

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

MADIHA KAUKAB
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Following news monitoring report is based on the important political, social, economic and Geo-strategic events occurred in Gulf Cooperation Council States along with a Comprehensive summary of the report.

SUMMARY

Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Abdulrahman Al-Attiyah condemned Friday the policies pursued by the Israeli occupation authorities against the Palestinians and their attempts to prevent them from entering occupied Jerusalem to perform Friday prayers at Al-Aqsa Mosque. In a press release, Al-Attiyah reviewed a descriptive series of Israeli arbitrary measures, citing the latest military decision to deport the MPs representing Jerusalem district. Al-Attiyah considered such measures as a continuation to the forced displacement policy against the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, in juxtaposition to the excessive use of force which constitutes a flagrant and clear violation of international laws, as well as the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 on the protection of civilians and to prohibit any occupied country, deportation of civilians from their land individually or collectively. GCC Secretary-General called the Security Council and the UN to take quick measures to combat such measures forced by Israel against Palestinians. He also mentioned the Israeli violent actions against the Gaza Flotilla that killed nine activists and wounded some 30 others. Saudi Arabia launched a nationwide fundraising campaign on Monday for Pakistan's flood victims, on the instructions of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah, Second Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior Prince Naif said. King Abdullah inaugurated the campaign by giving SR20 million while Crown Prince Sultan, deputy premier and minister of defense and aviation, donated SR10 million and Second Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior Prince Naif SR5 million to the fund. "We have instructed all regional governors to set up subsidiary committees to collect donations and encourage businessmen and other citizens to participate actively in the campaign, which is named after King Abdullah," Prince Naif told the Saudi Press Agency. The UAE is obliged to apply the UN Security Council resolutions on sanctions against Iran, Ambassador Ahmed Al Jarman, Permanent Representative of the UAE to the UN, said. "It (the UN Security Council Resolution 1929 relating to the sanctions against Iran) is a commitment from the Security Council and we are obliged to apply the sanctions, as it is part of international legal framework. We are committed to implementing it," Ahmed Al Jarman told reporters on the sidelines of the conference titled 'Fifth Forum of UAE Ambassadors and Heads of Diplomatic Representations Abroad' at the Emirates Palace hotel. The ambassador, however, said no date had been fixed to start implementing the resolutions. He said the application of the Security Council resolution was one of the agenda of the three-day ambassadors' conference which concluded on Wednesday. "We will highlight this during the conference and instructions will be given to the

authorities concerned on the application of the resolution for sanctions against Iran after the conference, he said. Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, said here on Tuesday that the distinguished bonds of love and brotherhood tying Bahrain and the sister State of Kuwait "is a legacy which we are proud of" and that the continuous meetings of the two countries is a mean for expansion of horizons of cooperation and consolidation in the interest of the two peoples. In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on the occasion of his visit to Kuwait on Wednesday, Prince Khalifa expressed pride and appreciation for the spirit of fraternity that prevail at the meetings of the two countries, saying that "such meetings help renew the two countries' keenness and determination to strengthen the bonds of cooperation and deepen the rapprochement between them and push forward ties in various fields and at all levels." He said the month of Ramadan and its great spiritual atmosphere is an opportunity to pay tribute to the fraternal spirit that combines the two brotherly countries, noting that it was also an opportunity to be seized to enjoy the hospitality of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He said the visit is an opportunity to express the cohesion as one family bond by the spirit of love and brotherhood. "Our meeting on the land of Kuwait, the land of glory and nobility and achievement is a chance to express to Kuwait, leadership and people our sincere appreciation for its efforts and its noble and sincere contribution in supporting development projects in Bahrain," Prince Khalifa said. The Emir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani has stressed the need to intensify efforts to resolve the Middle East crisis through dialogue and negotiation in accordance with the international resolutions, and welcomed the position of Paraguay on the Palestinian cause. The Emir, in a press statement after talks with President Fernando Lugo of Paraguay, at the Government Palace here today, said: "We stress the need to intensify efforts to achieve world peace and coexistence among peoples and civilizations, as we also stress the need to resolve the crisis in the Middle East through dialogue and negotiation accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, and we welcome the position of the Republic of Paraguay on the Palestinian cause. "The Emir voiced his happiness at visiting the country and meeting the Paraguayan leader, noting that the latter had visited Qatar last year. The Emir also expressed his thanks for the warm reception and hospitality extended by the government and people of Paraguay.

