle East that has remained unfazed by the global financial downturn, especially the corporate travel segment. "Our business travel segment this year, both inbound and outbound, has been much better than last year," Kanoo added. He said the second half is going to be better than the first half in the UAE. However, the one factor that would perhaps obstruct the return to normalcy would be the banks continuing with their conservative mindset of not allowing liquidity back into the economy, Kanoo said. "We don't believe that the UAE economy is going to grow back on its massive projects. Rather, it's going to grow on the strength of its small-to-medium size projects and companies, which are going to be the drivers of the economy going forward," he added.

South Korea to explore oil in the UAE

The United Arab Emirates and South Korea agreed to cooperate on energy exploration and stockpiling of crude oil, deepening ties after the Asian nation won a \$ 20 billion contract to build nuclear plants in Abu Dhabi. State-run Korea National Oil Corp (KNOC) and Abu Dhabi National Oil Co (Adnoc) signed a preliminary agreement on Monday at the headquarters of Anyang, South Korea-based KNOC, South Korea's Ministry of Knowledge Economy said on Monday. They will form a team to study the possibility of exploring for oil and gas in Abu Dhabi and will discuss a plan for Abu Dhabi National to use storage facilities owned by KNOC, the ministry said in a statement. KNOC is joining international oil companies such as Exxon Mobil Corp and Royal Dutch Shell Plc that have traditionally been present in the country, the fourth-largest crude producer in the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries. South Korea and the UAE are expanding economic cooperation after state-controlled Korea Electric Power Corp beat General Electric Co and Areva SA to win the emirate's first nuclear power plant contract in December. "South Korea isn't in the 'Abu Dhabi club' of companies such as Exxon and Shell that have big oil concessions and have traditionally won new contracts," Thaddeus Malesa, a Dubai-based analyst at PFC Energy, said. "The Koreans are going to have a much larger presence in the UAE, in energy and also in manufacturing, which is a direct result of the nuclear deal."

KUWAIT

International Front

Malaysian-Kuwaiti ties extolled

Malaysian Foreign Minister Aanifah Aman on Friday extolled relations that combine his country with the State of Kuwait, describing them as "excellent". Speaking to KUNA on the sidelines of the visit of Kuwaiti Minister of Oil and Minister of Information Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to Kuala Lumpur, Aman pointed to the depth of these high-level visits by officials of the two countries, considering that as a "clear evidence of the development of bilateral relations." He added that relations have been developing in various fields, citing the tourism sector as an example, recalling that his country had hosted more than 20,000 Kuwaiti tourists last year, "and still is being a suitable tourist destination for many of the Kuwaitis," calling in this regard to increase flights between the two countries. With regard to economic cooperation, Aman said that the rate of current trade exchange, which amounted to more than 400 million U.S. dollars a year did not reach the level of ambition, adding that the political leadership in both countries "looks forward to more cooperation and we can double the efforts and work together to increase the mutual trade and investment." He said Kuwaiti investors can enter the Malaysian market and benefit from the many privileges provided by his country to foreign investors, pointing out that there are Kuwaiti companies operating in the area of Islamic finance, banks and oil "and we must encourage the private sector of both countries to enter and benefit from the opportunities available." He expressed hope that the Kuwaiti government allow Malaysian companies to participate in the development plans Kuwait plans to implement through the development of infrastructure, particularly that the Malaysian companies have great expertise in this area.

Kuwait envoy underlines foreign diplomacy

Kuwaiti Ambassador in Cairo Rasheed Al-Hamad stressed here Thursday that Kuwait's foreign diplomacy has greatly contributed to reinforcing its relations with brotherly and friendly countries. Speaking at a ceremony to honor outgoing Kuwaiti counselor Omar Al-Kandari, Al-Hamad said Kuwaiti diplomacy had played an impressive role in cementing and reinforcing Kuwaiti relations with all world nations. He hailed Al-Kandari as a dedicated Kuwaiti diplomat who has helped in the creation of a quantum leap in the country's foreign diplomacy during his duty at the Kuwaiti Embassy in Egypt. Thanks to his distinguished diplomatic activity, Al-Kandari has managed to promote the real civilized image of his country, the ambassador added. For his part, the outgoing counselor urged his colleagues at the Kuwaiti Embassy in Cairo to continue their effort to maintain and further reinforce deep and strong ties between Kuwait and Egypt. He said Kuwait and Egypt enjoy deep-rooted political, economic and cultural bonds under the leadership of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Japanese-Kuwaiti committee to play crucial role in boosting ties

Newly formed Japanese-Kuwaiti Parliamentary Commission will play a crucial role in cementing the peoples' bilateral relations between the two friendly countries, the Kuwaiti Ambassador said. Abdul-Rahman Al-Otaibi made the statement at inauguration of the new commission, formed on May 27, at the Japanese Parliament building. This commission will also play a role in bolstering the cooperation between the Japanese and Kuwaiti parliaments, he said, affirming that the Kuwaiti political leadership has always urged the Kuwaiti parliamentarians to strengthen relations with counterparts in friendly and sisterly countries. The committee, set up by members of the ruling Japanese Democratic Party, includes MPs Watanbe Kozo, the higher advisor, Kano Michwiniko, the honorary chairman, Nakayama Yoswikatsu, the chairman, Matsuzaki Kimiaki, the secretary general, and Koizumi Toshiaki, the deputy secretary general, in addition to 30 other members of the ruling party. Addressing attendees at the inauguration ceremony, Al-Otaibi urged the Japanese lawmakers to seek to strengthen further the bilateral relations and rapidly endorse proposed accords with Kuwait. Noting that the inauguration coincided with the 20th anniversary of the Iraqi aggression on Kuwait and the 65th anniversary of the atomic attacks on the Japanese cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the ambassador affirmed that the Kuwaiti people would not forget the honorary Japanese stance during the liberation of Kuwait. For his part, Kozo made a statement, addressed to the participants, noting that the commission would "be a crucial factor for the improvement and activation of the Kuwaiti-Japanese relations." The Kuwaiti-Japanese relations are backed by the governments of the two countries that are keen on boosting the joint action, he said, indicating that the committee would play a role in aiding Kuwait to acquire some of the country's advanced technology.

Kuwaiti-Russian talks to help boost relations

The positive results from the third session of the Kuwaiti-Russian government committee for trade, economic, scientific and technical cooperation, which concluded here yesterday, will result in boosting ties between the two countries, according to a Russian minister. Speaking after the meeting, Energy Minister Sergey Ivanovich Shmatko, who headed the Russian delegation at the committee, said that the two-day session had addressed important issues related to prospective cooperation in several spheres. He called on Kuwaiti investors to launch business ventures in Russia, hailing Kuwait's role with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). He also praised the attention that Kuwait devoted to cultural affairs and its conservation of Islamic antiquities, adding that more than 700,000 people visited the exhibition mounted by Kuwait's Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah (House of Islamic Antiquities) here in 2009. Kuwait's Oil Minister and Information Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah headed the Kuwaiti delegation at the meetings, which also included Kuwait's Ambassador to Russia Nasser Al-Mozayen, the head of the Foreign Ministry's economic department Sheikh Ali Al-Khalid, Commerce and Industry Undersecretary Rashid Al-Tabtabae, Finance Undersecretary Khalifa Hamada, and the Director General of the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) Dr Naji Al-Mutairi. Meanwhile, the protocol document of the Russian-Kuwaiti Joint Committee meetings expresses both parties' eagerness to boost relations in all domains, reflecting the constructive atmosphere throughout the meetings. The document noted in particular the two

nations' interest in boosting cooperation in trade, commerce, industry, science and technology, and other related fields.

