

**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**

Muslims around the world could be setting their watches to a new time soon when the world's largest clock begins ticking atop a soaring skyscraper in Makkah. Saudi Arabia hopes the four faces of the new clock perched atop a tower, which is expected to be the world's second tallest building, will establish Makkah as an alternate time standard to the Greenwich median. The clock reflects a goal by some Muslims to replace the 126-year-old Universal Time standard originally called Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) with Makkah Mean Time. At a conference in Doha in 2008, Muslim clerics and scholars presented "scientific" arguments that Makkah time is the true global meridian. They said that Makkah is the center of the world and that the Greenwich standard was imposed by the West in 1884. The clock is targeted to enter service with a three-month trial period in the first week of the holy month of Ramadan on or about August 12, according to the Saudi Press Agency. The governor of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (North West Frontier Province) on Friday thanked Saudi Arabia for the humanitarian aid it sent to the region's flood victims. Gov. Owais Ahmad Ghani received expressed his gratitude to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah during a meeting with Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Abdul Aziz Al-Ghadeer in Peshawar on Friday. Al-Ghadeer was in Peshawar to receive the third Saudi Arabian Airlines jet carrying emergency relief material. The ambassador also met a number of officials in the provincial capital to discuss the matter of the distribution of the relief material, the Saudi Press Agency reported. The recent flood which is described as unprecedented and devastating affected millions of people in the region. There is enormous scope for enhancing cooperation between Gulf countries like the UAE and India in the educational field considering the changes that are happening in both the countries, said prominent Indian historian and educationist K N Panikker. UAE-India relations need not be confined to trade and investment, he said, while delivering a talk at the Indian Embassy here on Saturday evening. The talk was organised by the cultural wing of the Indian Embassy. "Education is an area where the two countries can cooperate since both countries are developing a modern educational network. This is the right time to build and develop a foundation of strong ties in the field of education," said Panikker "Education is not just about imparting knowledge or equipping children to get a gainful employment. The education system prevailing has a critical bearing on preserving and nurturing national identities. Western education may not fully satisfy the requirements of countries like India and the UAE in this respect. On the other hand, UAE and India share similar histories in these areas," he noted. UAE

and India can exchange students in several fields, said Panikker. Volunteers of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) yesterday boarded a Pakistan-bound Kuwaiti military aircraft carrying relief and humanitarian assistance for those afflicted by the flash floods there. The chairman of the KRCS mission to Pakistan, Khaled Al-Ghais, said in a statement that Kuwait will take control of its humanitarian mission in helping the Pakistanis and easing their suffering due to the dreadful suffering inflicted upon them as a result of the flash floods that recently ravaged the country. He added that the aid comes at the instructions of His Highness the Amir who ordered that urgent relief assistance be provided to those afflicted by the heavy flooding, noting that KRCS is in direct coordination with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society in order to convey Kuwaiti relief items to those affected. Al-Ghais explained that the KRCS field team will intensify its efforts in Pakistan in order to meet the needs of the people there, who face daunting challenges as a result of the damage caused by the floods in their respective areas. On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tareq al Said received at his office here yesterday Dato Mohammed Ramzi Mohammed Qasim, the Malaysian ambassador to the Sultanate, who called on His Highness to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty in the Sultanate. The ambassador expressed his thanks for the support he received from His Majesty, the Oman government and people during his duty in the Sultanate, saying that such support facilitated his mission. He wished His Majesty good health, happiness and a long life and the Omani people further progress and prosperity. HH Sayyid Asaad thanked the ambassador for the efforts he undertook in developing relations between the Sultanate and Malaysia, wishing him success in his future missions. He wished the friendly people of Malaysia further progress and prosperity. An official looking at aid materials on board an aircraft that left Doha for Pakistan. A Lekhwaya Search and Rescue team was on the flight. The aircraft carried tons of food, medical and relief materials to be distributed among the displaced people in the flood-stricken country. Torrential rains frustrated aid efforts in Pakistan yesterday, with some helicopters grounded as authorities battled to help 15mn people affected by the country's worst ever floods. Military rescue workers were rushing to evacuate families in the poor farming belt of Sindh province, where disaster officials were on red alert for a major deluge that could burst the banks of the swollen Indus river

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah has issued a royal order saying only approved scholars can issue fatwas (religious edicts). "As part of our religious and national duty we want you to ensure that fatwas are only issued by members of the Council of Senior Religious Scholars and other permitted people," King Abdullah said in the decree that was sent Thursday to Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al-Asheikh, who heads the Presidency for Scholastic Research and Religious Edicts (Dar Al-Ifta) as well as the scholars council. The decree also asked Al-Asheikh to report to the king on those fully qualified and eligible to issue fatwas. "Individual fatwas on personal matters such as matters of worship, dealings, personal matters are exempt from this ruling, but they should be between the questioner and the scholar. There should be a total ban on any topics involving strange or obsolete views." The king said the issuing of fatwas by unqualified persons was a violation of Islamic teachings. "We have observed the fallout from unqualified people issuing fatwas. It is our religious duty to stop them in order to preserve our religion, which is our dearest possession, and cut off an evil which, if we do not tackle now, will return with added force." the king added in the decree. "Religion is no place for bragging nor seeking worldly ambitions." The king said differences of opinion among scholars should be confined to their own circles and not involve other people. "We find some

people undermining the role of official establishments and crossing into state jurisdiction. They pose as eligible scholars to dispute these religious establishments," he added. Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces received yesterday the visiting South Korean Defence Minister Kim Tae-young. The two sides discussed a number of issues of common interest and ways to enhance cooperation in all fields, especially in the areas of defence, training, military rehabilitation, exchange of scientific and technological expertise. They also exchanged views on the latest regional and international developments. Parliament Speaker Jassim Al-Khorafi on Thursday called for a quick government draft law on the financing of the projects of the development plan, noting that the 50-member house would then look into what the government had to propose and the extent of need for such a law. Speaking to reporters, Khorafi stressed the significance that the lawmakers did not present a law proposal in order to deny the government a justification that plan was a failure due to the legislation of the deputies. There is no need for an extraordinary session, he said, calling on the government to present its law. He said the law would be debated and studied for its significance. His Majesty King Hamad issued a decree adding new residential complexes to the tables of electoral constituencies, changing the number of one block and determining the number of polling and counting sub-committees for parliamentary elections. Each constituency will have one sub-committee in addition to 10 general panels across the kingdom. His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa issued an edict determining the date of the election and nomination for municipal councils. He also issued an edict identifying voting areas, electoral constituencies, boundaries and the number of sub-committees for the election of councillors. Justice and Islamic Affairs Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ali Al Khalifa also issued six decisions, setting up a Higher Committee for Supervising Parliamentary Elections and determining locations for polling and counting committees.

The GCC economies are expected to rebound in 2010 from their relatively flat economic performance in 2009 on the back of strong fiscal spending, according to Gulf Investment Corporation (GIC), an investment bank based in Kuwait. "The growth forecasts assume that global economic growth will resume in the second half of this year and that oil prices would remain in the vicinity of \$ 70 to 75 a barrel, or even slightly higher," the bank said in a research note issued on Tuesday. Conditional on continued global economic recovery and sustained appetite for oil imports by the fast growing Asian economies, the note expects the GCC oil output to rebound in 2010 by nearly 4.8 per cent. Accordingly, the fiscal stance of the GCC governments is expected to remain largely in the positive territory, the bank said. However, the research note said that high government spending in 2009 in infrastructure and real estate have caused real fiscal deficit some GCC countries. "As of April 2010, the GCC economies have witnessed a substantial decrease in the value of their projects, both planned and underway," it said. According to the report, the recent decline in the euro against the US dollar has reduced imported inflationary pressures. "We anticipate the dollar peg to remain in effect until the creation of the monetary union a few years ahead," the GIC research note said. Iran has cancelled a gas contract with UAE-based Crescent Petroleum with which it has had a long-standing dispute over the supply of Iranian gas, the head of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) said yesterday. NIOC and Sharjah-headquartered Crescent signed a 25-year gas contract in 2001, with a price linked to oil. But as oil rallied some Iranian officials called for a revision to the price formula and blamed the price dispute for delivery delays. Javad Oji, head of NIOC and Iran's deputy oil minister said the contract had been nullified and that from now on: "The oil ministry's

policy is the direct sale of gas to the UAE government", the semi-official Mehr news agency reported. Kuwait and Iraq are expected to reach an agreement soon setting guidelines for investing in oilfields which cross their desert border, a newspaper reported yesterday. The Al-Jarida daily said in an unsourced report that a committee from the two countries met on Sunday in Kuwait to discuss the matter and an agreement was imminent. The newspaper said Kuwait and Iraq will delegate a "third party" it did not name to determine the size of these fields and each country's share in them. Bahrain could become a regional gateway to business links between the Middle East and China. Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry first vice-chairman Ebrahim Zainal yesterday invited a Chinese trade delegation to bring a version of their International Import and Export Fair to the kingdom in the future to develop even stronger ties between the Middle East and China. He was speaking at a meeting of the chamber, local businessmen and a Chinese delegation who were visiting the kingdom to promote the 108th edition of the trade fair in Guangzhou which attracts more than 200,000 buyers from more than 200 countries every year. Mr Zainal said that Bahrain already had strong business links with China and had seen more than 200 local businessmen attend the event in the past. "We would be proud to open our doors for Chinese to do business in the Gulf and we would like to see a version of this international event held here to cover the entire region. Qatar and Sri Lanka yesterday signed an air transport agreement after three days of talks in Doha. "The bilateral air service negotiations between Qatar and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka concluded in Doha on August 10. The meetings, which began on August 8, were held at the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority office," a spokesman said. The air service agreement was signed by HE Abdul Aziz al-Noaimi, chairman of Qatar Civil Aviation Authority, and KVPR de Silva, secretary at the Sri Lankan ministry of ports and aviation. Qatar Airways chief executive officer Akbar al-Baker was present at the signing ceremony. Qatar Airways currently operates three daily flights to Sri Lanka. The MoU signed yesterday has provisions to increase the number of flights to the south Asian island nation.