A well-planned education programme has helped Abu Dhabi's vibrant economy, Louis V. Gerstner Jr said during his lecture on education in the Capital. Gerstner Jr, Retired Chairman and CEO, International Business Machines (IBM) and Chairman of Broad Institute, University of Harvard and MIT, delivered a speech titled 'Education: from Nursery to G12 : The Path to Global Competitiveness', which was attended by General Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, at his Ramadan majlis, on Thursday. The lecturer said he was impressed by Shaikh Mohammed's support and care for development of education in the emirate of Abu Dhabi, which he said, goes parallel with the government's attention to education nationwide as education is seen as a major mainstay of the vibrant economy in the 21st century. Giving observations about Abu Dhabi programme for revamping the education after he met officials here, he noted that the emirate is conscious about the urgency of reforming the education system as part of its drive for introducing reforms relating to other national priorities mainly the call for knowledge-based economy. He said that he was impressed with the Abu Dhabi's integrated educational development plan, which he said he has never seen elsewhere in the world. According to him,

Abu Dhabi is capable of solving its educational challenges through developing creative solutions to them. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) plans to implement specific regulations in the near future on labor and expatriate workers' issues. This is in order to improve Kuwait's international image on human rights issue. The ministry is currently studying the implementation of laws to assess the offenses that were committed then, and prevent them from happening again in the future while enforcing regulations. The Cabinet is also keen toward promoting the establishment of exclusive residential areas for bachelor laborers while ensuring that security is maintained there. This supervision will provide necessary information to grant police officers easy access in case rioting occurs. The ministry had held combined studies with the Interior and Public Works Ministries to review the recommendations made by the Kuwait Municipality on the most suitable locations that can be converted into laborers' areas, including Al-Shaddadiya and Subhan. More than 1,200 young Omanis will receive training in various disciplines under agreements signed here between the government and private institutes in the country. They will be trained for administrative and technical professions in private sector companies such as customer service, heavy equipment driving and refinery operation, as well as jobs in the tourism industry. A total of 1,223 youngsters will benefit under the RO2.7 million scheme. The deals were signed by Manpower Minister Shaikh Abdullah bin Nassir Al Bakri with heads of a number of training centres and institutes. Speaking to reporters later, Hamad bin Khamis Al A'mri, Under-secretary for Technical Education and Vocational Training, said the ministry had drawn up an ambitious training plan for young nationals to be carried out as part of the current Five Year Plan. He said the agreements underlined the ministry's goal to "train and rehabilitate national manpower" in all professions and trades required by the private sector and in line with market needs. A national manpower development project had achieved "great success" thanks to the cooperation of private sector, A'mri added. Bahrain's political societies were yesterday urged to help stamp out acts of sabotage and violence. National unity must be preserved at all costs under the constitution, said a Justice and Islamic Affairs Ministry statement. Political groups have a duty to work within legal limits to achieve social peace and democracy in the manner laid down by Bahrain's National Action Charter, said the statement. The strong announcement follows "frequent acts that target domestic peace and security through arson, vandalism, destruction and endangering citizens' lives, freedom and property." Members of such societies "must exercise extreme vigilance and caution in all matters with a view to maintaining national unity, and abide by political societies' laws, added the statement. Legitimate political work of the highest priority "requires clear and unequivocal rejection and condemnation without any hesitation or diluting any of the situations to incite or encourage or justify acts of arson, vandalism and destruction compromising people's lives". Such behaviour cannot be tolerated, in order to preserve the achievements of this nation and protect future generations, the statement concluded.

The Third meeting of the Gulf monetary council attended by governors of monetary institutes and central banks of member states, concluded last night with the participation of the Central Bank of Kuwait Governor Sheikh Salem Abdulaziz Al-Sabah. The meeting that was headed by the Vice Governor, Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency, Dr. Mohammad Al-Jasser, discussed several issues concerning coordination and joint cooperation among member states, to accelerate the establishment of the Gulf Central Bank. The meeting also discussed the executive steps to complete the establishment of the monetary union for member states that have signed the GCC monetary agreement, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Bahrain. Abdullah Ahmed Al

Saleh, Director General of Foreign Trade Ministry, today met a Chinese delegation led by Deng Kuang, deputy director-general of Ningxia's Department of Commerce. During the meeting, they discussed ways to develop trade and investment relations between both countries and to enhance communication between their business communities. Al Saleh also got invitation for the participation of the UAE in the China (Ningxia) International Trade and Investment Fair and the first session of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Arab Countries in late September. Oman's economy enjoys stable and strong forecasts. The political stability index (2009), published by the Economic Intelligence Unit ranked the Sultanate No 1 among the GCC and Arab countries and 17 among 165 other countries. This was disclosed here yesterday by Ahmed bin Abdulnabi Macki, National Economy Minister and Deputy Chairman of the Financial Affairs and Energy Resources Council while visiting Oman's pavilion at Shanghai Expo. He noted that the Global Competitiveness Report 2008/2009 showed remarkable improvement in the country's classification as its ranking improved from 42nd to 38th among 134 countries. Macki told ONA that the government of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos attaches great attention to economic diversification strategy, which aims at developing the non-oil sectors, expanding production base and reliance on high value added products that target export. In this context, a number of major projects have been approved and are under way. He underlined the current developmental seventh five-year plan (2006-2010) that has ambitious objectives of achieving an annual growth rate of not less than three per cent for fixed prices, as well as improving the standard of living of nationals and establishment of a number of major industrial and tourism projects. Qatar and the Republic of Uruguay yesterday afternoon held a session of official talks, chaired by HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, President Jose Mujica of the Republic of Uruguay. The talks were attended by members of the official delegation accompanying HH the Emir. On the Uruguayan side, the talks were attended by Vice-President Danilo Astori, Foreign Minister Luis Almagro, Minister of Communications Enrique Pintado, Minister of Industry and Energy E Derman as well as the Ambassador of Uruguay to Qatar Jose Luis Remedi. At the beginning of the meeting, the Uruguayan president welcomed HH the Emir and expressed hope that the Emir's visit would contribute to further develop the relations between the two countries. The Emir thanked the president for the invitation to visit his country, expressing confidence that this visit would strengthen ties between the two countries in various fields. The two sides discussed ways to enhance relations between the two countries in various fields and reviewed a number of regional and international issues of common interest.