Kuwait donates USD 5 mln to victims of Pakistan floods

Kuwait has donated USD five million to victims of the severe floods in Pakistan, Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Board Chairman Barjas Humoud Al-Barjas revealed on Wednesday. "In accordance with the directions of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to alleviate the suffering of disaster victims in Pakistan as a result of the severe floods the country has experienced, Kuwait has decided to donate the amount of USD five million to exercise its belief as a nation and people in alleviating the suffering of nations from natural disasters," he announced. The KRCS in collaboration with the Foreign Ministry will ensure this humanitarian aid will reach those affected, he added. Al-Barjas also expressed the sympathy of the Kuwaiti leadership and people with the victims of the disaster, adding "Kuwait has made sure since olden times to extend a helping hand to other nations, aware of the unity of the world and the need of the cooperation of nations in easing the suffering of different parts of the world as a result of natural disasters."

'Iraq to 'confirm' commitment to UN-demarcated Kuwait-Iraq border'

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Tuesday urged the new Iraqi Government, once formed, to "confirm" its commitment to resolution 833 on the inviolability of the Iraq-Kuwait border and give it its "urgent attention" if it wants to get out from under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Among the matters that require "urgent attention is the need for the new Government of Iraq to do its utmost to fulfill its commitment to resolution 833 and Iraq's land and maritime borders with Kuwait," Ban said in his quarterly report to the Security Council on the work of the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI). "Progress is also essential with respect to the Iraq-Kuwait Boundary Maintenance Project and missing Kuwaiti national and properties. I believe such actions would encourage the Security Council to consider the steps that need to be taken for the full normalization of Iraq's international status," Ban added in his 14-page report. In the meantime, Ban expressed regret that Iraq "has not responded to repeated (UN) requests" to convey its readiness to continue the Iraq-Kuwaiti Boundary Maintenance Project mandated by resolution 833, and to contribute its share of the additional funding of USD 600,000 for that purpose. "The commitment of the Government of Iraq and the contribution of its share of the funding are necessary to sustain the project following the repeated postponement of the final phase of the maintenance work to be implemented by the Department of Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO)," he said.

Kuwait affirms support for Lebanon's territorial sanctity

Kuwait re-affirmed on Wednesday its support and solidarity with Lebanon for maintaining its territorial sovereignty and condemned the Tuesday Israeli attack in the border region. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, in a telephone contact with his Lebanese counterpart, Ali Al-Shami, affirmed the State of Kuwait full support for brotherly Lebanon in its defense of national territories, maintaining its sovereignty and safety of the people. The minister renewed Kuwait's condemnation of the Israeli attack on

Lebanese Army troops that resulted in the death of three military personnel and injury of others. The two ministers discussed the attack and its dangerous repercussions on regional peace and security, as well as coordination to face "such Israeli offensives at international quarters," according to a statement released by the Foreign Ministry. They agreed on manifesting common stances, in this respect, at the United Nations "and within the framework of bilateral relations with the great states that sponsor the peace process in the region." Al-Shami expressed gratitude to Sheikh Mohammad and deep satisfaction for Kuwait's continuous backing for Lebanon.

Kuwait asserts Britain's role in security, stability of Gulf

Kuwait's Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah asserted Monday importance of Britain's role in security and stability of the Gulf region, as well as its role in the Middle East peace process. Sheikh Mohammad was speaking to KUNA and Kuwait TV following his meeting with British Foreign Secretary William Hague, during which they talked about the 20th anniversary of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Twenty years ago, forces sent by Iraqi ruler Saddam Hussein occupied Kuwait for seven months before they were ejected by a US-led international coalition. "On this day we remember the ordeal and learn the lessons and look for the future to build relations based on solid foundations that reserve the State of Kuwait, this small country, its security and stability," said Sheikh Mohammad. The Kuwaiti and British sides believe in the importance of "buliding a safe region in our regional surrounding" coupled with Britain's important role within the UN Security Council, he said as he described Britain "Kuwait's distinguished friend." As for Iraq, Sheikh Mohammad said that Kuwait "is building relations with the new Iraqi on solid basis ... Iraq that believes in human rights and lives in peace and security and stability with its neighbors." He said he and Hague discussed UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's report about Iraq's implementation of UN resolutions. "The issue of Kuwait-Iraq borders demarcation is over and had been endorsed internationally long time ago." Sheikh Mohammad said they have also discussed Iraqi violations against farms in Kuwaiti territories, and the importance of maintaining border signs.

Kuwaiti Ambassador in Moscow notes relations 'constantly growing

Relations between the State of Kuwait and Russia are strong and are also constantly growing, based on solid basis of mutual respect, the Kuwaiti Ambassador here told KUNA Sunday. Member of the Russian-Kuwaiti Joint Committee, Ambassador Al-Mzayyan said both sides are keen on furthering cooperation in all areas, and most importantly in oil-related sectors, in investment, and in economic and trade exchange. He added the official visit of the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem to Russia back in May and his meeting with Russian FM Lavrov bolstered the level of cooperation and resulted in agreement over the expected visit of His Highness the Amir to Moscow soon. Giving glimpses of aspects of interaction between the two countries, the ambassador recalled that Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) had extended a major loan to finance an important sea port in 1997. Payment for this loan was agreed to be cash, while payment of interest is to be in form of goods produced by Russia, and the agreement was stressed in October 2005 during a visit by a Russian financial delegation. The diplomat also recalled that Kuwait was the first country in the Gulf to establish relations with Russia shortly after the state's independence in 1963. Relations continued to prosper since then, and as the legitimate heir of the broken down

Soviet Union, Kuwait's relations with Russia gained more impetus and agreements were signed in various fields. Most important of these agreements was one on military cooperation and for procurement of Russian weapon systems.

Political Front

MPs: Enact new laws to 'Kuwaitize' govt jobs

A number of lawmakers recently urged the government to issue new legislations pertinent to implementing the Kuwaitization policy. MPs added that the Parliament was currently working toward issuing new legislations to increase the ratio of nationals who hold public positions and conduct a full survey of posts occupied by expatriates so that they can be substituted by citizens, reported Al-Watan. MP Khaled Al-Adwah stressed that the government's 'substitution' policy should be implemented more seriously. He expressed surprise at the fact that some bodies were still asking for exemption from adopting the policy when thousands of citizens are unemployed. "This issue will be opened for discussion once the Parliament convenes after the recess period and we'll ask the government to provide complete statistics about the total number of expatriates employed in the government sector and the positions they hold to see whether they can be replaced by citizens," he underscored. MP Mubarak Al-Khurainej said that MPs are united in their decision to compel both the government and the private sector to hire citizens to reduce unemployment. He also said that the problem was a result of the government's lackadaisical approach on this particular issue. "Dependence on expatriate labor has had a negative impact on Kuwaiti society," he asserted noting that the most significant problem caused by expatriates was over-population and that the government should act immediately to issue further laws that restrict the 'import' of foreign or expatriate labor. He also suggested the establishment of a new, temporary parliamentary committee during the next parliamentary term to resolve the unemployment issue.

No contract extensions for expatriates over 60 in Kuwait

The contracts of expatriate employees who have crossed the age of 60 will not be extended, as per a recently issued ministerial decree. The relevant announcement was made by the Ministry of Defense's Undersecretary Jassar Al-Jassar, reported Al-Rai. He pointed out direct orders have been made by First Deputy PM and Defense Minister, Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubrak to replace expats on the verge of retirement with citizens. Al-Jassar also issued another decision that bans any change in job designation, allowances paid or granting pay hikes to expatriates to avoid over-burdening the ministry's budget.