## **GCC**

- **GCC producers to consult on India act**
- **Strong fiscal spend to drive GCC rebound: GIC study**
- **GCC bond, Sukuk markets bounce back in Q2**
- **GCC urged to tear down investment barriers**

## **YEMEN**

- **Bahraini King, Yemen President discuss regional and international issues**
- **Yemeni President discusses ties with Syrian PM**
- **Syrian-Yemeni Higher cmte meetings kick off**
- **Saudi businessmen to invest US\$ 1 bln in Yemen**

## **SAUDI ARABIA**

### **International Front**

- **Saudis evacuated from Moscow**

- Muslims may soon set their clocks to Makkah Mean Time
- BlackBerry 'in deal with Saudi'
- US warns citizens in Saudi Arabia of threat
- Pakistani official thanks Saudi Arabia for flood relief

### Social Front

- Fatwas only by senior scholars: King Abdullah
- University projects in Saudi Arabia worth SR2b okayed
- Imbibe spirit of Ramadan, says Abdullah
- Saudi to blacklist all transit visa violators
- Saudi Arabia's 9th Development Plan OK'd
- 3,000 judges needed in Saudi Arabia, says Bin Humaid
- Security plan to ensure pilgrims' safety in Ramadan: Prince Nayef

### Economy Front

- Inflation in Saudi Arabia to remain high
- Saudis to pump \$ 1b investment into Yemen
- Oil reserves 'plentiful', says Aramco chief
- Saudi, Qatari investors put stake in CS new debt fund

### UAE

#### International Front

- Ethiopian Prime Minister hails wise leadership of UAE
- UAE, South Korea discuss ways to enhance cooperation in all fields
- Scope for broader Indo-UAE ties in education
- Deep-rooted ties with UAE hailed on Singapore National Day

#### Social Front

- 85pc of UAE residents in deep debt
- Road accident deaths drop by 51% in Abu Dhabi
- 25 % of Abu Dhabi's population is nationals
- UAE job vacancies up 45%

#### Economy Front

- Etihad takes delivery of A330-200
- New irrigation methods to reduce water usage by 40% in 5 years
- Iran cancels gas deal with UAE's Crescent

## **Health Front**

- **Law needed to protect our rights: Aids patients**

## **KUWAIT**

### **International Front**

- **Iraqi Ambassador lauds relations with Kuwait**
- **US sells more Patriot missiles to Kuwait**
- **Kuwaiti Interior Minister hails talks with British official**
- **Kuwait sends relief aid to Pakistan**

### **Political Front**

- **Cooperation of authorities top priority before us: Kuwaiti PM**
- **Khorafi calls on govt to present its law on development plan financing**
- **Kuwaiti MP Tabtabai fumes over 'Persian Gulf'**
- **Kuwaiti MP calls for greater steps for rapprochement with Turkey**

### **Social Front**

- **Kuwait has received 500 doctors since last year**

### **Economy Front**

- **Economy set to rebound in Kuwait**
- **Kuwait, Iraq close to deal**
- **Kuwait's KUFPEC signs with Egypt deal to export gas oil, aircraft fuel**

## **OMAN**

### **International Front**

- **SQU and Tokyo varsity discuss ways for knowledge sharing**
- **Credibility of Oman's media applauded**
- **Oman-South Korea relations discussed**
- **Oman, Malaysia review relations**

### **Social Front**

- **No statement issued on BlackBerry: Oman TRA**
- **SQU to admit 2,700 students**

## **Economy Front**

- Oman Cables Industry exports set to touch RO 110 million
- Oman revenue jumps 31pc on oil output

## **BAHRAIN**

### **International Front**

- US looking for peace not war: US Ambassador to Bahrain
- Cash boost for Bahrain military

### **Political Front**

- Bahrain gears up for elections
- Bahrain poll unlikely to bring major changes to parliament
- King Hamad hails democratic achievements

### **Social Front**

- Bahrain to mark 'Year of Youth'
- 293 special needs people provided jobs in Bahrain

## **Economy Front**

- Bahrain 'could boost Mideast-China trade'
- Bahrain says no plans to ban BlackBerry services

## **QATAR**

### **International Front**

- Qatar Emir, Syrian President hold talks
- Qatar aid for Pakistan

### **Economy Front**

- Qatar Airways nears 100-route milestone
- Qatar overhauls customs procedures
- Qatar and Sri Lanka sign air transport agreement

## GCC

### **GCC producers to consult on India act**

Gulf petrochemical producers said they plan to embark on consultations with the governments of the GCC, regarding anti-dumping duties imposed by India on their products namely Saudi and Omani products, pan-Arab newspaper Asharq Al Awsat reported yesterday. Saudi petrochemical exporters are upset over a decision by the Indian government to impose an anti-dumping duty of more than 22% on polypropylene products on the grounds that their prices in Saudi Arabia were lower than in India, the daily reported.

### **Strong fiscal spend to drive GCC rebound: GIC study**

The GCC economies are expected to rebound in 2010 from their relatively flat economic performance in 2009 on the back of strong fiscal spending, according to Gulf Investment Corporation (GIC), an investment bank based in Kuwait. “The growth forecasts assume that global economic growth will resume in the second half of this year and that oil prices would remain in the vicinity of \$ 70 to 75 a barrel, or even slightly higher,” the bank said in a research note issued on Tuesday. Conditional on continued global economic recovery and sustained appetite for oil imports by the fast growing Asian economies, the note expects the GCC oil output to rebound in 2010 by nearly 4.8 per cent.

Accordingly, the fiscal stance of the GCC governments is expected to remain largely in the positive territory, the bank said. However, the research note said that high government spending in 2009 in infrastructure and real estate have caused real fiscal deficit some GCC countries. “As of April 2010, the GCC economies have witnessed a substantial decrease in the value of their projects, both planned and underway,” it said. According to the report, the recent decline in the euro against the US dollar has reduced imported inflationary pressures. “We anticipate the dollar peg to remain in effect until the creation of the monetary union a few years ahead,” the GIC research note said.

### **GCC bond, Sukuk markets bounce back in Q2**

The GCC debt capital markets staged a broad-based recovery in the second quarter of the year after a disappointing beginning to the year, NCB Capital reported on Monday. The conventional bond market saw the aggregate value of primary issuances increase by 33 per cent over the last quarter, while the number of issuances more than doubled. The primary Sukuk market also picked up, led by sovereign issuances, and reached a total value of \$ 3.4 billion, a significant rise over the same period last year. However, against this positive backdrop, the markets face a period of uncertainty in the wake of the European debt crisis. Dr Jarmo Kotilaine, chief economist of NCB Capital, said “government issuances emerged as a key market driver. Out of the eight GCC Sukuk issued during the last quarter, seven were sovereign issues from Bahrain and Qatar. The progress made in restructuring troubled Sukuk also boosted sentiment in the Shariah-compliant market segment.”



## **GCC urged to tear down investment barriers**

Gulf oil producers need to tear down investment barriers and facilitate the expansion of the private sector to ensure jobs for their citizens given the limited capacity of the public sector, according to a key Qatari bank. International Bank of Qatar (IBQ) said the six Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, which sit atop 45 per cent of the world's proven oil wealth, face a serious challenge in creating sufficient jobs for the fast-growing number of nationals as their public sector has become saturated and a possible decline in oil prices could plunge them back into painful budget deficits. In a study on the GCC economy, IBQ said more than half the GCC nationals who entered the labour market in 2008 were employed by the government sector.

Its figures showed the number of national employees in the public sector stood at nearly 50 per cent of the total work force in Saudi Arabia and as high as 88 per cent in Qatar, 85 per cent in the UAE and 82 per cent in Kuwait. "The GCC countries face two serious challenges in the coming decade. They include their ability to create enough jobs for their people and the possibility of the return of large deficits to their budgets," IBQ said. "The public sector is expected to have a limited capacity to absorb new employees and its ability could weaken further in the future as it has become saturated and a possible drop in oil prices could curb high public spending and push the budgets of member states into shortfalls again." IBQ said such challenges should prompt the GCC, where expatriate workers are a majority in most members, to take measures to encourage the private sector to absorb the new national entrants to the labour market. "The GCC countries must allow the private sector to play a bigger role in the domestic economy with the aim of creating sufficient jobs for nationals...it also should be enabled to become the main provider of public services instead of the government to do so, GCC governments must adopt policies that will facilitate the expansion of the private sector and remove unnecessary barriers for investors despite some progress in this regard, a lot more needs to be done."

## **YEMEN**

### **Bahraini King, Yemen President discuss regional and international issues**

President Ali Abdullah Saleh received on Sunday a phone call from King Hamad ibn Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain. During the phone conversation, King Hamad congratulated President Saleh on the coming of Ramadan month. Saleh and Hamad discussed the bilateral cooperation relations in addition to several regional and international issues of common interests.

### **Yemeni President discusses ties with Syrian PM**

Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh received on Sunday a visiting Syrian delegation headed by Prime Minister Mohammed Naji Al-Otri discussing means of enhancing bilateral relations, it was officially reported. Al-Otri briefed the president about activities of the higher joint commission, planned Syrian-Yemeni accords, aimed at enhancing the relations and launching investment projects in various sectors. The 10th session of the Syrian-Yemeni Higher Committee was held here on Saturday -- co-chaired by Yemeni Prime Minister Ali Mohammad Mujawwar and his Syrian counterpart. The Yemeni Prime Minister shed light on recommendations approved in previous meetings of June 2009, including procedures required to overcome future

obstacles regarding cooperation. Meanwhile in Damascus, the official Syrian news agency, SANA, quoted Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh as calling for expanding cooperation between Syria and Yemen in economy, trade, agriculture, transport and culture.

### **Syrian-Yemeni Higher cmte meetings kick off**

The 10th session of the Syrian-Yemeni Higher Committee began its meeting on Saturday and co-chaired by Yemeni Prime Minister Ali Mohammad Mujawwar and his Syrian counterpart Mohammad Naji Otri. Such gathering resembles the clear and rapid development bilateral relations have been witnessing, the Yemeni premier said in the opening session, stressing importance of joint efforts into boosting cooperation which will benefit peoples of both countries.