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- **King Abdullah orders fundraiser for Pakistan flood relief**
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- **Macki's China tour to boost investment ties**
- **Oman inks deal to buy four tankers from China**

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- **Bahraini PM concludes visit to Kuwait**
- **Kuwait-Bahrain relations 'legacy we are proud of': Bahrain PM**

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- **Parliament quota for women urged: Bahrain**

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- **Bahraini polling contenders begin campaign for seats early**

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- **New tourism watchdog vow in Bahrain**

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- **Qatar Emir calls for more talks to resolve Mideast crisis**
- **Qatar, Paraguay sign agreements**
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- **Qatar not well equipped for emergencies**

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- **Qatar and Uruguay sign economic, trade accord**

GCC

GCC team mulls uses of Nuclear energy for peaceful purposes

Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary General Abdulrahman Al-Attiyah presided here the 14th GCC meeting of the team responsible for monitoring the preparation of detailed studies of the uses of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The General Secretariat of the GCC said in a statement on Tuesday that the Secretary-General Al-Attiyah reviewed in the beginning of the meeting with the experts what has been achieved concerning the preparation of detailed studies of the uses of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes from the previous meetings.

The statement said that Al-Attiyah also discussed with the experts, the extent of the technical cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for 2010, as well as the cooperation program for the next phase including the evaluation and studies of the benefits behind the the cooperation. Furthermore, Al-Attiyah expressed his hopes to resolve all matters related to the detailed studies of the seven uses of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, which was agreed upon between the member states.

GCC Chief Calls for Supporting Palestinian People

HE the GCC secretary General Abdulrahman Bin Hamad Al Attiyah called on key players in the international community to take meaningful steps to support the legitimate rights of Palestinian people instead of putting pressure on the Palestinian Authority to agree on resuming direct talks with Israel. HE al Attiyah in a statement expressed hope that the Quartet on the Middle East would suggest a new plan aimed at supporting the Palestinian people in light of Israel's Judaization scheme. In this context, the GCC Chief called on the international community to act firmly against the Israeli practices, which included annexation of Palestinian territories in complete ignorance of legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. On the other hand, HE Al-attiyah denounced as a "terrorist act" the assassination of a Hamas leader in Dubai and called for firm action against those responsible. He renewed GCC support to the United Arab Emirates' investigation into the killing to bring the perpetrators of this crime to justice and enhance regional and international security. Concluding, HE Al-attiyah called on the countries, whose sovereignty and security has been violated by act, to take a firm stand against the party responsible for violating international laws and norms.

GCC condemns Israeli behavior on Palestinians

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citing the latest military decision to deport the MPs representing Jerusalem district.

Al-Attayah considered such measures as a continuation to the forced displacement policy against the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, in juxtaposition to the excessive use of force which constitutes a flagrant and clear violation of international laws, as well as the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 on the protection of civilians and to prohibit any occupied country, deportation of civilians from their land individually or collectively. GCC Secretary-General called the Security Council and the UN to take quick measures to combat such measures forced by Israel against Palestinians. He also mentioned the Israeli violent actions against the Gaza Flotilla that killed nine activists and wounded some 30 others.

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M&A activity stagnant in GCC

Acquisition activity in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region remains depressed despite the fact that some sizable transactions have been concluded in 2010, according to Fitch Ratings. In a report on Monday, Fitch said the prospects for sustained economic growth would remain too uncertain for Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Middle East and Africa (MEA) corporates to consider significant acquisitive product and market diversification. However, it said, factors such as the uncertain operating outlook, the need for maintenance and organic capital expenditure, shareholder expectations of cash dividends and a desire to strengthen liquidity and to moderate leverage are limiting the appetite and capacity of many Fitch-rated corporate issuers to be more active in M&A.

"The limited availability of finance also continues to constrain any pick up in M&A activity," the report added. Reflecting the industry's relative stability and more limited prospects in developed markets, Fitch added, telecommunications continues to be one of the main sectors of M&A activity across the EMEA region, and Fitch believes this will continue to be the case, especially in Africa where further deals are anticipated. In addition to consolidation driven by the need to improve vertical integration, industrial corporate M&A across the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region is to a meaningful degree being facilitated by vendors who are looking to sell stakes in their companies to service or repay debt.