Kuwaiti MPs criticize appointment of seven deputies

A slew of parliamentary queries have been directed at the Minister for Cabinet Affairs Roudhan Al-Roudhan's decision to appoint seven assistants to the chairman of the Fatwa and Legislation Department. Lawmakers claim that the law stipulates that the deputies' appointment should have been made in accordance with an Amiri decree, especially since HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah had previously expressed disapproval at the appointment of deputies for the department. These inquisitions will be made by members of the National Action

group, Popular Action Bloc and the Development and Reform blocs. They mainly complained about the timing at which the decision was passed as the department's law was being reviewed at present. In the meantime, MPs are believed to have linked the latest decision of Al-Roudhan's, with the issues related to the dissolution of sports clubs' boards which will be discussed in October. This is in addition to other issues that concern the Public Authority for Youth and Sports(PAYS). Furthermore, HH the Prime Minister has fallen out of favor with the National Action Bloc, after he told them that all reports showed the decision to appoint the assistants was incorrect, reported Al-Qabas.

Social Front

Remembering Iraqi invasion, Kuwait cabinet urges firmer national unity

Marking the 20th anniversary of the brutal Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the Kuwaiti Cabinet urged here Monday the Kuwaiti people to learn lessons, build the present and the future and shore up national unity. At a routine weekly meeting, held at Seif Palace presided over by Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Sabah, while bitterly remembering this heinous crime - committed by Saddam Hussein's army in August 1990 - which left hundreds martyred, injured or missing, the cabinet urged the Kuwaiti people to learn lessons from the brutal Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Roudhan Abdelaziz Al-Roudhan told reporters following the meeting. The cabinet also voiced gratitude and appreciation for all those friendly and brotherly countries which contributed to the expulsion of the Iraqi army from Kuwait, he said. However, the Kuwaiti ministers reiterated their country's support for ongoing efforts to build a new Iraq based on freedom, democracy, respect of Iraq's sovereignty and good neighborliness as well as abidance by international conventions and resolutions, the cabinet minister added. At the meeting, the cabinet also discussed recent Tunisian, Lebanese, Slovakian, Liberian and Malawian letters to His Highness the Amir on ways and means of further bolstering and promoting distinguished relations between Kuwait and these nations.

Kuwait helps protect Islamic art heritage

Scheduled visit by Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam Al-Muhtadee Billa to Kuwait today is aimed at boosting the brotherly and friendly relations between the sultanate and the Gulf state, the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Brunei said yesterday. Ghassan Mohammad Al-Duwaisan, in a telephone statement, said the crown prince plans to get acquainted, personally, with his Kuwaiti counterpart, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, for cementing the brotherly and friendly relations with His Highness, and exploring the developments in the political, economic and social sectors in Kuwait, achieved under leadership of HH the Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.= Al-Muhtadee Billa and his accompanying delegation are scheduled to hold talks with senior Kuwaiti leaders on means of cementing the bilateral relations and visiting landmark economic, scientific and cultural sites in the Gulf state, said Al-Duwaisan in the interview with the Kuwaiti news agency. Elaborating, the diplomat indicated that the Kuwaiti diplomatic mission has been implementing the state policy of openness, sparing no effort for the improvement of the relations with Brunei, namely at the economic level. The Kuwaiti diplomats are guided by the "wide policy of His Highness the

Amir, the sheikh of the diplomats, a policy that is based on serving economic and common interests of Kuwait and other states," Al-Duwaisan said, alluding to Sheikh Sabah's service as the foreign minister of the country for many years in the past.

Economy Front

Kuwait's crude oil exports to Japan hit 2-year low

Kuwait's crude oil exports to Japan plunged 47.1 percent in June from a year earlier to 4.86 million barrels, or 162,000 barrels per day (bpd), for the sixth consecutive monthly drop, the government said Friday. It was the lowest volume since June 2008, when it stood at 161, 000 bpd. In June, Kuwait's crude exports to China skyrocketed to a record high of 308,000 bpd, surpassing the Japan-bound shipments for the first time, according to comparative data. Japan had long been Kuwait's largest oil buyer with roughly accounting for 20 percent of its total crude exports. Kuwait supplied 5.1 percent of Japan's crude oil in June, compared with 9.5 percent in the same month of last year and 5.9 percent in May, the Japanese Natural Resources and Energy Agency, a unit of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, said in a preliminary report. Japan's overall imports of crude oil edged down 1.5 percent year-on-year to 3.19 million bpd for the first decline in four months. Shipments from the Middle East fell 0.3 percent to 2.76 million bpd, and accounted for 86.5 percent of the total, up 1.0 percentage points from the year before.

Kuwaiti, Arab economists call for activating joint investment plan

Kuwaiti and Arab figures, who participated in the Arab conference for improvement and activation of the joint economy that concluded here Wednesday, called for activating a joint investment plan that was prepared by the Council of Arab Economic Unity (CAEU). Speaking to KUNA, head of Kuwait's delegation and director of the Commerce and Industry Ministry's Gulf and Arab world department Dr. Abdullah Al-Owaisi said that participants in the event called in their recommendations supporting the establishment of a joint Arab customs union and uniting customs tariffs and standards in all Arab countries. They also recommended the establishment of a higher body for Arab strategic planning and stressed that training Arab work force was significant, he added. During the two-day conference, which was organized by the Arab Exporters and Importers Union, businessmen and decision makers discussed ways to ease the flow of products among Arab countries, he pointed out. The Kuwaiti delegation included the President of the Board of Trustees of the Exporters Association and Arab investors (Kuwait) Mezyed Al-Jufaira, Head of the regional office of the Union of Exporters and Importers of the Arabs (Kuwait) Saad Qasid Al-Jufaira, and director of the marketing and investment department at the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources Sodfa Al-Kandari. The conference was attended by about 300 businessmen and officials from 22 Arab countries. The Arab Exporters and Importers Union was established in 2005 to develop trade exchange among Arab countries.

Experts stress importance of Kuwait economic summit

Eminent Kuwaiti figures, participating in the Arab conference for improvement and activation of the joint economy, asserted yesterday the importance of the Kuwait economic summit in

achieving Arab economic integration. Dr. Abdullah Al-Owaisi, the head of the Kuwaiti delegation at the conference that concluded later yesterday, said that the conference which was organized by the Regional Office of Arab Exporters and Importers Federation in Jordan, looks into activating Arab economic integration, in implementation of the Kuwait Economic Summit resolutions. Al-Owaisi, the director of Gulf Affairs and the Arab world in the Ministry of Trade and Industry, said the conference "is an important step to achieve Arab economic integration", highlighting its importance to achieve the Arab Free Trade Zone, increase volume of trade exchange and inter-Arab trade. He also stressed on the importance of the seminars, which include governmental officials, to discuss the impediments of goods flow and inter-Arab trade. Director of marketing and investment in the Public Authority for Agriculture and Fish Resources, Sodfa Ahmed Al-Kandari, said that Kuwait economic summit recommended a number of recommendations, notably a fund to finance small projects. She added that Kuwait highlights the importance of small enterprises, and opened the way for the Gulf and Arab investors to investment in the state. On the economic conference being held in Amman, Al-Kandari said the Union of Arab exporters and investors includes 17 countries-as well all GCC countries.

Kuwait hires Citigroup for airline privatisation

Kuwait appointed Citigroup , Ernst & Young and aviation services firm Seabury to handle the privatisation of the Gulf state's national carrier, Kuwait Airways. The state news agency KUNA quoted a state committee as saying on Wednesday that the contracts with Citi and the two other companies will be signed in coming days. Kuwait's parliament approved a plan in 2008 to privatise loss-making Kuwait Airways Corp. Under the plan, the government will sell 40 percent of the flag carrier to the public and 35 percent to a long-term investor. The world's fourth largest oil exporter is on a drive to boost its private sector and become a regional financial center.