Mujawwar called for expanding cooperation horizons amid the rapid regional and international developments which in turn calls for improving joint work and benefit from mutual benefits.

The Yemeni Prime Minister shed light on recommendations approved in previous meetings of June 2009, including procedures required to overcome future obstacles regarding cooperation and steady organized meetings between the two sides. For his part, Otri highlighted past committee meetings throughout the years which laid the foundation for a stronger bilateral relations. The Syrian premier expressed comfort regarding approved practical measures from both sides in preparation meetings, stressing importance on achieving mutual benefit to both countries.

### **Saudi businessmen to invest US\$ 1 bln in Yemen**

Saudi investors intend to pump over the next five years US\$ 1 billion in new investments in several Yemeni cities. This came as Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh has vowed to provide all the moral and legal support to open new doors for Saudi investors. These investments are to be directed to the cities of Hadramout, Sana'a, Aden, Hodeidah, Ibb, Taiz, Abyan, and the Yemeni islands, especially Socotra and Kamran. President Saleh met recently a delegation of Saudi businessmen and investors. The delegation is headed by Abdul Rahman Al Jeraisy, Vice Chairman of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce in the Kingdom. Meanwhile, a joint commission comprising three persons who represent the federation of chambers of commerce in Saudi Arabia and Yemen has been formed, a Yemeni businessman has said. In a statement, deputy chairman of the board of directors of the chamber of commerce and industry of Sana'a Mohammed Salah said that the commission will be concerned with enhancing investment partnership between the two brotherly countries. "The commission has been formed following the meeting held in Sana'a with the visiting Saudi investment delegation", he added.

## **SAUDI ARABIA**

### **International Front**

#### **Saudis evacuated from Moscow**

On the directive of King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, family members of Saudi embassy staff and Saudi visitors were evacuated by a private plane Thursday from Moscow, which has choked for days on acrid smog from wildfires. The evacuees will be provided transportation from King Khaled International Airport in Riyadh to their home cities across the Kingdom, Ambassador Osama Naqli, the spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said in a statement to the Saudi Press Agency. Russia Thursday stepped up efforts to halt wildfires near its main nuclear research site, as President Dmitry Medvedev said a quarter of crops had been lost in a record heatwave. Naqli also said that all Saudi citizens in Pakistan and their families were evacuated during the last few days from flood-affected areas to the Pakistani port city of Karachi, where they will stay until conditions return to normal.

#### **Muslims may soon set their clocks to Makkah Mean Time**

Muslims around the world could be setting their watches to a new time soon when the world's largest clock begins ticking atop a soaring skyscraper in Makkah. Saudi Arabia hopes the four faces of the new clock perched atop a tower, which is expected to be the world's second tallest building, will establish Makkah as an alternate time standard to the Greenwich median. The clock reflects a goal by some Muslims to replace the 126-year-old Universal Time standard originally called Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) with Makkah Mean Time. At a conference in Doha in 2008, Muslim clerics and scholars presented "scientific" arguments that Makkah time is the true global meridian. They said that Makkah is the center of the world and that the Greenwich standard was imposed by the West in 1884. The clock is targeted to enter service with a three-month trial period in the first week of the holy month of Ramadan on or about August 12, according to the Saudi Press Agency.

#### **BlackBerry 'in deal with Saudi'**

BlackBerry has "virtually" sealed a deal with Saudi Arabia on its encrypted messenger services to avert a ban on the smartphone, a Saudi telecoms company official said yesterday. "A deal has been virtually reached and we are in the process of adding the final touches," said the official of one of Saudi Arabia's three licensed mobile operators, asking not to be named. The official declined to go into details. The Saudi-financed satellite television Al Arabiya, citing unnamed Saudi sources, said BlackBerry's Canadian makers have agreed in principle to grant access to Saudi authorities to decipher its messenger exchanges between users. A special server for the messenger services is to be set up in the kingdom, according to Al Arabiya. Earlier yesterday, an official of a mobile phone company reported progress in talks with BlackBerry's manufacturers, Research In Motion (RIM), in a bid to have the device conform to Saudi laws. "A solution is in sight with the Canadian company," the official said.

Only last week RIM founder and co-chief executive Mike Lazaridis, however, told the New York Times that letting governments monitor messages would imperil ties with clients, including major corporations and law enforcement agencies. Stepping into the fray on Thursday, the US and Canadian governments said they would hold talks with those countries fearful of the security implications of BlackBerry usage. Several BlackBerry subscribers in the Saudi port city and business hub of Jeddah said yesterday the service had been working uninterrupted since it was reinstated after a four-hour suspension the previous day. The Saudi telecommunications authority announced earlier in the week it had ordered mobile providers to block key BlackBerry services or face a \$ 1.3mn fine as of August 6. The regulator had said the suspension was because "the way BlackBerry services are provided currently does not meet the regulatory criteria of the commission and the licensing conditions."

### **US warns citizens in Saudi Arabia of threat**

The US Embassy in Saudi Arabia has warned American citizens that extremists may be planning to attack Westerners in the country. The warning issued Wednesday said the timing and method of the potential attacks were not known. ". We have received credible information that an unidentified extremist(s) in Saudi Arabia may be planning to attack Westerners working and living in Al-Qassim, Saudi Arabia," the US warning said. Al-Qassim is an ultraconservative province northwest of Riyadh. The embassy urged US citizens to "exercise prudence and enhanced security awareness at all times."

### **Pakistani official thanks Saudi Arabia for flood relief**

The governor of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (North West Frontier Province) on Friday thanked Saudi Arabia for the humanitarian aid it sent to the region's flood victims. Gov. Owais Ahmad Ghani received expressed his gratitude to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah during a meeting with Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Abdul Aziz Al-Ghadeer in Peshawar on Friday. Al-Ghadeer was in Peshawar to receive the third Saudi Arabian Airlines jet carrying emergency relief material. The ambassador also met a number of officials in the provincial capital to discuss the matter of the distribution of the relief material, the Saudi Press Agency reported. The recent flood which is described as unprecedented and devastating affected millions of people in the region.

### **Social Front**

#### **Fatwas only by senior scholars: King Abdullah**

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"Individual fatwas on personal matters such as matters of worship, dealings, personal matters are exempt from this ruling, but they should be between the questioner and the scholar. There should be a total ban on any topics involving strange or obsolete views." The king said the issuing of fatwas by unqualified persons was a violation of Islamic teachings. "We have observed the fallout from unqualified people issuing fatwas. It is our religious duty to stop them in order to preserve our religion, which is our dearest possession, and cut off an evil which, if we do not tackle now, will return with added force." the king added in the decree. "Religion is no place for bragging nor seeking worldly ambitions." The king said differences of opinion among scholars should be confined to their own circles and not involve other people. "We find some people undermining the role of official establishments and crossing into state jurisdiction. They pose as eligible scholars to dispute these religious establishments," he added.

### **University projects in Saudi Arabia worth SR2b okayed**

Dr. Khaled Al-Anqari, Minister of Higher Education, has signed contracts for 22 projects to be carried out at a number of local universities at a total cost of SR2 billion. He said these projects will help to increase the capacity of different universities and upgrade the quality of programs taught to students. He said the new projects include the construction of a building for the university's administration at Baha University, the construction of an engineering college and educational hospital at Hail University, in addition to other premises at other universities. The signing ceremony took place at the ministry's headquarters in Jeddah on Tuesday in the presence of the universities' presidents. Meanwhile, Al-Anqari added that all students enrolled in the King's Scholarship Program have been accepted at prestigious and recommended universities in Australia and elsewhere. He said if a problem arises from the number of Saudi students sent on scholarships to a university abroad, the problem will be solved immediately by directing the students to a better study program. The scholarship program is going ahead according to plan. He also touched on plans by his ministry and some universities to set up new hostels for males and females to suit their financial situation.

### **Imbibe spirit of Ramadan, says Abdullah**

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah urged Muslims on Tuesday to compete with one another in righteous deeds and work to alleviate the pain and suffering of the poor and needy, inspired by the spirit of the holy month of Ramadan. "This blessed month has taught us many lessons. We have to contemplate them to learn how people should be compassionate to their fellow beings, how the rich feel the suffering of the poor, and how Muslims compete with one another to win the pleasure of God," the king said in his Ramadan message. In their joint message to Saudis on the advent of Ramadan, King Abdullah and Crown Prince Sultan, deputy premier and minister of defense and aviation, also urged Muslims to imbibe the true spirit of Islam, which is a religion of love, mercy and tolerance and promotes goodness, reform and dialogue.

The Royal Court announced on Tuesday that the fasting month would start in the Kingdom on Wednesday (Aug. 11), after several people sighted the Ramadan crescent in different parts of the country. In their message, the king and crown prince called upon Muslims to participate actively

in the creation of a human civilization. In this respect, the message referred to Saudi Arabia's efforts to promote dialogue with followers of other religious faiths and cultures. "Our interfaith dialogue initiative was aimed at building a civilized world bringing people closer in order to work for establishing peace and justice and enhancing the welfare of the whole humanity," said the message that was read out on Saudi Television by Culture and Information Minister Abdul Aziz Khoja.

### **Saudi to blacklist all transit visa violators**

Travellers flouting Saudi Arabian transit visa rules will be blacklisted, a senior official at the Saudi Arabian Embassy here said. Violators will not be issued another visa in future but can obtain a Haj or Umrah visa, the diplomat added. "The Saudi missions in the UAE and neighbouring countries grant transit visas for those wishing to travel to Egypt, Jordan and Levant countries overland," Naif Al Otaiba, an official in the Saudi Arabian Embassy in the Capital told Khaleej Times. "The visa has a maximum limit of three days and if the visa holder stays more than three days without compelling justification, he will face a fine and a ban from getting another permit in the future," he said. Khaleej Times on Monday received a telephone call from an expatriate family residing in the UAE, which had got a transit visa to travel overland on their way to their homeland, but their car broke down for almost one week on the return journey.