YEMEN

Qatar message to Yemen president

Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani meets Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh at the presidential palace in Sanaa yesterday. The Prime Minister conveyed a verbal message from HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, dealing with bilateral ties and matters of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by members of the official delegation accompanying the Prime Minister. Attending on the Yemeni side were Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Mujawar, Foreign Minister Abubakr al-Qirbi, adviser to the president for political affairs Abdul Karim al-Eriani and other senior officials. Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim later left Sanaa.

Doha to host Yemen talks with rebels

Yemeni officials and northern Shia rebels will go to Doha in the next two days to try to shore up a fragile northern truce with the help of Qatari mediation, officials from both sides said yesterday. Qatar brokered a north Yemen peace accord in 2008 before the region slipped back into a civil war that last year drew in Saudi Arabia. Yemen reached a new truce with rebels in February to halt sporadic fighting that has displaced 350,000 people since 2005, and officials said this week's Doha talks would focus on efforts to enhance peace in the north rebel stronghold of Saada. "We will discuss details of the mechanisms to implement the (current) agreement," a Yemeni official said, adding that the delegates would look for ways to carry out terms of the truce. Impoverished Yemen, also facing growing southern separatism, is under pressure to resolve domestic conflicts to focus on quashing a resurgent Al Qaeda arm that wants to use the Arabian Peninsula state to launch attacks in the region and beyond.

Yemen president urges the forces to stay vigilant to face possible attacks and scheme

President Ali Abdullah Saleh chaired on Sunday a meeting with the leaderships of the Defense and Interior Ministries. The meeting discussed the security situation in Yemen and issues related to development and modernization of the armed and security forces, with a focus on upgrading the capabilities of the Coastguard and boosting efforts in fighting terrorism, trafficking and piracy. Issues on training and military readiness and vigilance and the topics of admission and improving curricula at military colleges were also dealt with. President Saleh talked to the leaderships congratulating them on Ramadan and affirming the holy month should be used in the best interest of the country and people. He stressed the importance of military training and implementing the two ministries programs to boost their abilities. Furthermore, he urged the forces to stay vigilant to face possible attacks and schemes by those trying to disturb the public security.

Yemen denies oil depletion reports

Yemen's Oil Minister Amer Al-Aidaros lashed out at detractors who had alleged that the country's oil stocks are running low, while reaffirming the fact that Yemen is still a virgin territory with regards to tapping oil resources. The minister said that ongoing exploration is

promising and Yemen has just explored 20 percent of its potential. He highlighted the fact that new oil discoveries recently in Hadramout, Shabwa and Marib are indicative of the way forward for the country. Al-Aidaros blasted the allegations that Yemen oil stock is running low and called it canard. "An international organization forecasted that Yemen would import oil in 2010 and another one said that block 18 would dry out in 2005. But despite their predictions, the block is producing 25,000 barrels daily and the production is on the up and up," he said.

He also blamed the fluctuation of production on some technical problems. Though the production over the years has been varying, the reason for the different levels of production is largely due to energy and on-site issues. "But the sector is still a promising one for investors, and I call on all to avail this opportunity in Yemen," he said. Pipelines in the oil-rich districts like Marib and Shabwa have become a target for Al-Qaeda and tribesmen fighting the government "I do think that the sabotage by the tribals had an impact on oil production. Without a safe and stable environment, oil production will not develop," he added.

SAUDI ARABIA

International Front

Newsweek lists King Abdullah among top 10 world leaders

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah has been listed by Newsweek among the world's most respected 10 leaders. The list included British Prime Minister David Cameron, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Brazilian President Lula da Silva. The US magazine lauded King Abdullah as a reformer "who has given the go-ahead to modernize schools, has appointed women to high office and invested in science and technology and nuclear power." It commended the king's efforts to fight terrorism and extremism, adding that the Saudi leader had urged Muslims "to embrace the spirit of tolerance, moderation and balance.

King Abdullah orders SR300m more in Pakistan aid

King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, has ordered that SR300 million be provided to flood-stricken Pakistan on behalf of the Saudi people, the Saudi Press Agency said Wednesday. Meanwhile, the national fund-raising campaign that kicked off Monday evening to help flood victims in Pakistan has so far raised more than SR100 million. Dr. Saeed Al-Orabi, Adviser to Prince Naif Bin Abdul Aziz, Second Deputy Premier, Minister of Interior and head of the relief campaign, said the campaign is a continuation of the Kingdom's efforts to help those afflicted by disasters around the world. Lauding the role of the Kingdom in the ongoing relief efforts, Pakistan's Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani said King Abdullah's initiative for organizing a campaign for the flood-devastated country will help alleviate the suffering of flood victims. Gilani said that all efforts would be made to ensure transparency in the relief efforts so that the aid can reach the deserving. Abdul Aziz Alghadir, the Kingdom's Ambassador to Islamabad, said that the distribution of the Kingdom's donations in kind and cash would be made in coordination with the regional office of the donation campaign based in Pakistan, the Saudi Embassy and other relevant authorities in Pakistan

King Abdullah orders fundraiser for Pakistan flood relief

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US to sell Saudi Arabia arms worth \$ 60bn in biggest deal