Kuwait, Russia seek stronger commercial ties

Kuwait-Russian committee members said Tuesday trade exchange and commercial cooperation between the two countries were not as solid at the political ties. Kuwait Minister of Oil and Minister of Information Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Sabah and Russian Energy Minister Sergey Shmatko, at a joint news conference at the end of the committee's two-day meeting that they acknowledged that commercial ties were not as strong as political relations. "We have to work harder than ever," they agreed. They said that both countries need to speed up the formation of two sub-committees, the first dealing with oil, gas and other energies, while the other deals with science and technology. Both ministers said they discussed possible opening of investment offices in the two countries, the exchange of information about these offices and needed feasibility studies before setting them up.

OMAN

International Front

Action team formed to liaise with neighbouring countries: Oman

Brigadier Suhail bin Amor, Director-General of Criminal Investigation, Royal Oman Police (ROP), said that vehicle theft is an international phenomenon which emerged recently in the Sultanate. Brig Suhail explained that an observable increase in car theft in the Sultanate is due to a number of factors that encourage the thieves to take a chance. These factors include lack of carefulness among the owners of vehicles who either leave their cars unlocked or parked with engines running or parked in deserted areas or with bags visible inside. Brig Suhail pointed out that the thieves have different ways of earning money by stealing vehicles. They sell vehicles owned by car rental agencies or mortgaged to finance companies. When they buy mortgaged vehicles, they give the seller post-dated cheques. In this case, they produce a legally documented sale contract sourced from an advocate's office. As soon as that is done, the vehicle is exported to other countries. But when the seller tries to collect the cheque on its date, he/she discovers that it is a bounced cheque, with zero cash balance in the account, said Brig Suhail. He affirmed that the crime combat squads have foiled many attempts to export stolen vehicles and that a team is co-ordinating with police departments in neighbouring countries to arrest the suspects. Brig Suhail advised car rental agencies to fix GPS systems in the vehicles they rent so that they could track them if stolen. He also stressed that these companies must collect proper data from the people who hire the vehicles and exchange the data with the ROP so that the suspects could be apprehended before they leave the Sultanate. He also advised all those who fall prey to car theft to report to the ROP immediately, using the emergency number 9999 and give the full details of their vehicles.

Mideast girl guides gather in Oman to boost ties

Some 400 girl Guides from around the Middle East have gathered in Oman's southern Dhofar governorate for an annual camp aimed at fostering partnership and cooperation among guides in countries of the region. The 20th Arab Guides Camp at Jabal A' Shor, with delegates from eight countries, Oman, the UAE, Tunisia, Libya, Lebanon, Egypt, Sudan and Syria was inaugurated on Monday by Sayyidah Sana bint Hamad Al Busaidiyah, Director-general of Education and Chairperson of the Scouts and Guides Commission in the Muscat governorate. The programme for a six-day camp, titled 'Our Environment, Our Life' includes seminars, workshops and training sessions and a series of social and entertainment activities. The events will this year focus on recycling of waste products from the paper industry and creating flowers from plastic water bottles.

Sultanate-Iran relations strong, model for region

Brigadier-General Ahmad Vahidi, Defence and Armed Forces Logistics Minister in Iran, hailed the relations binding his country with the Sultanate. He described the Omani-Iranian ties as the best and a model in the region. Addressing a press conference at the Iranian Embassy here yesterday, Brigadier-General Vahidi said that the audience with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos was

constructive and fruitful. The two sides emphasised on the security in the region and maintaining it as the responsibility of all. He also added that the audience touched on enhancing and developing relations between the two countries. "A number of regional and international issues of common concern were also discussed," he said. The Iranian minister pointed out that the relations at the bilateral level between the two countries have a joint understanding towards various regional and international issues and there are many common points that gather both sides. He also underlined the solid relations particularly the economic ties as they are at an excellent stage, citing the historical relations between the two countries.

Brigadier-General Vahidi said his meeting with top-ranking Omani officials, including Sayyid Badr bin Saud al Busaidy, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs, on ways to enhance security in the Gulf region was very fruitful during his two-day official visit to the Sultanate. During the talks, Brigadier-General Vahidi said the two sides stressed on boosting defence co-operation and securing their waters, especially the Strait of Hormuz. This strategic oil artery has remained a safe route for the energy-rich region and is used for shipping 40 per cent of the world's seaborne crude. As for security in the Strait of Hormuz, the Iranian minister affirmed that the responsibility of the security is a joint responsibility of the countries in the region. Brigadier-General Vahidi hailed the deep-rooted relations binding Iran and Oman, the understanding and joint interests and the necessity to promote such relations at various levels to serve the interests of both Omani and Iranian peoples and achieve further progress and prosperity.

Iranian defense minister to hold talks in Oman on cooperation

Iran's Minister of Defense Brigadier-General Ahmad Vahidi, heading a delegation of military officials, travelled to Oman on Tuesday on an official visit aimed at discussing bilateral ties and cooperation in the military sector. Brig. Gen. Vahidi, in a statement ahead of his departure to Muscat, the Omani capital, expressed hope his mission would result in boosting further the solid and historic ties bounding the Islamic republic with the sultanate. The minister indicated his visit would be in response to an invitation by his Omani counterpart, Bader Bin Saud Bin Hareb Al-Bousaidi, adding that the visit would be within the framework of "cementing peace and friendship and brotherhood among the peoples and states of the region." Responding to renewed US threats that using force against the republic remained an option, the minister said possible US military strike on his country would be "flagrant violation of the charter of the United Nations." Washington has repeatedly affirmed that using the military option against Iran for its "intransigence" regarding its nuclear file has remained on the table. The Americans say the the Iranians are seeking to develop nuclear arms but the Iranians assert that their nuclear program is for peaceful purposes.

Social Front

Campaign to improve Oman's public sector services

A new drive has been launched in Oman to improve quality of service offered to citizens and residents by government departments. The goal is to provide "world class public services for all", Maymuna Al Adawy of the Brand Oman Management Unit (BOMU), which is

spearheading the campaign, said. “A strong culture of customer care and customer service can have a major impact on how we are perceived internationally and our competitive standing. First impressions certainly count,” she said. Maymuna was speaking at the end of a customer service training programme designed by BOMU in which officials from the Royal Oman Police, ministries of commerce and industry, manpower and housing, Public Prosecution and Muscat Municipality took part. She noted that as in other countries, the demand for public services in Oman was growing faster than the economy as a whole, especially for health and education, and this trend is expected to continue as the country competed in the global economy.

“The public sector will also face new challenges in providing modern services that are more personalised and meet the needs of a sophisticated, diverse and demanding user base,” she said, adding: “If we’re trying to raise Oman’s competitiveness then we really need to be focusing on how we deliver our public services.” The four-day ‘Frontline Oman’ workshop provided participants with an understanding of the necessary skills and personal motivation to provide excellent customer service. They were taught how to project a positive, confident and professional image to customers and to use every opportunity of contact to promote their organisation.

Economy Front

Oman-China trade at \$ 12bn

Shaikh Abdullah bin Saleh al Saadi, Sultanate’s Ambassador to China, has said that trade exchange between the Sultanate and China is on a rising trend and has recently touched more than \$ 12 billion. He added that the economic co-operation between the two countries is witnessing a big leap and is expected to double in the forthcoming stage due to strong ties. Al Saadi said that Oman’s pavilion at Shanghai Expo 2010 succeeded in attracting a large number of visitors who showed interest in visiting the Sultanate as tourists and investors.