The family is still facing a problem of a breach of the three-day transit visa. "Regrettably, many of those who obtain transit visas don't use them for the purpose they are issued for, and they illegally stay to perform Umrah or Haj in a flagrant violation of the transit visa rules," the diplomat said. However, the Saudi authorities exempt those from these penalties who fall sick or are involved in traffic accidents or are facing any circumstances out of their control that the authorities see acceptable.

### **Saudi Arabia's 9th Development Plan OK'd**

The Cabinet Monday reviewed and approved the country's 9th Development Plan for the period 2010 to 2014, which will see a 67 percent increase in spending on the previous plan to a record new total of SR1,444 billion. Presiding over the Cabinet, King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, directed all government departments to implement their programs and projects as scheduled. He said that completing these projects on time serves to improve the quality of life for citizens. Most of the spending is allocated for the human resources sector that includes education and training. There will also be spending on social development, health, municipal services, housing, culture, transport, communications and other sectors. Long-term strategy for sustainable development.

In a statement on the eve of the approval of the Kingdom's 9th Five-Year Development Plan, Minister of Economy and Planning Dr. Khaled Bin Muhammad Al-Gosaibi, said the new plan is a long-term strategy for sustainable development. He said due attention has been given to the country's competitiveness, the growth of a knowledge economy and youth issues. Human development resources has received the lion's share at 50.6 percent; the social development and health sector 19 percent; and transportation and municipal and housing services respectively at 15.7 percent, 7.7 percent and 7.0 percent, said Al-Gosaibi. The Cabinet also approved an

agreement between the Kingdom and Syria on double taxation and capital and income tax vasion which was signed in Damascus, Syria last year. It also approved a memorandum of understanding between the Saudi General Organization of Social Insurance and its counterpart in Yemen, which was signed in Riyadh earlier this year.

### **3,000 judges needed in Saudi Arabia, says Bin Humaid**

The Kingdom needs 3,000 judges to operate effectively, according to Dr. Saleh Bin Abdullah Bin Humaid, Chairman of the Supreme Judiciary Council. He stressed that King Abdullah's judiciary reform program, for which SR9 billion has been allocated, will help to increase job openings for judges. He said graduates were reluctant to join the judiciary because of the high standards required. He said about 1,500 qualified and trained judges will soon start work at the courts. He added that the specialist courts system will be applied as soon as the pleading system, which has been referred to the Experts Commission at the Council of Ministers, has been completed. He denied rumors of differences and problems between the Supreme Judiciary Council and judges in various parts of the Kingdom. "The Council is trying to cope with the developments within the King's judiciary reform project," he said. Al-Humaid made these comments at an event honoring newly appointed judges.

### **Security plan to ensure pilgrims' safety in Ramadan: Prince Nayef**

A security plan for the holy month of Ramadan taking into consideration the large number of Umra pilgrims and visitors expected at this time of the year, has been approved. Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz, Second Deputy Premier, Minister of Interior and Chairman of the Civil Defence Council, has endorsed the civil defence safety and security plan to deal with emergency situations in the holy city of Makkah, according to Lt-Gen. Saad Al Twaijri, Director General of the Civil Defence. Al Twaijri said Prince Nayef is personally monitoring all stages of the plan, which has been designed to ensure the highest degree of safety for all pilgrims and visitors.

Additional forces, including 300 officers and non-commissioned officers will be deployed this year to maintain security. He stressed that the Civil Defence Council will not compromise on safety and will deal strictly with anyone who ignores these measures. He said the plan will be carried out by all government agencies that make up the Civil Defence Council. He added that the summer holiday leads to overcrowding in Makkah because thousands of holiday-makers want to spend the holy month in the vicinity of the Grand Mosque. Al Twaijri said the civil defence plan will be implemented from the first of Ramadan, adding that the plan covers more than 12 risk areas and counter measures. The risk list includes fires in the vicinity of the holy places, at power stations, hotels, residential towers where Umra pilgrims are housed and car tunnels. Security personnel will also be watching for overcrowding, stampedes at Haram's gates and areas surrounding the Grand Mosque.

## **Economy Front**

### **Saudi, Qatari investors put stake in CS new debt fund**

Credit Suisse (CS) said on Thursday it planned to launch a debt fund in excess of \$ 1 billion with its largest key shareholders to invest in emerging markets debt. The Swiss banking giant did not name its shareholders but its largest stakeholders are the Qatar Investment Authority with 8.9 percent and Saudi conglomerate Olayan with 6.6 percent. Credit Suisse said the fund would operate through its Asset Management business and would “pursue credit investments in global emerging markets”. “Our shareholders commitment to the fund is a testament to the strength of Credit Suisse’s Emerging Markets franchise and the value that can be created for investors in these important markets,” Rob Shafir, chief executive for the bank’s asset management division, said in a statement. The Emerging Markets Credit Opportunity fund (EMCO) would be managed by Credit Suisse and focus on investment opportunities in emerging markets in Latin America, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Meanwhile, Credit Suisse said it was cutting around 75 jobs in its UK operations, becoming the second investment bank in as many days to slim down as economic fears hit the deal-making business. Financial market jitters in the wake of Europe’s debt crisis.

### **Saudis to pump \$ 1b investment into Yemen**

Saudi investors intend to invest \$ 1 billion over the next five years in new investments for several Yemeni cities. This came as Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh vowed to provide all the moral and legal support to open new doors for Saudi investors. The investments are directed to cities in Hadhramaut, Sana’a, Aden, Hodeidah, Ibb, Taiz, Abyan, and the Yemeni islands, specially Socotra and Kamran. Saleh met last Saturday a delegation of businessmen and investors from Saudi Arabia. The delegation was headed by Abdul Rahman Al Jeraisy, vice chairman of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce in Saudi Arabia. Saleh expressed his happiness to meet with the Saudi delegation. He warmly welcomed them to invest in Yemen. He confirmed that the Saudi investments would receive all care and attention from him personally and from the government and Yemeni businessmen, so as to ensure positive cooperation and integration to achieve the desired partnership between the two countries. “There are many promising opportunities for investment in Yemen which are available for investors in the Kingdom or other brotherly and friendly countries”, he added. He confirmed that Yemen lives in security and stability despite what is portrayed the media who tends to magnify any events and seek to create a large confusion to distort the reality of the stable security situations in Yemen. Saleh stressed the importance of strengthening the bridges of cooperation and partnership between businessmen and investors in Yemen and Saudi Arabia through joint projects in various fields.

### **Oil reserves 'plentiful', says Aramco chief**

Saudi Aramco President and CEO Khalid A. Al-Falih brushed aside “peak oil” concerns, saying the world has plentiful supply of oil and gas, with a vast quantity of known reserves yet to be tapped and additional resources still to be discovered. Speaking at the Oxford Energy Forum, Al-Falih said off-and-on fears that the world’s oil resources are about to be exhausted are baseless,



according to a report by Saudi Press Agency. Al-Falih said geological evidence proved that the energy-hungry world can still bank on between 6 and 8 trillion barrels of conventional oil and natural gas liquids and about 7 trillion barrels of unconventional oil. The ability to produce those resources hinges on a complex interplay of technology, economic, environmental and regulatory factors, said Al-Falih, who heads the national oil company of the world's largest crude exporter. Aramco operates the world's largest single hydrocarbon network, and produced nearly 3.4 billion barrels of oil last year, managing over 100 oil and gas fields in the country. The concept of "peak oil" has been an issue of contention among oil producers, environment lobby groups and policy makers ever since the term was coined by geophysicist M. King Hubbert in the 1950s. Hubbert predicted that world oil supply would peak in 1995. Some oil experts have estimated that oil production will hit peak levels by 2020.

### **Inflation in Saudi Arabia to remain high**

Researchers at Riyadh-based Jadwa Investment have revised the Kingdom's full-year inflation forecast up to 5.2 percent in 2010 and 4.2 percent in 2011, according to reports Monday. Saudi Arabia hit a high of 5.5 percent in June, less than half the 11 percent peak in June 2008, but well above the 1.2 percent average witnessed since 1980. The finance firm said that out of 44 leading and developed markets surveyed by Reuters, only Turkey has a higher inflation rate than Saudi Arabia, and the bulk of countries are seeing falling rates. Jadwa indicated that Ramadan and poor weather conditions in central and eastern Europe were forcing food prices higher, with inflation in this segment up by 6.2 percent in June from -0.3 percent in October last year. The firm revealed that since 2002, food prices have risen more than five times faster in Ramadan than the average for the other 11 months in the year. In addition, significant government spending has pushed up the prices of raw materials, and public sector pay, pensions and other benefits are also assisting consumer spending. Elsewhere, strong domestic demand for housing in Saudi Arabia remains high, unlike elsewhere in the Gulf, where demand was largely driven by expatriates, many of whom have now lost their jobs and left. Jadwa added that another factor contributing to inflation in the second half was a rise in electricity tariffs from July, which in turn will raise production costs for companies such as SABIC. While external factors have played a part in dampening inflation in Saudi Arabia, Jadwa said that these would continue to be subdued. "For the moment, we think that the government will accept the relatively high level of inflation in the Kingdom," the research note stated.

## **UAE**

### **International Front**

#### **Ethiopian Prime Minister hails wise leadership of UAE**

Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia has hailed the wise leadership of President H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE and Ruler of Dubai H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum for the development and growth witnessed in the UAE. He expressed these views while receiving Dr. Yusuf Issa Hassan Al Sabri, UAE Ambassador to Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Prime Minister noted with appreciation the significant role played by H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign

Affairs in the African continent, which led African countries to support the UAE in the selection of Abu Dhabi to be the headquarters of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

On his part, Dr. Al Sabri expressed his seek desire to make efforts and endeavours to ensure the development of friendly relations and cooperation between the two countries and expanding new horizons for this cooperation. The meeting was attended by a number of officials.

### **UAE, South Korea discuss ways to enhance cooperation in all fields**

Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces received yesterday the visiting South Korean Defence Minister Kim Tae-young. The two sides discussed a number of issues of common interest and ways to enhance cooperation in all fields, especially in the areas of defence, training, military rehabilitation, exchange of scientific and technological expertise. They also exchanged views on the latest regional and international developments.