A proposed US weapons sale to Saudi Arabia of F-15 fighter jets also includes as many as 132 Apache attack helicopters and UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters that bring the total value of the package to around \$ 60bn, according to a government official familiar with the plan. The Pentagon and State Department about two weeks ago informally notified congressional committees that handle arms sales of the planned transaction, the official said. "I think it would be the largest ever," said William Hartung, director of the New York City-based New America Foundation's Arms and Security Initiative. "Other deals that used to be considered large," like the \$ 9bn sale of 72 F-15s to the Saudis in 1992-93 or the kingdom's \$ 9bn acquisition of US AWACS surveillance aircraft in 1981, "aren't even in the ballpark, even allowing for inflation," Hartung said. The package includes 84 F-15s at a cost of \$ 30bn and helicopter sales totalling about \$ 30bn that include spare parts, training simulators, long-term logistics support and some munitions.

French paper lauds King Abdullah for reforms

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz has furthered the development of the Kingdom by instituting a series of pragmatic reforms, according to an article in the French newspaper Le Figaro. In the article by Loseil Van Dersilk to mark the fifth anniversary of King Abdullah's ascension to the throne as per the Gregorian calendar, she said, "As for us in France, it is now time to build bridges of trust, friendship and fruitful cooperation between our countries." She added that relations between King Abdullah and the people of Saudi Arabia are firm and stable due to the noble positions taken by the royal family in both domestic and foreign affairs. Van Dersilk said the reign of King Abdullah has been characterised by a number of reforms and achievements which have elevated the Kingdom to an advanced rank

among the world's countries. She said that since ascending the throne, King Abdullah has guided the country through a series of reasonable reforms and that most Saudis now willingly agree that things are going in the right direction.

Van Dersilk cited a number of achievements which have taken place during the era of King Abdullah. "On the economic front, we find that the Kingdom remained relatively stable amid the international financial crisis which negatively affected a number of countries," she stressed. She said that King Abdullah has, amid the global financial slowdown, dedicated a number of public expenditure programmes worth more than \$ 400 billion for giant projects in the field of transportation and has opened new economic cities in different parts of the Kingdom. She added that following the accession of the Kingdom to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in December 2005, doors opened wide for foreign investors in the Kingdom

Social Front

Saudi judge considers paralysis punishment

A Saudi judge has asked several hospitals in the country whether they could damage a man's spinal cord as punishment after he was convicted of attacking another man with a cleaver and paralyzing him, the brother of the victim said Thursday. Abdul-Aziz al-Mutairi, 22, was left paralyzed and subsequently lost a foot after a fight more than two years ago. He asked a judge in northwestern Tabuk province to impose an equivalent punishment on his attacker under Islamic law, his brother Khaled al-Mutairi told The Associated Press by telephone from there.

He said one of the hospitals, located in Tabuk, responded that it is possible to damage the spinal cord, but it added that the operation would have to be done at another more specific public in the kingdom, highlights the delicate attempt in Saudi Arabia to balance a push to modernize the country with interpretations of religious traditions that critics say are out of sync with a modern society. The Saudi newspaper Okaz identified the judge as Saoud bin Suleiman al-Youssef. The brother said the judge asked at least two hospitals for a medical opinion on whether surgeons could render the attacker's spinal cord nonfunctional. He and Saudi newspaper reports did not identify the attacker

Saudis show 'mature behavior' on Internet

Saudi Internet users show more mature behavior when visiting websites than Internet users in other parts of the Arab World, said a high-ranking official of a regional Internet search applications specialist. Ashraf Tawakkol, CEO Taya IT, an Egypt-based Internet search applications company, said that with the amount of information put on the web on a daily basis, it is important to note whether it meets the basic requirements of people in the region, particularly Arab women. The answer is that searching Arabic content with keywords is not always useful, particularly on leading search engine sites, such as Google, Yahoo and Bing.

"We, at Taya IT are targeting Arab women as a contingent segment by virtue of their own culture and social values system. Arab women have their own interests and topics to talk about," Tawakkol said. He said Taya IT has already started to look for resources that can satisfy the

specific needs of Arab women on search engines. He said that as of today there is no data available indicating the exact number of women surfers in Saudi Arabia or elsewhere in the Middle East. “But what we do know is that Saudi Internet users are the second largest group in the Middle East and that their number is increasing. The Saudi Internet market is very important because the users show mature behavior,” he said.

Tawakkol Tuesday announced here the launch of Yajeel Islam and Yajeel Hawaa (women), two new domains appearing for the first time on the Yajeel search network. “With the start of Ramadan, we are in a unique position to launch these new domains which increase in popularity during the holy month,” said Tawakkol. “We value our culture and identity. We strongly believe this should be reflected in our products and shall continue to provide relevant search services for popular topics on the Arabic web,” he added.