Omani, Chinese trade delegates explore JV possibilities

Following on from various themes held in line with the Sultanate’s participation at the World Expo 2010, in Shanghai China, the Ministry of Tourism’s Under-Secretary for Tourism, Mohammed bin Hamood al Toobi, opened the Oman Tourism Week activities with a seminar, held here at Le Royal Meridien, followed by an official visit to the Oman Pavilion site, at the Expo, yesterday. Over 150 official delegates and contingents from the Chinese and visiting Omani hospitality industry attended the seminar, which besides the Under-Secretary, was presided over by the Omani Ambassador to China, Abdullah bin Saleh al Saadi, Patrick Chen, Deputy Director of the Shanghai Municipal Tourism Administration and Hassan bin Mohammed al Lawati, Deputy Commissioner General of the Sultanate of Oman Pavilion — World Expo 2010, Shanghai. The Oman Tourism Week is designed to bring together inbound and outbound tour operators with their Chinese counterparts and to showcase the country’s many tourist attractions to World Expo visitors. China is already Oman’s fastest growing source of visitor arrivals, with numbers increasing by more than 30 per cent each year. In his inaugural address, Al Toobi noted, the World Expo brings global focus to Shanghai and they are delighted to have Oman represented at the Expo, allowing for mutually beneficial engagement with China and

other countries of the region. "Tourism in both China and Oman is seeing remarkable growth. Although China is a much bigger country, our respective domestic tourism markets are growing quickly and we both see tourism as a major economic driver and employer. We also see the need to enter and develop key international markets, and here I think Oman has excelled in demonstrating its interest in engaging China," he added. He commented on the Memorandum of Understanding on Tourism Relations signed by the two countries in 2006, resulting in an increase in the number of Chinese tourists to the Sultanate, with future numbers expected to rise rapidly. "I am hoping that the National Tourism Administration of China and Oman's Ministry of Tourism will set a timetable to implement the MoU and invest in greater commercial interaction between our respective tourism businesses," said the Under-Secretary. Chen also gave an address on the occasion, where he welcomed and congratulated the delegates on the successful commencement of Oman Tourism Week. He complimented the activities being held at the Oman pavilion and also spoke about the strong historical ties and bonds of friendship that exist between Oman and China. Further, he noted the increasing commercial and business ties that are taking place between the two countries.

Power sector regulator targets major reduction in electricity losses: Oman

The Authority for Electricity Regulation Oman is targeting a significant reduction in electricity losses, which presently eat away almost a fifth of the Sultanate's total electricity output. Technical and non-technical losses accounted for 18.9 per cent of total units entering the power systems of the Sultanate in 2009. This was marginally lower than the previous year's figure of 18.9 per cent, according to the Authority. Losses within the Main Interconnected System (MIS), which covers much of the northern half of the Sultanate, declined slightly to 19.1 per cent in 2009 from 19.4 per cent a year earlier. However, losses within the Salalah Power System, which covers Dhofar Governorate, rose to 19.2 per cent in 2009 from 16.9 per cent in 2008, an increase attributed to the operation of the system in "stressful conditions". On the other hand, the Rural Areas Electricity Company (RAEC), which serves remote locations outside of the MIS and Salalah systems, reported a strong decline in electricity losses to around 10 per cent, according to the regulator. The Authority, whose brief also includes a mandate to boost power sector efficiency, has a long-term target for bringing down technical losses within the MIS to between 7 and 9 per cent. An intermediate target set by the regulator for technical losses reduction within the MIS is 14 per cent for 2011. In fact, system losses within the MIS have been on a declining trend since the power sector was fully restructured in 2005.

BlackBerry services to customers in Oman continues

Telecom operators Omantel and Nawras have pledged to continue offering their popular BlackBerry services to customers in the Sultanate, notwithstanding this week's threat by the telecom regulator in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to block key messaging services offered by the smartphone. Outlining Omantel's position with regard to the BlackBerry controversy, a spokesman for Omantel stated: "The service is still available, and will continue to be provided, unless we get a directive to the contrary from the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) of Oman." A representative of Nawras, which also provides BlackBerry services to its customers, noted: "At Nawras we are continuing to offer customers our pleasingly different BlackBerry services, as usual. If we learn that the situation will be changing for any reason, we

assure our customers that we will make every effort to let them know at the earliest opportunity.” The official further added: “It is business as usual for Nawras BlackBerry customers in Oman who are enjoying the benefits of great service, great value and great connection. BlackBerry smartphones from Nawras make it easy for customers to get closer with wireless access to email, phone, web and organiser features.” Earlier this week, UAE authorities announced a suspension of BlackBerry services with effect from October 11, 2010 citing security concerns. Saudi Arabia was also said to be contemplating similar action, according to media reports.

Oman Finance Ministry okays deals worth RO72m

The Finance Ministry approved nine agreements and three variation orders worth RO.72,095,000. The agreements included the rehabilitation of Nizwa-Thumrait road, fourth stage, part 3 (RO.32 million) with 972-day implementation period, consultancy services for Muscat International and Salalah Airports (RO.14,816,000) with 66-month implementation period, construction of water network in Sumail (RO.11,916,000) with 25-month implementation period, rehabilitation of the pumping line and construction of new lines for Salalah Wastewater Services Co (RO.2,890,000) with 242-day implementation period. Approved agreements included the design and implementation of roads connection in Hamra Al Drou in Ibbri (RO.2,511,000) with 600-day implementation period, changing the high tension power lines into ground cables on Salalah/Thumrait road (RO.1,485,000) with 194-day implementation period, construction of a co-basic education school in Seeh Al Maashi in Bahla (RO.842,000) with 434-day implementation period, consultancy services for construction of Hasik/Al Shuwaimiyah road (RO.612,000) with 15-month implementation period and updating and developing of financial system at IT department in Finance Ministry (RO.244,000). It approved the variation order related to designing and construction of a runway in Adam (RO.3,357,000), variation related to maintenance of damaged roads in Nizwa, Al Hamra, Al Khabourah, Liwa, Shinas and Saham (RO.897,000) and variation order related to the operation and maintenance of Al Masarat water basin (RO.525,000).

London report affirms Sultanate witnesses economic prosperity

A new report published by the London-based Business Monitor International affirmed that the Sultanate is currently witnessing economic prosperity despite poor global economic growth. The report, which focuses on the scope of economic growth in the Sultanate in the third quarter of this year, lays emphasis on a rising volume of oil production in the Sultanate, noting that this increase in output and the high price of oil have led to a healthy growth of the GDP. The report was published by Business Monitor International last July on its website. It shows that the Omani economic situation is safe despite the oil forecasts for the forthcoming years. The report also indicates that the Sultanate maintains balanced relations with regional and international powers and that this reflects on its economic stature locally and internationally.

BAHRAIN

International Front

'Partnership between Bahrain and US has made the ties stronger'

Deputy King Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa yesterday stressed the need for co-operation to reconsider the concept of terrorism and extremism prevailing in the West following the September 11 attacks. He was speaking as he received a US Congress delegation, led by Jane Taylor, at Riffa Palace, in the presence of his son Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa. The Deputy King said Bahrain strongly denounces any terror attack and has joined efforts with moderate Arab countries to uproot terrorism and work out a modern concept based on moderation and tolerance.

On regional developments and relations between the international community and Iran, he underlined the importance of maintaining security and stability in the region. He also called for a surge in investments alongside military co-operation between the US and Bahrain, whereby Bahrain's chances of investing in the US will increase while attracting more US investments into the kingdom. The Deputy King said the partnership between the two countries over the past decades has made the ties stronger and historical, mainly in the military and political domains, enjoying the support of His Majesty King Hamad and the constant follow-up of different US departments to reach strategic coalition.