### **Scope for broader Indo-UAE ties in education**

There is enormous scope for enhancing cooperation between Gulf countries like the UAE and India in the educational field considering the changes that are happening in both the countries, said prominent Indian historian and educationist K N Panikker. UAE-India relations need not be confined to trade and investment, he said, while delivering a talk at the Indian Embassy here on Saturday evening. The talk was organised by the cultural wing of the Indian Embassy. “Education is an area where the two countries can cooperate since both countries are developing a modern educational network. This is the right time to build and develop a foundation of strong ties in the field of education,” said Panikker “Education is not just about imparting knowledge or equipping children to get a gainful employment. The education system prevailing has a critical bearing on preserving and nurturing national identities. Western education may not fully satisfy the requirements of countries like India and the UAE in this respect. On the other hand, UAE and India share similar histories in these areas,” he noted. UAE and India can exchange students in several fields, said Panikker.

### **Deep-rooted ties with UAE hailed on Singapore National Day**

The Singapore community in the UAE celebrated their 45th National Day in style in the Capital on Friday evening showcasing a series of traditional and cultural performances. The National Day falls on August 9 but they celebrated it on August 6 at the Park Rotana hotel here. To mark the occasion, the community also raised funds for needy people and the money will be given to the Future Centre for Special Needs in the Capital. According to the mission’s records, there are around 1,500 Singaporeans in the UAE and mostly reside in Dubai and the Northern Emirates. Talking to Khaleej Times, Tee Tua Ba, Non-Resident Ambassador of Singapore said, “Singapore and the UAE enjoy excellent ties and a mutually beneficial relationship. Our leaders share similar aspirations for the development of our countries and our people. We also face similar challenges of maintaining our competitiveness in the global economy, and the continuous development of our human resources.”

## **Social Front**

### **85pc of UAE residents in deep debt**

A huge majority of UAE residents are currently entangled in a debt trap even as the country's Central Bank reports a spurt in the number of bounced cheques this year, a study by a UAE-based financial consultancy revealed. The study, the first of its kind held in the UAE, also revealed that 85 per cent of those who responded to a survey are heavily indebted, with the average individual debt at around Dh500,000. The study by the Dubai-based debt management and credit counselling agency ISDM suggests that 75 per cent of the debt-laden residents are men and the rest women. In Dubai, in terms of total debt by nationality, residents from India (17 per cent) and Philippines (25 per cent) rank the highest, followed by Pakistan and South Africa, while Emiratis accounted for three per cent. The study covered a cross-section of mostly salaried category, earning between Dh4,000 and Dh70,000 a month, Yohannes Mazeingia, Managing Director of ISDM, told Khaleej Times. He said the average individual debt of Dh500,000 might appear huge. "But when you consider the combined load of a couple of personal loans and several credit card debts plus interests and other hidden charges, the total individual liability cannot be less."

"This is a serious issue that needs to be addressed before it goes out of hand," said Mazeingia, whose firm currently services more than 3,000 clients. After a period of slower credit availability, easy credit options are again chasing gullible customers with most banks in a race to lure as many credit card users as possible. Banks in the UAE charge exorbitantly high interest rates which, combined with "other hidden charges", will cross 24 per cent, which Mazeingia believes, is "one of the highest in the world".

### **Road accident deaths drop by 51% in Abu Dhabi**

Road deaths in Abu Dhabi have seen a remarkable drop, thanks to the new strategy of traffic safety rolled out in the emirate. Figures released by Col. Hussain Ahmed Al Harithi, Director of Traffic and Patrol at the Abu Dhabi Police, show that the number of deaths caused by road accidents dropped by 51 per cent during July this year compared to the same period last year. He also revealed that the total number of deaths and severe injuries in Abu Dhabi declined in July by 38 per cent compared to the same period last year. A total of 41 road deaths were recorded in a single month in Abu Dhabi while this dropped to 20 cases of deaths in the same period this year, the figures show. The major reasons of traffic accidents last month were human errors like abrupt turnings, negligence, lack of concentration and closed driving without leaving enough distance between vehicles.

### **25 % of Abu Dhabi's population is nationals**

Estimates by the government-run Statistics Centre-Abu Dhabi (SCAD) put the Capital emirate's population at 1.643 million people in mid-2009, with nearly 25 per cent of them Emiratis. Out of the emirate's total 1,643,344 people, 1,068,759 are males and 1,130,516 live in urban areas, Butti Ahmed Mohammed bin Butti Al Qubaisi, the Director of SCAD said at a Press conference here on Tuesday, after releasing the 'Statistical Yearbook of Abu Dhabi—2010'. The book has been

brought out by SCAD. Interestingly, the total population of the emirate was 211,812 in 1975; it grew 6.6 times to reach 1,339,484 inhabitants in 2005, Al Qubaisi said. The Emirate's average annual population growth rate between the last two censuses conducted in 2001 and 2005 was 4.4 per cent, and the population level in 2009 has been worked out by the SCAD experts based on this growth rate. The population pyramid for Abu Dhabi nationals for 2009 shows a broad-based age-sex structure, with an even decrease in population figures due to mortality effects of an aging population. The age structure by broad age-groups shows that 40.2 per cent of the nationals are below the age of 15, while 57.6 per cent of them are aged 15-64 years and 2.2 per cent are elderly with age 65 and above. Estimates by SCAD show that the unemployed population increased from 28,573 people in 2005 to 29,881 in 2008 — 33.6 per cent of them were nationals and 27.3 per cent were females. The largest portion of the unemployed — 24.5 per cent — is in the age group 20-24 years. This finding applies to nationals and non-nationals, males and females alike, SCAD Yearbook reports.

### **UAE job vacancies up 45%**

The UAE saw a 45 per cent rise in the number of job vacancies in the second quarter of the year compared to same period last year, said a research report. Compared to the first quarter, job vacancies increased 33 per cent in the second quarter of 2010, said a study conducted by the FiveTen Group, a global recruitment firm. "A more positive outlook for the region is being reflected by the banking and finance industry hiring again. Ongoing government investment in infrastructure is also resulting in more jobs in fields such as IT and telecoms," the report said. Confidence is returning to the economy across the UAE, as global trade increases and rising oil prices benefit the region, it said. Business confidence has also been strengthened in the region by continuing progress on the restructuring of the Dubai World debt, allaying concerns that the debt will not be repaid, the study said. From negative GDP growth in 2009, the International Monetary Fund has projected growth of 1.3 per cent in 2010 and 3.1 per cent in 2011. "Dubai has had it tough particularly over the course of the downturn but the outlook for the Emirate and the region as a whole is looking rosier," said Mark Baxter, regional director of the FiveTen Group.

### **Economy Front**

#### **Etihad takes delivery of A330-200**

Etihad Airways has taken delivery of its first A330-200 freighter aircraft. Etihad is the launch customer for the freighter which made its maiden flight from Airbus in Toulouse to the airline's base in Abu Dhabi on Monday, August 9. The freighter will boost the airline's expanding fleet of cargo aircraft and arrives at a time when cargo volumes are at their highest for Etihad. Etihad Crystal Cargo carried a record tonnage in July of more than 23,000 tonnes. More than 30,000 shipments were carried during the month, driven by increased volumes from Pakistan, Australia, China and Bangladesh. The United Arab Emirates was the top cargo destination. James Hogan, Etihad Airways' Chief Executive Officer, said: "The arrival of our new A330-200 freighter marks a new era in Etihad's cargo services and will support Etihad's goal to expand that side of the business further."

## **New irrigation methods to reduce water usage by 40% in 5 years**

An irrigation demonstration farm in Seih Al Kheir, a first of its kind, was inaugurated on Tuesday in the presence of Rashed Mohamed Al Shariqi, Chairman of Abu Dhabi Farmers' Services Centre and Director General of Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority, and a number of agricultural experts, farmers and farm owners from the Western Region. The farm was set up by the Abu Dhabi's Farmers' Services Centre (FSC) to help farmers in the UAE achieve higher productivity and better quality of crops as well as to reduce the use of natural resources through demonstration of modern irrigation technology. Shariqi said the transition to the new system would reduce water usage for farming by 40 per cent in the next five years. "The irrigation demonstration farm will guide and encourage the region's farmers to adopt modern and efficient systems that reduce the use of water and increase agricultural productivity," Shariqi said.

"I call upon our brothers in the farming sector to cooperate with the efforts of the government which are aimed at preserving the nation's resources and improving the people's quality of life," he said. According to Mubarak Ali Al Qusaili Al Mansouri, Executive Director of Agriculture, ADFCA and Governing Board Member, Farmers' Services Centre, the demonstration farm was modelled on the size and design of regional farms and makes it convenient for farmers to implement the system in their own farms.

## **Iran cancels gas deal with UAE's Crescent**

Iran has cancelled a gas contract with UAE-based Crescent Petroleum with which it has had a long-standing dispute over the supply of Iranian gas, the head of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) said yesterday. NIOC and Sharjah-headquartered Crescent signed a 25-year gas contract in 2001, with a price linked to oil. But as oil rallied some Iranian officials called for a revision to the price formula and blamed the price dispute for delivery delays. Javad Oji, head of NIOC and Iran's deputy oil minister said the contract had been nullified and that from now on: "The oil ministry's policy is the direct sale of gas to the UAE government", the semi-official Mehr news agency reported.

For the sale of gas to neighboring countries, a unified price formula has been set and all negotiations will be conducted on the basis of this formula obtained on the basis of oil and oil derivative prices," he said. Iran, a major crude exporter, sits on the world's second-largest natural gas reserves after Russia, but sanctions that hinder access to Western technology and other factors have slowed its development as a major exporter. Oji said gas exports in the last Iranian year, which ran to March 21, 2010, were up 44 percent year-on-year at \$ 6.8 billion. Iran also earned \$ 1.8 billion from the swap and transit of gas during the same period. Production capacity stands at 540 million cubic metres per day, he said.