Naif calls for action to curb drugs scourge

More research, greater emphasis on educating the youth, and greater investment in health facilities will help curb the scourge of drugs in the Kingdom, according to Prince Naif Bin Abdul Aziz, Second Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior. Prince Naif made these comments while chairing the second meeting of the National Committee for Combating Narcotics (NCCN) at his office here, Sunday. Addressing the session, Prince Naif stressed the importance of placing attention on studies and research on this issue. He also directed members to give priority to the issue of the youth, by setting up youth clubs to enable them to invest their leisure time in useful hobbies. Prince Naif also touched on the importance of giving more to the health sector by setting up hospitals in various parts of the Kingdom for the treatment of drug addicts. He emphasized the need for producing and executing well-planned media campaigns, in coordination with the NCCN, to enlighten the public about the dangers of drugs. He stressed the importance of designing these programs in a professional manner so that it can yield positive results.

In a statement to the press following the meeting, Prince Naif said the members discussed all methods needed to ensure the safety of citizens from narcotics and all its derivatives, whether natural or synthetic. He said the session was important because it was held in the presence of princes, ministers and senior officials from various government departments. He said that there is a greater emphasis now on tackling the issue in a methodical manner by relying on facts and figures related to smuggling and the abuse of drugs. “We also analyze the crimes committed under the influence of drugs. On this basis, the committee is working on a comprehensive report about this issue in preparation for submission to King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. The report will focus mainly on the measures that should be taken to reduce the smuggling of drugs into the Kingdom and ways of dealing and enlightening drug abusers.”

Saudi Education Ministry scraps pre-2009 curricula

The Ministry of Education has announced that teaching curricula printed before 2009 (1430H) are not to be used and stressed the need to use the new curricula as of the upcoming academic year. The ministry said the decision to cancel the old curricula “is not subject to discussion and

should be implemented equally in the boys' and girls' schools in the big cities, governorates, villages and rural complexes.” The ministry, represented by the education administrations, has called on principals of government and private schools to contact it to secure sufficient quantities of books in the new curricula, which will be distributed to male and female students at the beginning of the 2010-2011 (1431-1432H) academic year on Sept. 25.

In another educational development, the Girls' Education Administration in Taif has deposited SR17 million in the accounts of the female students in special education, Qur'an memorization schools and girls who receive allowances because they are too far from their homes. Salim Bin Hilal Al-Zahrani, Director General of Education for Girls in Taif, said these entitlements are for the second semester until the end of the summer vacation. He said more than 7,000 female students receive them.

In another development, Hamad Bin Mansour Al-Omran, Director of Education in Hail Region, appointed Falha Bint Attallah Al-Shammari as director of Comprehensive Quality Management in Hail Education Administration, for a period of one year. She will have all powers stipulated by regulations and directives. Al-Omran said having women in effective roles as partners in decision-making at the administration level instills the principle of integration between men and women so they can work together to upgrade the education process in Hail Region.

Visa black market hard to control: Saudi

There is a black market for visas that is difficult to control, according to the Saudi Ministry of Labour. An official source in the Ministry of Labour reportedly said that monitoring programmes have uncovered the black market. He said there is an “inability to stop this market because the Ministry of Labour cannot ban citizens from obtaining visas if they fulfill conditions for obtaining them, even if these visas have been obtained with the intention of trading in them”. In a related matter, Qussay Filali, Director General of the Labour Office in Jeddah Governorate, said that the Ministry of Labour would eliminate unemployment within five years through a strategic plan to instill the principle of national manpower. Filali said that families, the Ministry of Higher Education and the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation are partners in ensuring that the plan is successful. A report released by the General Department of Statistics and Information, a division of the Ministry of Planning and Economy, showed that the number of unemployed people in the kingdom rose to 10.5 per cent of the working population. The report said that the number of jobless has risen by 32,197 people from September 2008 to August 2009.

King's order on fatwas to 'prevent confusion'

The order of King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, to restrict the issuance of religious edicts (fatwas) to members of the Board of Senior Ulema is a wise action and would prevent confusion, said Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Aziz Aal Al-Sheikh, the Grand Mufti. The royal order issued Thursday also banned tackling of any subject that is considered of “strange views or obsolete.” As to the hosting of seekers of religious knowledge on some TV channels, the Grand Mufti said: “I hope there would be coordination with them and they should contemplate on this directive and they should know that it has been issued by the ruler. The objective is to prevent committing mistakes so as not to deviate from the consensus opinion and

start forbidding some matters and making others permissible without proof.” On the question of allowing some religious scholars and famous sheikhs to issue fatwas, Aal Al-Sheikh said these matters would be taken into consideration in future and would be looked into. Meanwhile, Sheikh Saleh Bin Abdul Aziz Aal Al-Sheikh, Minister of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Call and Guidance said the order will definitely check issuance of unwanted fatwas and would ensure that proper religious guidelines are issued by the competent authority. The minister warned that the approach of the Holy Book, the Sunnah and the guidance of the worthy ancestors is to be strict concerning fatwas. He pointed out that the jurisprudential rule is that the Shariah has come for the interests of the Muslims and to increase these interests as well as to prevent and curb evil and malicious acts. The minister said the characteristics of the person issuing religious edicts include being mature, just and being knowledgeable in the Shariah judgments and on the people’s conditions and intentions. “If he does not know the real condition of the people, a distorted picture could be presented to him. Therefore, the person who issues religious edicts should verify all matters and weighing the advantages and disadvantages.”