Bahrain condemns terrorist attack on Jordan

The Kingdom of Bahrain strongly condemned on Monday the terrorist attack earlier in the day at the Jordanian port city of Aqaba which claimed the life of a Jordanian citizen and injuring five others. The Kingdom's foreign ministry condemned , in a statement, the rocket attack at Aqaba. Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmad bin Mohammad Al-Khalifa sent a cable of condolences to Jordanian counterpart Nasser Judeh, expressing the Kingdom's condemnation for such terrorist attack and asserting on the Kingdom's support and stance in confronting such terrorist acts.

Saudi Arabia commends security cooperation with Bahrain

Saudi Second Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz commended Sunday security cooperation with Bahrain which would ultimately secure safety of citizens. Prince Nayef, in a statement during a meeting with Bahraini Interior Minister Sheikh Rashed Al-Khalifa, said the security cooperation between Riyadh and Manama would restore order in both Gulf countries. Sheikh Rashed, quoted by state-run news agency (SPA), hailed the Saudi approval of a proposal to developing King Fahad Causeway. "The care and interest of the leaderships of the two countries push us to provide all means of comfort for citizens of both countries," he said. The Bahraini minister, who arrived here earlier today, commended the high level of security cooperation and coordination with Saudi Arabia. The Saudi and Bahraini ministers held official talks on security collaboration.

Social Front

Young Bahrainis urged to vote carefully

Young voters were advised to research the candidates they are voting for rather than select them based on emotion or the influence of authority figures, an outgoing MP said. Liberal MP Dr Aziz Abul, who has chosen not to stand for re-election this year, said he found that a lot of people chose their candidates for the wrong reasons. "Many people vote based on ethnicity, sectarianism or tribal links," he told the GDN. "Others vote blindly based on the advice of influential people or authority figures, such as parents. This can and has resulted in the election of people with limited abilities. Instead of voting for emotional reasons, young voters should take the time to research their candidates, meet them and ask them questions. "They should try to find out a little more about their background, and whether they have the necessary experience and educational level to do the job." Dr Abul said voters should look at participation as a responsibility to their country and to their own well-being. "Voters should seek to put into office people who they believe will work to the benefit of their constituents. By voting they are giving politicians the ability to do things on their behalf which will benefit them and their communities." Dr Abul was speaking at a seminar 'Voting for Beginners' organised by the Bahraini American Cultural Exchange Society (BACES) at the Sheraton Hotel. It was attended by first-time voters and discussed the voting process and the importance of participation.

We have no intention of blocking BlackBerry: Bahrain TRA

Telecom giant Batelco is taking precautionary measures to protect its customers in the event BlackBerry services are suspended in Bahrain. However, the Telecomm-unications Regulatory Authority (TRA) yesterday reiterated that it had no intention of blocking the service. "It has issued no directions to licensees requiring the blocking of BlackBerry or other services," said a statement from the watchdog. It followed an announcement by the UAE on Sunday that it would halt BlackBerry services in October due to security fears. Saudi Arabia also announced its decision to ban BlackBerry Messenger services for the same reason. "We want to assure all our BlackBerry customers that Batelco is working on alternative offers to minimise any inconvenience should some services be suspended," said Batelco group general manager media relations Ahmed Al Janahi. "We will fully comply with any directive to suspend some BlackBerry services, should such be issued, as this is a legal obligation on Batelco." Mr Al Janahi said the move was a precautionary measure which was part of the company's contingency plans. "We have received many enquires from customers which is why we are looking into other alternative offers," he said. "This is part of our contingency plan, which we have for every event in order to ease any problems on the customers. "At this stage, it is prudent to plan for such a scenario and proactively inform our customers to minimise any concerns they may have. "It's not proper to speculate what the specific alternative offers will be at this stage as our marketing and sales teams are finalising such offers. "We believe that no Batelco customer should be financially penalised if limitations are placed on some BlackBerry services - we will address all customer concerns as quickly as practicable." The move by the UAE follows a warning from Bahrain in April against using BlackBerry Messenger software to distribute local news. The UAE said it would suspend BlackBerry Messenger, e-mail and web browser services on October 11, citing security concerns about encrypted data it cannot monitor.

Rise in violence against women in Bahrain

The month of May turned out to be by far the worst month of the year for women in Bahrain, with NGOs reporting 153 cases of violence against them from a total 928 registered cases in the first half of 2010. Abuse cases against men by their women represented 10 per cent of the total recorded cases. The abuses varied from physical and verbal violence, with men hitting their wives being the highest among reported cases. Statistics collected from all women societies by the Bahrain Women's Union revealed that women are the first abuse victims followed by children, while abuses could be classified to economic, psychological and social violence. Fakhriya Sayed Shuber, a social worker at the Union, told the press that the Legal Support Office of the Union, that was established in September 2008, was dedicated to support abused women by offering legal assistance to them to fight for their rights. "Many women seek the office directly, while some are referred by government or NGOS to benefit from its service," she revealed.

Bahrain witnesses decline in number of employed

Bahrain witnessed a decrease in total number of employed persons from 607,570 in second quarter of 2009 to 597,040 at the end of June this year, representing a negative annual growth rate of -1.7 per cent. For non-Bahraini workers, the decrease was -2.4 per cent while the number of employed Bahrainis went up to 139,347 showing a positive annual growth rate of 0.5 per cent. This was highlighted in the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) quarterly newsletter which monitors changes of key labour market indicators. The LMRA announced that the total number of irregular workers as of end of June reached 41,168, of which 16,181 are absent from work, 18,464 terminated, and 6,523 expired visas. According to the newsletter, the average monthly wages are now BD318 representing 5.0 per cent rise compared to the same period of 2009. The number of new work visas issued by LMRA during second quarter of 2010 decreased by 12.4 per cent compared to the same quarter last year.

Wages boost for Bahrainis

The average wages of Bahrainis rose by more than two per cent in the first six months of this year, says the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA). They are now BD438, up from BD429 for the same period last year - an increase of 2.1pc. The average wages of Bahrainis in the private sector surged by 4.9pc, according to a quarterly report by the LMRA. The number of Bahrainis in the labour market grew by 0.5pc to 139,347, its chief executive Ali Radhi said. The number of expatriate workers declined by 2.4pc, he said. The figures show that Bahrain's labour market reforms, that aim to make Bahrainis the first choice of employers, are bearing fruit, Mr Radhi said.

Economy Front

Bahrain's financial services sector grows 4pc

Bahrain's financial services sector grew by four per cent in the first quarter of this year, representing 6pc year-on-year growth, according to a report by the Central Informatics Organisation. The Bulletin of Quarterly National Accounts also reports that the kingdom's insurance industry grew 5pc in the first three months of this year or 15pc year-on-year. The news follows figures published by the Economic Development Board (EDB) last month showing the financial services sector contributed almost 23pc of the total increase in gross domestic product (GDP) over the last six years and is the largest contributor to total GDP, accounting for roughly one quarter by volume. "Ethical values - the fundamentals of transparency and sound regulation - have formed the basis for the steady growth of our strong financial sector in Bahrain, built over the past 40 years," EDB chief operating officer Kamal Ahmed said. "It is crucially important to our economy. More than a major sector in its own right, it is also the motor that drives so many other industries. "A great financial centre draws investment to provide companies with the ability to grow their output, profits and jobs," he said.

Mr Ahmed added that in bringing these wider benefits, the financial services sector plays an important role in achieving the ambitions of Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030. Vision 2030 is designed to drive the private sector as an engine of growth, support further diversification of the economy and ultimately elevate national living standard by creating greater opportunities for Bahrainis. This process is implemented under the guidance of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and EDB chairman.