## **Health Front**

### **Law needed to protect our rights: Aids patients**

A number of Aids patients, who are from the Aids clinic at Rashid Hospital in Dubai, have demanded that the concerned authorities declare the final version of the draft law to protect the

society from Aids while also protecting the rights of people living with it. According to the Ministry of Health (MoH), it has already completed the draft of the law which will allow Aids patients to go on with their lives normally, and have job opportunities available to them. This had been announced by Dr Hanif Hassan, the Minister of Health, who also mentioned other drafts relating to combating other diseases. The total number of Aids patients in the country has reached 787 in the first six months of this year, according to MoH statistics. These also revealed that the reasons for the infection differed, with 9 per cent being infected through their mothers during delivery. According to the statistics, four per cent were infected through drugs and narcotics, 9 per cent through marital relationships, 4 per cent through contaminated blood (both in and out of the country), 17 per cent due to homosexuality, and 57 per cent through other means.

Dr Abdullah Estadi, a consultant of internal medicine and the head of the infectious diseases department at Rashid Hospital, said there is no unified record for Aids in the country, despite the growing number of patients. He said that the number of cases reviewed in the hospital has been 130, with all being Emiratis, except for 18 expatriates, who were sentenced by court orders. The authorities cannot deport them after they were found to have Aids, and so they are receiving treatment within the country, added the doctor. As for the others who suffering from Aids in Dubai, the hospital does not know of those cases, added Dr Estadi. Medical studies have proven that Aids can only be transferred through semen, blood, vaginal secretions and breast milk and it cannot be transmitted through saliva, sweat, air, sneezing, or coughing - making it safe for people to interact with those suffering from the disease.

## **KUWAIT**

### **International Front**

#### **Iraqi Ambassador lauds relations with Kuwait**

Iraqi Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Bahr Al-Oloum lauded here Thursday relations with Kuwait, saying that his country respected the sovereignty of Kuwait. The Iraqi diplomat made the remarks during a visit to the Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA) headquarters. According to KJA press release, the Ambassador said that the recent statements attributed to Iraq's envoy to the Arab League in regards to the Kuwait-Iraq border issues were "untrue" and that Iraq would not approve statements which could endanger relations between the two countries. The Iraqi government, stated the Ambassador, would always recognized Kuwait as an independent state and would respect the UNSC resolutions in regards to pending files between Kuwait and Baghdad.

#### **US sells more Patriot missiles to Kuwait**

The United States is planning to sell more than 200 Patriot missiles worth some \$ 900 million to Kuwait as part of its longterm effort to build up anti-missile systems in the Gulf. The initiative is aimed at defending Gulf allies against potential Iranian missile strikes and to signal to Teheran that any aggression would not go unanswered. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency announced on Wednesday that it had notified Congress of the proposed sale. Congress could

object but is not expected to do so. Kuwait has long been identified as one of several Gulf states already with Patriot missiles. US officials say Patriot batteries also have been stationed in Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

### **Kuwaiti Interior Minister hails talks with British official**

Kuwait's Minister of Interior Lieut. Gen. Sheikh Jaber Khaled Al-Sabah hailed talks he had held with British Minister of State for Security and Counter Terrorism Baroness Pauline Neville-Jones, which he described as positive. Speaking to KUNA before departing London on his way home, he said that a memorandum of understanding that had been signed with the British government is related to the exchange of expertise, security cooperation, organised crime, money laundering and benefiting from the UK's vast experience in the field of security, particularly on technical and technology-related issues. Sheikh Jaber stressed Kuwait's commitment to joint cooperation with the UK, and the need for both to stand together in light of what is being witnessed on the global and regional scale of fast-paced events and quickly developing forms of international organised crime, and what follows of abductions, hostage keeping and human trafficking.

The Kuwaiti minister underlined that his ministry will do all it can to make technical needs and equipment available to support forces in attaining security across the country. The Minister of Interior had spent two days in London, during which he had met Baroness Neville-Jones.

### **Kuwait sends relief aid to Pakistan**

Volunteers of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) yesterday boarded a Pakistan-bound Kuwaiti military aircraft carrying relief and humanitarian assistance for those afflicted by the flash floods there. The chairman of the KRCS mission to Pakistan, Khaled Al-Ghais, said in a statement that Kuwait will take control of its humanitarian mission in helping the Pakistanis and easing their suffering due to the dreadful suffering inflicted upon them as a result of the flash floods that recently ravaged the country. He added that the aid comes at the instructions of His Highness the Amir who ordered that urgent relief assistance be provided to those afflicted by the heavy flooding, noting that KRCS is in direct coordination with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society in order to convey Kuwaiti relief items to those affected. Al-Ghais explained that the KRCS field team will intensify its efforts in Pakistan in order to meet the needs of the people there, who face daunting challenges as a result of the damage caused by the floods in their respective areas.

### **Political Front**

#### **Cooperation of authorities top priority before us: Kuwaiti PM**

The homeland is set for a course of great challenge, and the top most challenge is to strengthen cooperation between the legislative and the executive authorities for the best interest of Kuwait, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad told Al-Seyassah daily in remarks published on Thursday. His Highness noted that there is no cause for alarm or fear over a lapse in Kuwaiti politics, because ours is a state of institutions and one which relies and refers

to the Constitution approved by its people and leadership. As for procedures to facilitate meeting the objectives of the state's development plan, he said focus is now on reducing red-tape and document processes to speed up execution of projects. "However, this is not a problem Kuwait suffers in particular, but one which is wide-spread among states of institutions," His Highness remarked.

"We shall try our best to reduce stages of processing, as we are fully committed to all details of the development plan. It is an ambitious plan which would rejuvenate the economy and urge people to act rather than surrender to a trend of hollow political rhetoric which is not coupled with action. His Highness stressed, "Citizens are bored with great argument and little action, which plagued us in recent years." The development plan has over 20 mega projects, "And we shall focus on six or seven of these in the first phase; those directly related to services, communications, education, and health care."

### **Khorafi calls on govt to present its law on development plan financing**

Parliament Speaker Jassim Al-Khorafi on Thursday called for a quick government draft law on the financing of the projects of the development plan, noting that the 50-member house would then look into what the government had to propose and the extent of need for such a law. Speaking to reporters, Khorafi stressed the significance that the lawmakers did not present a law proposal in order to deny the government a justification that plan was a failure due to the legislation of the deputies. There is no need for an extraordinary session, he said, calling on the government to present its law. He said the law would be debated and studied for its significance.

### **Kuwaiti MP Tabtabai fumes over 'Persian Gulf'**

Salafi Islamist MP Waleed Al-Tabtabai protested yesterday at the General Statistics Department use of the term Persian Gulf instead of Arabian Gulf in English on a map for the region which was posted on the department's website. Tabatabai asked Sheikh Ahmad if the ministry has conducted an investigation into the issue and on what basis the term has been used. The lawmaker also demanded to know the results of the investigation that has been made and what action has been taken against those responsible. In another development, the deputy prime minister for economic affairs Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Sabah said yesterday the government has asked for two weeks to finalize an opinion on the best method to fund projects outlined under the four-year development plan. Sheikh Ahmad's statement came after a meeting with the National Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee to study proposals calling to set up a special government fund for financing the multi-billion-dollar projects.

The minister however clarified that any government funding will be only for new public shareholding companies to be established to implement the projects and not for private companies which may be awarded parts of the projects. Sheikh Ahmad also stressed that a role will be provided for the local banking sector to contribute to the funding of the projects. He said that the government informed members of the committee that funding will be provided only to the public shareholding companies that will be established as part of the development plan. The proposed shareholding companies will be 50 percent owned by the public through an initial



public offering, 10 percent to be held by the government and the remaining 40 percent will be sold at an auction to a strategic private investor.

### **Kuwaiti MP calls for greater steps for rapprochement with Turkey**

A leading Kuwaiti lawmaker on Saturday called for taking greater steps for achieving Arab-Turkish rapprochement. Addressing the opening session of the Arab-Turkish Dialogue forum, held here, MP Marzoug Al-Ghanem, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Kuwaiti Parliament (the National Assembly), said such a rapprochement between the two nations has become a reality, and meets the aspiration, in this respect, of the Arab and Turkish peoples. Greater and further steps on this path should be taken, he said, indicating that the Turks and the Arabs had been slack in making their ties closer, he added. He said that Kuwait "is anxious" to host the next round of dialogue between the Kuwaiti and Turkish parliaments "so that this dialogue would be follow-up to the Gulf-Turkish meeting due in Kuwait during October." MP Al-Ghanem expressed hope that the first round of the Arab-Turkish dialogue, currently held in Damascus, would conclude with proposals that would constitute the basis for an accord, to be signed during the next meeting in Kuwait. He also proposed that the next meeting at this level be held by the year-end.

### **Social Front**

#### **Kuwait has received 500 doctors since last year**

Kuwait has hosted 500 foreign medical specialists since last year, in line with the state policy of upgrading the national medical services. Health Undersecretary Dr. Ibrahim Al-Abdel Hadi said in a statement to KUNA on Saturday the hosting of the specialized doctors was part of the policy to benefit from foreign expertise for improving the national medical services. The specialists, during their stay in the country, have been engaged in workshops, performing critical surgeries, addressing seminars and giving advise to the local personnel, he said, indicating at plans for inviting more medical teams from abroad to make a qualitative leap in the vital sector. Recently-signed accords with foreign countries will ensure improvement of the services at the Chest Diseases Hospital, the National Bank of Kuwait's Cancer Hospital for Children and Hussein Makki Jumaa Hospital for Cancer.

### **Economy Front**

#### **Economy set to rebound in Kuwait**

Kuwait's economy recovered at a slower pace than expected in the first half of 2010, after shrinking 21.2 per cent in nominal terms last year due to weak oil prices, data from the country showed yesterday. The global downturn hit Kuwait, the world's fourth-biggest oil exporter, harder than other Gulf states in 2009 as its economy heavily relies on the volatile hydrocarbon sector. The Opec member's economy is expected to rebound this year, helped by higher oil prices and government spending plans. However, the second-quarter data released by the central bank pointed to sluggish domestic demand. "Imports look more or less flat over the past two quarters. This does not fit very well with the notion of the economy recovering, it probably tells the story

that the economy is doing a bit better but it is not exactly booming forward," said National Bank of Kuwait senior economist Daniel Kaye.