Economy Front

Saudi Arabia to provide investment opportunities to Saudi women

The Federation of Saudi Arabia Chambers of Commerce and Industry, with participation of the Saudi government, is planning a conference to promote domestic investment opportunities to Saudi businesswomen. The conference, entitled “Investment Opportunities in the Country’s Region,” is scheduled to take place in Riyadh on Oct.4-5 and is the first major meeting of Saudi businesswomen to be jointly sponsored under the patronage of a royal representative, Princess Saita bint Abdullah and the civil and private labor sectors. The aim, according to a statement from the organization, is to allow women to play a more active role in the domestic economy and provide more jobs for Saudi women. According to a report released last week by Al-Masah Capital, the Saudi female jobless rate is currently at 24.9 percent. “This reveals the huge potential for including the Saudi women in the labor force and utilizing them in the broader economic development,” stated the report called “Saudi Women: A Catalyst for Change,” said.

Chamber statistics have said that Saudi women, despite sitting on a SR44.6 billion stockpile of cash and SR7.1 billion in real estate, only account for 4.3 percent of total private-sector firms. “Women at the conference will have a chance to get acquainted with services provided by the Chamber and the government to promote domestic investment as well as available financing tools for projects sought by Saudi women investors,” said the chamber statement.

Health insurance fastest growing sector in Saudi Arabia

The Saudi Arabian insurance industry has emerged as one of the fastest growing insurance industries across the world. While the global economic crisis has severely hit other industrial sectors, the insurance industry has marinated its 30-35 percent annual growth rate on the back of compulsory insurance lines. According to RNCOS latest report on “Saudi Arabia Insurance Market to 2012”, protection & savings and health insurance are the fastest growing insurance lines in the Kingdom, with health insurance accounted for around 50 percent of the overall insurance market at the end of 2009. The health insurance sector is expected to grow at fast pace

on the back of increasing involvement of private companies and the obligation for foreign nationals and foreign pilgrims to buy insurance covers. In addition, the most recent introduction of compulsory health insurance for private employees, irrespective of the size of the company they are working with, will further boost the health insurance market in the country.

Moreover, the general insurance category has shown substantial growth despite being heavily hit by the financial crisis. It is expected to grow at a CAGR of more than 24 percent between 2010 and 2012 owing to rising motor and energy insurance. Property and aviation insurance are expected to emerge as the fastest growing general insurance segments over the forecast period. The motor insurance segment is projected to grow at a CAGR of 30 percent between 2010 and 2012. The fast growth rate will be achieved on the back of promotional strategies deployed by government. With the strong prospective growth in auto sales, the premium of motor insurance will increase as vehicle insurance has been made compulsory in the country. Earlier, another report said Saudi Arabia would be the most attractive prospect for international insurance companies that are looking to operate in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The "Saudi Arabia Insurance Report Q3 2010" noted that virtually all other trends in the Kingdom are favorable and the market has been opened up to foreign competition. New laws are promoting the development of health insurance, it said. Saudi Arabia's economy has withstood the downturn in energy prices through 2009 well, it added.

\$ 294m tourism project planned for Yanbu seafront

A \$ 294 million tourism project has been planned for the Yanbu seafront in Saudi Arabia. Five projects have been presented to the government for development of the seafront to draw tourists and local visitors along the 11- kilometer seafront. The Kingdom has recently decided to expand its tourism market to diversify its economy. Among the developments planned for Yanbu will be a number of green areas, beaches, amusement parks, hotels and restaurants. The basic infrastructure designs for five projects to develop the Yanbu seafront in Saudi Arabia have been completed, according to Royal Commission for Jubail and Yanbu. The projects, worth more than SR1.1 billion (\$ 294 million), are set to be developed along the 11km seafront as part of the country's wider strategy to expand its tourism market and diversify its economy. Among the developments will be a number of green areas, beaches, amusement parks, hotels, restaurants, car parks and pavements, as well as a long Corniche. A Royal Commission spokesperson said: "The projects will contribute to the creation of a strong base for tourism in the region and will diversify the economic base of the city."

First Saudi company formed to manufacture solar power plants

Vision Electro Mechanical Co. (VISION), a subsidiary of Construction Products Holding Company (CPC), has formed a company with a capital of \$ 150 million (SR562.5 million) for the development, manufacture and operation of solar power plants to generate electricity. The company started the building of a solar field at its industrial complex in Bahra, Makkah region, in cooperation with an international leading company in solar power technology. The solar power field is designed to work under the highest temperatures to commensurate with the atmosphere of the Gulf region, and will keep track of the movement of the sun throughout the day to achieve the maximum potential use of solar energy. Dr. Faysal Alaquil, director of

Business Development at Construction Products Holding Company, said: “Through this pioneering project, VISION hopes to introduce this new technology era to the clean energy sector in Saudi Arabia, in line with its objective of investing in renewable energy projects. This project will not only serve to the local region, but the needs of power projects throughout the Arabian Gulf region”.