Outlook for Bahrain' banking is maintained

The outlook for Bahrain's banking system remains negative as more losses loom mainly due to exposure to local and regional real estate, rating agency Moody's said yesterday. The agency said in a statement it expected non-performing losses to rise and that "the severity and timing of real-estate-related losses (was) still uncertain". Bahraini retail banks such as Ahli United Bank have weathered the crisis relatively well, posting lower profits due to bad loans and provisions. But the country's investment sector with companies have been hit by a freeze in regional investments and a sharp real-estate correction that started late in 2008. "Our current assessment is that although real-estate loan quality has generally remained robust so far, continued weakness in this sector will eventually feed through to banks' loan portfolios...", George Chrysaphinis, analyst at Moody's said in the statement. Moody's also said most of Bahrain's retail and wholesale banks remain well capitalised, helping them absorb more losses.

UN sanctions 'won't affect gas imports from Iran'

BAHRAIN'S gas imports from Iran will not be affected by UN sanctions against Tehran, says Iranian Ambassador Hussain Amir Abdullahyan. He insisted they would not be impaired because of booming trade between the countries. "Tehran and Manama have lived together peacefully for centuries, and they do not allow any third party to undermine their bilateral ties," he told the GDN. "The UN Security Council sanctions against Iran do not cover the export of Iran's gas to

Bahrain." Iran has the world's second largest natural gas reserves after Russia, accounting for around 15 per cent of the world's total reserves. "Iran has expressed readiness to provide Bahrain with its needed gas, in line with the priority of exporting gas to neighbours," said Mr Abdullahyan. "Investment in Iran's upstream oil and gas projects is proposed to any country interested in importing gas from Iran." The US announced new Iran sanctions on Tuesday, targeting senior officials of three organisations for allegedly supporting terrorist groups, including the Taliban in Afghanistan. The US Treasury Department, which announced the sanctions, also named 21 companies that it said were, in effect, front companies for Iran in its pursuit of illicit weaponry, including nuclear arms. By publicly naming the companies, Washington said it was making it easier for US companies to comply with their legal obligation not to do business with the Iranian government.

Bahrain's Unicorn CEO to leave over strategy

The chief executive pushing Bahrain's Unicorn investment bank as a global Islamic finance player is set to leave after the board demanded more focus on Saudi Arabia, two sources familiar with the matter said. "There's been a conflict with the board," a source familiar with Unicorn said, adding that this was the reason Chief Executive Majid Al-Refai was set to depart. The source said that the board wants the company to focus on Saudi Arabia, where board members of the Al-Shelash family also own stakes in Dar Al-Arkan, the country's largest real estate developer. Unicorn was founded in 2004 and had assets of \$ 974 million at the end of March. Under Al-Refai, it has sought to become an international Islamic financial services group with a presence in the United States, Malaysia and Turkey. A Bahrain-based banker said there had also been disagreements over some investments. A spokeswoman for Unicorn declined to comment. Al-Refai is a key figure in Islamic banking in Bahrain where he was a founder of Islamic investment house Arcapita before founding Unicorn. The industry has been hard hit by a regional property crash in 2008, after which its main revenue sources of raising funds for private equity and property projects dried up. Unicorn's business is slightly more diversified than that of other Bahraini investment houses, but its net profit still fell to \$ 2.2 million in 2009 from \$ 35 million in 2008.

Expo city on way in Bahrain

Banks and foreign investors have been urged to pump money into a world-class \$ 1.1 billion (BD410 million) 'Exhibitions City' in Bahrain. Details of the massive project - to be built next to Bahrain International Circuit in Sakhir - were revealed yesterday when an agreement was signed. Phase one of this pioneering venture will cost \$ 350m, announced the newly registered Bahrain Exhibitions and Conference Company. It will include a four-star hotel. Both national and international banks and investors will be encouraged to support the complex, which aims to meet all future requirements to develop the exhibitions industry in accordance with Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030. It is a joint venture between Bahrain Exhibitions and Conferences Authority, Mumtalakat and the private sector, represented by Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), said Industry and Commerce Minister Dr Hassan Fakhro. The Minister, Mumtalakat Holdings chief executive Talal Alzain and BCCI chairman Dr Essam Fakhro yesterday signed the contract to establish the company, in the presence of officials.

"It represents a cornerstone in achieving Bahrain's presence on the map of regional and international exhibitions and conferences and attracting big events and more international, distinguished and specialised participation in conferences and exhibition programmes. It will also boost Bahrain's status globally, presenting it as having a favourable environment for exhibitions and conferences and attracting investments, through an integrated economic system," the Minister said. The city will be designed using the latest technology, with best services offered to clients and the highest standards adopted to manage meetings, motivations, exhibitions and conferences, in line with Vision 2030.

Health Front

Bahrain barbers advised to wear masks

The Bahrain health authority has launched a nationwide campaign to encourage barbers and beauty salon workers to wear masks to prevent the spread of respiratory diseases. Head of the Environment Health at the Public Health, Abdullah Al Satrawi, said that wearing of masks comes on top of a series of awareness programmes offered to salons' workers to adhere to health regulations for the protection of public. "We are only promoting these workers to wear masks but cannot force them as there are no local or international legislations that force them to do so." The Public Health, through ongoing workshops in Arabic and English, called upon these workers to take care of self-hygiene and clean their tools every time they are used. The official further advised the public to read instructions of products they use in salons and ensure they are stored properly and not expired. According to latest statistics, the health ministry closed down 47 shops and verbally warned thousands of salon owners in 2008 for violating safety rules. There are about 500 ladies and 1,000 gents' salon in the country.

QATAR

International Front

Emir pledges support in Beirut meeting

HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani yesterday called for preserving Lebanon's sovereignty and enhancing its stability. "Lebanon should remain sovereign, free and independent in facing all the circumstances arising from the region's developments," HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa said during a dinner hosted by Lebanese President Michel Suleiman in his honour at the Baabda presidential palace. "We understand the sensitive moment today ... We hope that Lebanon will not drift to where its enemies want," the Emir said. "We will not hesitate to make any effort when we are asked, not only out of keenness for Lebanon, but out of keenness for the entire Arab nation, so that it can find an open way to safety and progress," he added. HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa and HH Sheikha Mozah Nasser al-Misnad arrived in Beirut earlier for a three-day visit that will also take him to southern Lebanon whose reconstruction Qatar is helping to finance. The Emir is accompanied by a high-level official delegation, including his Personal Representative HH Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and Industry Abdullah bin Hamad al-Attiyah. President Suleiman and his wife Wafaa Suleiman led well-wishers to welcome HH the Emir and

HH Sheikha Mozah at Rafik al-Hariri International Airport. Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Barri and Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri were also on hand to welcome the Emir and Sheikha Mozah. At the dinner reception, President Suleiman praised the role Qatar has played in enhancing stability in Lebanon since 2008. "The close relations and strong links between our two countries has had a clear and positive impact on the situation in Lebanon," Suleiman said.

Qatar slams 'Israeli aggression'

Qatar has condemned and denounced the Israeli aggression against the Lebanese army in Al Adaisseh in south Lebanon as "a blatant infringement of the international borders of Lebanon as well as a clear violation of UN Security Council Resolution No 1701". In a statement issued to Qatar News Agency (QNA), an official source at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs called on the international community, the UN and Unifil forces "to shoulder their responsibility and put an end to such acts of aggression to fully implement the Security Council resolution in order to avoid any negative repercussions that can affect security and stability in the region". The source reiterated that Qatar's commitment to stand in solidarity with Lebanon.