"In terms of most people's hopes for the coming year about the government's major investment programme, most of it really has not got going yet," he said. Imports fell 16pc year-on-year in the second quarter, edging slightly higher compared with the previous three months, when they booked a 31pc annual drop. Exports, of which oil accounts for 95pc, jumped 30pc from a year ago, reaching their highest level since the third quarter of 2008.

### **Kuwait, Iraq close to deal**

Kuwait and Iraq are expected to reach an agreement soon setting guidelines for investing in oilfields which cross their desert border, a newspaper reported yesterday. The Al-Jarida daily said in an unsourced report that a committee from the two countries met on Sunday in Kuwait to discuss the matter and an agreement was imminent. The newspaper said Kuwait and Iraq will delegate a "third party" it did not name to determine the size of these fields and each country's share in them.

### **Kuwait's KUFPEC signs with Egypt deal to export gas oil, aircraft fuel**

KUFPEC's Managing Director for International Marketing Abdulatif Al-Houti (with photos) CAIRO, Aug 7 (KUNA) -- Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) said Saturday that it has signed a deal to export gas oil and aircraft fuel to Egypt for a period of three years. UFPEC's Managing Director for International Marketing Abdulatif Al-Houti signed the agreement with Vice President of Egypt General Petroleum Authority (EGPA) Mohammad Shuaib. Al-Houti told KUNA the deal would be put into activation as of next January, stressing that such deal would help strengthen petroleum cooperation between Kuwait and Egypt. KUFPEC's Branch Manager in Egypt Said Safan affirmed the importance of such deal to bolster bilateral relations, adding that KUFPEC was involved in other petroleum ventures in Egypt. Established in 1981 by its parent company, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), KUFPEC is an international oil company, engaged in exploration, development and production of crude oil and natural gas outside Kuwait, active in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Australia.

## **OMAN**

### **International Front**

#### **SQU and Tokyo varsity discuss ways for knowledge sharing**

Dr Ali bin Saud al Bimani, the Vice Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University, yesterday received in his office Prof Masayuki Yamauchi, Professor at the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Tokyo in Japan. They discussed prospective collaboration between the College of Arts and Social Sciences at SQU and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Tokyo University. Prof Yamauchi said that his institution is committed to providing wide-ranging knowledge and intellectual skills to its students to equip them cope with contemporary

social demands and the changing times. With regard to exchange of students between the SQU and his school, Prof Yamauchi pointed out about the AIKOM (Abroad In Komaba) programme, a one-year undergraduate exchange programme between the University of Tokyo and partner universities in 19 countries. AIKOM is operated under a formal short-term exchange agreement which stipulates mutual tuition waiver and credit transfer. “The College of Arts and Sciences located at Komaba, Japan which is functioning under the Graduate School, sends and receives, more than 25 students each year”, he revealed. Dr Al Bimani offered the support of SQU to the UoT in promoting teaching and research related to history, literature and cultural heritage of the Middle East countries, especially the Sultanate of Oman. Sayyida Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant Vice Chancellor for External Co-operation, SQU also participated in the discussion.

### **Credibility of Oman's media applauded**

The international website Middle East Online has hailed the achievements of the Omani media during the past 40 years of the country’s renaissance led by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. The website published an illustrated article stating that His Majesty the Sultan continues to give his directives to upgrade the skills of media personnel and stick to the principles of credibility and balanced reporting of current issues. The information sector has become a solid pillar of the modern state in the Sultanate where citizens and the private sector get a fair chance. Middle East Online stressed that the ‘Omani information message’ is distinguished for credibility in reporting local, Arab and international issues, thanks to the competent personnel who manage this message. The website said that this stand clearly indicates the personality traits of the Omani identity and its contribution to friendship in the international community and its advocacy of peace, security, stability and prosperity in the region and beyond. The website said the Omani information sector, in its written, broadcast and telecast forms, has highlighted the country’s renaissance and sought to achieve its noble goals and its comprehensive vision to serve the citizens now and in the future.

### **Oman-South Korea relations discussed**

Sayyid Badr bin Saud al Busaidy, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs, received at the Umm al Ghawarif camp in Salalah yesterday Kim Tae Young, Defence Minister in South Korea, who is currently visiting the Sultanate to inspect the Korean vessel anchored at the Port of Salalah. Sayyid Badr and Young discussed bilateral relations. The meeting was attended by the South Korean ambassador to the Sultanate.

### **Oman, Malaysia review relations**

On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tareq al Said received at his office here yesterday Dato Mohammed Ramzi Mohammed Qasim, the Malaysian ambassador to the Sultanate, who called on His Highness to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty in the Sultanate. The ambassador expressed his thanks for the support he received from His Majesty, the Oman government and people during his duty in the Sultanate, saying that such support facilitated his mission. He wished His Majesty good health, happiness and a long life and the Omani people further progress and prosperity. HH Sayyid Asaad thanked the ambassador for the efforts he undertook in developing relations between the Sultanate and

Malaysia, wishing him success in his future missions. He wished the friendly people of Malaysia further progress and prosperity.

## **Social Front**

### **No statement issued on BlackBerry: Oman TRA**

Oman's telecom watchdog has denied reports carried by some international wire services and published by a number of local and foreign newspapers that it had 'no plans to suspend' BlackBerry services in the country. The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) said it had not issued any statement suggesting that it had "no plans to suspend BlackBerry services including Messenger, e-mail, and web-browsing in the sultanate. "However, Oman Telecommunications Regulatory Authority would like to bring to the attention of the beneficiaries of telecommunications services in the sultanate that should there be a change in the current status, TRA Oman would issue an appropriate statement to the media." Last week, Oman's two main mobile service companies, Omantel and Nawras, said they had currently no plans to discontinue or restrict BlackBerry services. They added that they would revise their decision only if TRA advised them to do so.

### **SQU to admit 2,700 students**

The Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), Oman's premier higher education institution, announced here on Sunday that it would admit more than 2,700 undergraduate students in the new 2010-11 academic year. Classes are due to start on September 18. The state-run SQU receives the list of Omani students eligible for admission to undergraduate courses from the Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC), functioning under the Ministry of Higher Education. The centre is tasked with regulating admission of students in higher education institutions in the sultanate. Of the total 2,731 new students to be admitted this year at SQU, the College of Science will receive 503, College of Engineering 455, College of Commerce and Economics 450, College of Arts and Social Sciences 478, College of Education 205, College of Law 160, College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences 300, College of Medicine and Health Sciences 120, College of Nursing 60 and College of Science 503.

## **Economy Front**

### **Oman Cables Industry exports set to touch RO 110 million**

Oman Cables Industry SAOG (OCI) has chalked up a string of achievements in general and on the export front in particular. Vice-Chairman and Managing Director Hussain bin Salman said Oman Cables Industry's exports in 2010 are expected to be RO 110 million as against RO 19.590 million in 2004, RO 39.030 million in 2005, RO 79.520 million in 2006 and RO 89 million in 2009. Vice-Chairman and Managing Director Hussain bin Salman said OCI's exports have been on the rise since its inception in 1984, but the figure of RO 110 million will be the most spectacular performance so far. The company's market share in Oman is expected to increase to RO 90 million this year from RO 67 million in 2009. Oman Cables' exports to the GCC market in 2009 stood at RO 81 million, which is expected to hover around the same figure

this year. As OCI seeks to expand into new export markets, it is delighted to be creating more job opportunities for the nationals. Omanisation at Oman Cables has increased from 52.4 per cent in 2005, 53.3 per cent in 2009 to 55.3 per cent in 2010. Over the past 26 years, Oman Cables has grown to become one of the world's leading companies that develops, manufactures and markets a totally integrated product line, including instrumentation cables, high voltage cables, power cables, control cables, overhead conductors, building wires, flexible cables and medium voltage power cables for a variety of technological applications.

### **Oman revenue jumps 31pc on oil output**

Higher output and a jump in oil prices lifted Oman's revenues by 31 per cent in the first half of the year to 4.22 billion Omani rials (\$ 10.96bn), the ministry of national economy's bulletin said yesterday. Average oil production rose 8.1pc to 856,700 barrels per day in the first half versus a year earlier, it said. Oman sold its oil at an average price of \$ 77.57 per barrel, up 69.7pc from the same period a year earlier. Oman is an independent oil producer in a region with Opec's largest crude exporters, but its oil has a big influence on international markets, as it is used in benchmark pricing for around 12 million barrels per day of crude exported from the Middle East to Asia. Its natural gas production increased 6.3pc to 563.551bn cubic feet in the first half, the data showed. The sultanate has awarded a number of exploration contracts to foreign companies in the last five years to boost gas production, to meet rising domestic demand. The country's expenditure rose 8.8pc to 3.52bn rials in the first half, achieving a budget surplus of 702.8m rials. Oman has forecast a deficit of 810m rials for 2010 after basing its budget on the price of oil at \$ 50 per barrel

## **BAHRAIN**

### **International Front**

#### **US looking for peace not war: US Ambassador to Bahrain**

Has the US lit the fuse for war in the Gulf with its nuclear stand-off with Iran, support for Israel and military action in Iraq and Afghanistan ? No, insists US Ambassador to Bahrain JOSEPH ERELI, in a hard-hitting interview. "We don't want to see a war in the Gulf," says US Ambassador to Bahrain Joseph Erel. "We want the Iranian stand-off to be settled peacefully in everyone's interests", he told the GDN and our Arabic sister paper Akhbar Al Khaleej in a challenging head-to-head discussion. He was quick to dismiss heightened fears that the US was already planning for war, following remarks by Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who saw "very few good options with Iran". Admiral Mullen spoke of US military plans for a possible attack, during a "Meet the Press" interview on August 1 but Mr Erel said his remarks had been widely misinterpreted. "What he meant was that either potential scenario was bleak Iran obtaining a nuclear bomb, or the use of force to stop it getting one," said Mr Erel. "Either would cause much suffering. We have learned our lessons well from Iraq." Diplomacy was the best route, and both US politicians and the military were hopeful it could still work, he said.

## **Cash boost for Bahrain military**

Bahrain's military is in line for a \$ 19.5 million (BD7.4m) cash injection from the US government. The funding was provisionally assigned by the US Senate Appropriations Committee as part of the Department of State Foreign Operations and Related Programmes Appropriations Bill. It is part of the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) programme, which offers grants to foreign governments to finance the purchase of American-made weapons, services and training. The funding falls in line with the US government budget for the fiscal year 2011, which begins on October 1. According to the US Embassy in Bahrain, the exact amount of money to be given to Bahrain and what it will be used for are still to be finalised. However, although it approved the cash, the Appropriations Committee expressed concerns over allegations that criminal suspects are being abused in Bahrain custody.

## **Political Front**

### **Bahrain gears up for elections**

His Majesty King Hamad issued a decree adding new residential complexes to the tables of electoral constituencies, changing the number of one block and determining the number of polling and counting sub-committees for parliamentary elections. Each constituency will have one sub-committee in addition to 10 general panels across the kingdom. His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa issued an edict determining the date of the election and nomination for municipal councils. He also issued an edict identifying voting areas, electoral constituencies, boundaries and the number of sub-committees for the election of councillors. Justice and Islamic Affairs Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ali Al Khalifa also issued six decisions, setting up a Higher Committee for Supervising Parliamentary Elections and determining locations for polling and counting committees.

### **Bahrain poll unlikely to bring major changes to parliament**

Bahrain has announced it will hold parliamentary elections on Oct.23, a poll that is not expected to bring about major changes in the current structure of the assembly. The election will be the third since the country's ruler, King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa, launched a political reform process a decade ago to help quell Shi'ite street protests. The king, who chaired a cabinet meeting on Sunday attended by Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa and Crown Prince Sheikh Salman Bin Hamad Al Khalifa, urged voters to turn out in large numbers for the polls. "Decision-making and participating (in the vote) ensures the continuity of the democratic process in the kingdom and enhances the serious work for offering better services for the citizens," the official media quoted him as saying. Municipal elections would be held the same day, the Bahrain News Agency said.

### **King Hamad hails democratic achievements**

His Majesty King Hamad yesterday hailed the National Assembly's efforts in boosting the democratic march in the country. He was speaking as he received at Safriya Palace Shura Council chairman Ali Saleh Al Saleh and parliament chairman Khalifa Al Dhahrani, who

presented him with annual reports on the fourth session of second legislative term. He lauded their achievements and the crucial role they played in improving legislation and establishing foundations of the country's institutions and law. He expressed thanks and appreciation to the chairmen and members for their efforts in serving the nation. His Majesty said democratic process will be consolidated with the upcoming parliamentary and municipal elections, giving more impetus to citizens' participation in public life and development.

He commended the assembly's role in regional, Arab and international parliamentary institutions and organisations aimed at reinforcing relations with countries worldwide and expressed hope for a more effective participation in the coming elections. He said difference of opinion is required, but it must be based on love and mutual respect, qualities characterising Bahrainis who live in a unified and civilised society. The King also thanked citizens for their contributions to the kingdom's advancement and progress.

## **Social Front**

### **Bahrain to mark 'Year of Youth'**

A series of initiatives for Bahraini youth are currently being negotiated between the government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It follows the launch of UN's International Year of Youth in New York on Wednesday. A series of youth events and campaigns will take place around the world until August 11 next year as part of the programme, under the theme Dialogue and Mutual Understanding. It aims to promote the ideals of peace, respect for human rights and solidarity across generations, cultures, religions and civilisations.

The United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in Bahrain is teaming up with the Ajial Organisation to promote the talents and skills of young people here. "We are set to promote the International Year of Youth through several activities involving media campaigns in the Gulf countries and other activities in partnership with NGOs and universities in Bahrain," said UNIC director Nejib Friji.

### **293 special needs people provided jobs in Bahrain**

A total of 293 special needs Bahrainis have been provided jobs in various sectors in the last four years. Employments were provided through "You Aren't Alone" Centre which is dedicated to promote job opportunities for the handicapped. The centre's officials conducted 969 visits to companies and organisations to persuade them to recruit candidates recommended by their centre. The Minister of Social Development, Dr Fatima Al Baloushi, told the press on Sunday that the state-run centre was looking for job openings for 421 individuals with different disabilities who are currently on a waiting list. "Before nominating any jobseeker, the centre conducts an interview to know a candidate's skills and interests, as we are keen to offer them jobs that they like." The centre's duties did not end after managing jobs for candidates as its officials continued to monitor the adjustment of disabled people at their work place and keep in touch with employers to ensure that candidates nominated by them meet job requirements. Handicapped people are usually offered training before and after finding jobs. Besides job

opportunities, 700 special needs Bahrainis have been given cards which can be used to purchase goods on discount rates at many commercial outlets.

## **Economy Front**

### **Bahrain 'could boost Mideast-China trade'**

Bahrain could become a regional gateway to business links between the Middle East and China. Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry first vice-chairman Ebrahim Zainal yesterday invited a Chinese trade delegation to bring a version of their International Import and Export Fair to the kingdom in the future to develop even stronger ties between the Middle East and China. He was speaking at a meeting of the chamber, local businessmen and a Chinese delegation who were visiting the kingdom to promote the 108th edition of the trade fair in Guangzhou which attracts more than 200,000 buyers from more than 200 countries every year.

Mr Zainal said that Bahrain already had strong business links with China and had seen more than 200 local businessmen attend the event in the past. "We would be proud to open our doors for Chinese to do business in the Gulf and we would like to see a version of this international event held here to cover the entire region.

### **Bahrain says no plans to ban BlackBerry services**

Bahrain's foreign minister said Sunday the country has no plans to follow its Persian Gulf neighbors in banning some BlackBerry services because security fears do not outweigh the technological benefits. His comments come as device maker Research in Motion Ltd. is facing opposition by a number of countries around the world, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in the Gulf, to the way its encrypted e-mail and messenger services are managed.

Bahrain's Sheik Khaled bin Ahmed Al Khalifa told The Associated Press the handheld devices raise legitimate concerns, but that his nation has decided that banning some of the phones' features is "not a way of dealing with it." "We're not saying there is no security concern," Sheik Khaled said in an interview. But, he added: "There are many other ways for the criminals or terrorists to communicate, so we decided we might as well live it." Canadian-based RIM is negotiating with Saudi authorities to avoid a ban on messaging services on the devices, while neighboring UAE is planning an even more sweeping crackdown on the data services starting in October. Both countries have cited security concerns. Critics contend that the countries, which maintain tight controls on the media, are also motivated by a desire to monitor users' speech and political activity.



## **QATAR**

### **International Front**

#### **Qatar Emir, Syrian President hold talks**

HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani met yesterday in the city of Latakia Syrian President Bashar Al Assad. During the meeting, the two leaders discussed bilateral relations and ways of boosting and developing them and reviewed a number of regional and international issues of mutual concern.

#### **Qatar aid for Pakistan**

An official looking at aid materials on board an aircraft that left Doha for Pakistan. A Lekhwaya Search and Rescue team was on the flight. The aircraft carried tons of food, medical and relief materials to be distributed among the displaced people in the flood-stricken country. Torrential rains frustrated aid efforts in Pakistan yesterday, with some helicopters grounded as authorities battled to help 15mn people affected by the country's worst ever floods. Military rescue workers were rushing to evacuate families in the poor farming belt of Sindh province, where disaster officials were on red alert for a major deluge that could burst the banks of the swollen Indus river

### **Economy Front**

#### **Qatar Airways nears 100-route milestone**

Qatar Airways' expansion drive that has seen the addition of new route launches in the first half of this year has brought the carrier to the threshold of completing a century of destinations spread over six continents, the company's top executive said yesterday. "Qatar Airways has been on a remarkable expansion drive with seven new route launches in the first six months of 2010 among them Bengaluru, Copenhagen, Ankara, Tokyo and Barcelona," Qatar Airways chief executive officer Akbar al-Baker said. In an interview with Qatar News Agency yesterday, al-Baker said, "A special highlight was our first entry into South America in June, where we introduced daily flights to Brazil and Argentina. It also means that Qatar Airways now covers six continents."

Six further routes are scheduled to be launched over a four-month period from October 2010 that would propel Qatar Airways' passenger network to almost 100 destinations.

#### **Qatar overhauls customs procedures**

Qatar aims to significantly lessen customs inspection to just 5% of total imports as it simplifies procedures through a single-window system, a move that is beneficial to merchandise. The new single window system, which is expected to be implemented either by the end of this year or early next year, will cover both goods in transit and transshipment. "One of the main goals is to upgrade levels of human and technological capacities to attain inspection of less than 5% of the total imported goods," said Mohamed Ahmed al-Mohannadi, the director of Maritime Customs and manager of the single-window project. He said the system, which has been developed in association with CrimsonLogic, would segregate the declaration into green, yellow and red

procedures, with each highlighting the gravity of the inspections needed. Importers would be able to initiate customs clearance procedures from anywhere in the world online, saving time and effort, he said. The consignment clearance would take only a few minutes once the new system is in place instead of weeks, as at present, which has led to overcrowding in the ports and hence higher costs for importers in the form of demurrages.

### **Qatar and Sri Lanka sign air transport agreement**

Qatar and Sri Lanka yesterday signed an air transport agreement after three days of talks in Doha. “The bilateral air service negotiations between Qatar and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka concluded in Doha on August 10. The meetings, which began on August 8, were held at the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority office,” a spokesman said. The air service agreement was signed by HE Abdul Aziz al-Noaimi, chairman of Qatar Civil Aviation Authority, and KVPR de Silva, secretary at the Sri Lankan ministry of ports and aviation. Qatar Airways chief executive officer Akbar al-Baker was present at the signing ceremony. Qatar Airways currently operates three daily flights to Sri Lanka. The MoU signed yesterday has provisions to increase the number of flights to the south Asian island nation.