Talks explore ways to boost Qatar, Algeria ties

HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani and Algerian President Abdulaziz Bouteflika yesterday held a round of talks in the Algerian capital. They discussed relations between the two countries and ways to enhance them. Several regional and international issues of common interest were also reviewed. The talks were attended by HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani and members of the official delegation accompanying the Emir. On the Algerian side, the talks were attended by National Assembly Speaker Abdul Qadir bin Saleh, Deputy Minister of National Defence Abdul-Malik Guenaizia and Chief of Staff Maj Gen Ahmed Kaid, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mourad Medelci and director general of the Arab Affairs Department at the Foreign Ministry Abdul Hameed Shabshob. Earlier, HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa and HH Sheikha Mozah Nasser al-Misnad attended a luncheon banquet hosted by President Bouteflika. The Emir and Sheikha Mozah arrived in Algeria for a one-day visit after concluding a trip to Lebanon.

Qatar, South Africa discuss bilateral issues

The Minister of State for Interior Affairs H E Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani with the Deputy Minister of International Relations and Co-operation of the Republic of South Africa Ibrahim Ismail Ibrahim in Doha yesterday. Talks during the meeting covered bilateral issues.

Qatari Amir hopes Lebanese internally resolve squabbles

Visiting Qatar's Amir Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani indicated on Saturday that the Lebanese should seek to resolve their internal problems among themselves without external intervention. The Amir, speaking at a Qatari-funded newly-built hospital in the southern town of Bint Jbeil, said the Lebanese could take decisions without the need of holding meetings abroad, alluding in particular to the 1989 accord in Taif, Saudi Arabia, that resulted in ending the 16-year

civil war, and the 2008 Doha conciliation that was reached following street battles between the loyalists' camp of Sheikh Saad Al-Hariri and the opposition forces, led by Hezbollah. Sheikh Hamad, addressing attendees of the hospital inauguration ceremony, including his spouse, Sheikha Moza, and top Lebanese leaders including President Michel Suleiman, re-affirmed support for Lebanon and hinted at the plight of the people of Gaza. The ceremony was broadcast live by local television stations. The Amir was given a symbolic key of the town that witnessed fierce fighting between Israeli forces and Hezbollah fighters in 2006. Qatar has funded reconstruction of houses and facilities in several southern villages and towns since the end of this round of fighting. For his part, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri spoke at the ceremony, emphasizing the necessity of abiding by the Taif and Doha accords to maintain the country's peace, and expressed thanks, in somewhat poetic terms, for the Amir and his country's aid for the country.

Political Front

Qatar against any military action in region, says PM

The Prime Minister and Foreign Minister H E Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabor Al Thani has underlined that Qatar is against any military action in the region because the region cannot bear such action. The Premier said: "Iran is our neighbour in the Gulf .. and we always seek that this issue would be resolved through diplomacy and negotiation." The Premier was speaking on Sunday in response to a question by Al Jazeera Channel on his view about the situation in the region in the light of remarks made by the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, that the US has a plan to attack Iran if needed to prevent it from getting nuclear weapons. "The possibilities of war of course exist, but unfortunately these possibilities were fuelled by ideas of (Israeli Defence Minister Ehud) Barak and others from the Israeli side, who always want to escalate this issue for their own agenda which do not serve the region and do not serve our allies in the region, in our view," he added.

Economy Front

Council pushes technology in the construction of green buildings

More than 120 participants attended the second seminar conducted by Qatar Green Building Council (QGBC) covering an array of topics such as problems with recycling, sun-shading on modern buildings, water scarcity and lighting as well as energy usage in green buildings. Participants included experts and laymen from the construction and property industry, representatives from government agencies, non-government organisations, academic institutions and students. QGBC's Research and Innovation Committee co-chair Abdullah Hamad al-Misnad introduced QGBC expert speakers and encouraged the audience to support the promotion of green buildings by attending and participating in QGBC's awareness seminars. He announced that QGBC will continue to hold such networking events to provide a platform for the members of the industry, educators and students to exchange information and help raise awareness on sustainability. Al-Misnad encouraged his audience to visit QGBC's website www.qatargbc.org.qa to stay up to date on QGBC's activities. He also acknowledged and appreciated ThinkScape Group who developed the QGBC's website free of charge as part of

their corporate social responsibility initiative, to help spread the green building message and reach out to QGBC stakeholders. During an opening session, QGBC Education Committee chair Engr Mohamed Jaber shed light on the need to reduce lighting levels and energy usage in building design, explaining how it not only reduced cost but helped in improving overall quality of the building and in preserving the health of the residents as well as the environment.

Al-Attiyah opens Qapco facility at Tripoli

HE the Deputy Premier and Minister of Energy and Industry Abdullah bin Hamad al-Attiyah, who is also chairman of Qatar Petrochemical Company (Qapco), yesterday opened Qapco's logistics services facility at the free zone in Tripoli port, the largest city in northern Lebanon. The opening ceremony was attended by Lebanese Minister of Public Works and Transportation Ghazi Aridi, Qatar's Ambassador to Lebanon Ali bin Saad al-Mohannadi, a number of MPs of the Lebanese parliament and a number of Lebanese officials. In a speech HE al-Attiyah expressed his pleasure over the inauguration of the facility.

Residential rents expected to decline further in Qatar

Residential rents in Qatar are expected to decline further even as new building units continue to pour into the market, according to a new study. Real estate researcher Century 21 said Madinat Khalifa and Al Muntazah had seen a 5% decline in apartment rents last month. But other areas like Al Matar, Al Sadd and Najma had either seen "insignificant change" or "positive growth" in July. The "average monthly rate" in places like Bin Mahmoud is now below QR5,000 while it is about QR4,000 in Madinat Khalifa and Muaither. Villa rental rates have registered "minimal changes" from previous month with only Ain Khaled, Mraikh and Al Hilal facing more than 4% decline. On the other hand, villa rentals in Al Dafnah, Khretiyat and Abu Hamour have seen a growth of more than 4%. Century 21 said: "Summer season is expected to be heavy on real estate sector this year though effects are seen less acute than last summer." According to the researcher, a "stabilisation trend" is expected in the market by the end of the current quarter. Although still pouring into the market, the pressure of supply volumes (residential units) is easing with many projects already delivering their stocks. There was a "slight decline" in real estate activity last month as most decisions related to property movements are usually delayed until the end of the summer season, the report said. Real estate sales market is still facing a "slowdown" though sales transactions are seen growing. July saw sales transactions exceeded QR300mn in weekly value, most of which were in land sales, according to Century 21.

Qatar Airways receives one more long-range Boeing 777

Qatar Airways has reached another milestone as it received its 20th Boeing 777 aircraft - a new B777-200 arriving from Seattle, Washington - by a delivery flight last week. The aircraft is the seventh long-range Boeing in the airline's fleet of 20 Boeings, which includes 11 extended range, seven long-range, and two freighter versions. Qatar Airways CEO, Akbar al-Baker, announced the order of two additional long range Boeings at the recently concluded Farnborough Air Show 2010 that will be used to target new ultra long-haul markets. An eighth long range Boeing is due for delivery in August. Qatar Airways' long range Boeings currently operate non-stop between Doha and Houston and Melbourne and Sao Paulo, but the

airline has yet to announce between which destinations the new aircraft will operate. Al-Baker said: "Qatar Airways has a plan to substantially grow its network. In the next three years, the airline will open at least 20 new destinations. With new aircraft deliveries averaging more than one per month, including the 787 Dreamliner from Boeing next year, Qatar Airways is well on track to achieving its goal of 120 destinations by 2013." "The long range Boeing offers Qatar Airways the capability to serve virtually any key city in the world non-stop from the airline's hub in Doha. That provides great flexibility and economics for a network carrier," he added.