UAE

International Front

UAE committed to humanitarian responsibilities

Shaikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Ruler’s Representative in the Western Region and Chairman of the UAE Red Crescent Authority (UAERCA), said the UAE has renewed its commitment to humanitarian responsibilities to reduce the impact of human suffering. He pointed out that the UAE has also renewed its constant desire to mobilise support for universal humanitarian principles and for its continued support to the affected victims of conflicts and disasters and praised the leaders of the country for their continued support.

Shaikh Hamdan, in a statement marking the World Humanitarian Day on Thursday, stressed on the UAE’s care to promote its humanitarian efforts around the world. He also expressed his happiness towards the fact that the UAE is appreciated by the United Nations (UN) and its humanitarian organisations that have chosen UAE to be its main station for relief operations and initiatives to achieve the greatest measure of solidarity with humanitarian situations all over the world. He appealed the international community to shoulder its full responsibility to alleviate suffering, poverty, hunger and increased extent of marginalised regions, hoping that the financial crisis will not affect the current international efforts in reducing poverty.

UAE swears by UN curbs

The UAE is obliged to apply the UN Security Council resolutions on sanctions against Iran, Ambassador Ahmed Al Jarman, Permanent Representative of the UAE to the UN, said. “It (the UN Security Council Resolution 1929 relating to the sanctions against Iran) is a commitment from the Security Council and we are obliged to apply the sanctions, as it is part of international legal framework. We are committed to implementing it,” Ahmed Al Jarman told reporters on the sidelines of the conference titled ‘Fifth Forum of UAE Ambassadors and Heads of Diplomatic Representations Abroad’ at the Emirates Palace hotel. The ambassador, however, said no date had been fixed to start implementing the resolutions. He said the application of the Security Council resolution was one of the agenda of the three-day ambassadors’ conference which concluded on Wednesday. “We will highlight this during the conference and instructions will be given to the authorities concerned on the application of the resolution for sanctions against Iran after the conference, he said.

Blackwater's founder moving to Abu Dhabi

Erik Prince, founder of the notorious security firm Blackwater, planned to leave the United States and relocate this month to Abu Dhabi, according to US Department of Justice documents. Prince has been under a glaring spotlight as the subject of multiple lawsuits, including by two former civilian Blackwater employees over the company's operations in Iraq and in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. In documents filed with the Justice Department, copies of which were obtained yesterday by AFP, a lawyer said Prince planned to settle in the United Arab Emirates prior to August 15, when his children were starting school. Prince does not face criminal charges, but his company, which now operates under the name Xe Services, has been implicated in a slew of scandals related to its operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Five executives face indictment on weapons charges, two ex-employees face murder charges after two Afghans died in Kabul in May 2009 - they pleaded not guilty on Tuesday-and the firm was banned from Iraq after allegations its guards opened fire on innocent civilians, although a US court cleared company employees of criminal charges.

The two former Blackwater employees suing the company have accused it of defrauding the federal government, which was Blackwater's largest employers and has paid the firm several million dollars in contracts since 2001. Colleagues told The New York Times that Prince aimed to focus on security assignments for governments in Africa and the Middle East, and that he had become bitter about the scrutiny and negative publicity the company has received. "He needs a break from America", one unnamed colleague was quoted as saying in the Times.

UAE role in relief across world praised

The UAE under President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan has exerted efforts to curb effects of catastrophes and humanitarian crises in many countries worldwide. As per the directives of Vice-President and Prime Minister of UAE and Ruler of Dubai, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, General Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces and follow up from Sheikh Hamdan Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler's Representative in the Western Region, Chairman of the Red Crescent Authority (RCA), the UAE is on the top of donors and countries supporting humanitarian issues to help deal with repercussions of crises worldwide. The RCA said in its statement on marking the World Humanitarian Work Day, which corresponds with Aug.19, that the UAE has set a unique course to provide relief aid to those who deserve it irrespective of race, sex or religion. Ahmed Humaid Al Mazrouei, board chairman of the RCA said that the country has been shouldering humanitarian responsibilities to defuse conflicts and disasters across the globe.

UAE 'will enforce UN sanctions on Iran'

The UAE will enforce the latest round of UN sanctions against Iran but must pay close attention to the interests of the business community, the country's ambassador to the US said yesterday. Some companies had already been shut down under the previous round of sanctions, Yousef al Otaiba said. "Anything caught violating UN sanctions, we have been very open about and implement the UN sanctions very openly. That is not something that is up for debate," he said.

Iran was the UAE's fourth-biggest trading partner in the first quarter of the year behind India, China and the US. Non-oil exports of Dh173 million from the UAE to Iran were overshadowed by UAE re-exports of Dh2.4 billion. Simply throttling off that trade would hurt UAE businesses, Mr al Otaiba said.

“We do a significant amount of trade with Iran. It cannot be all illicit and it can't be all illegal,” he said. “What we're trying to do is sift the good from the bad, and make sure nothing that is legitimate gets harmed by the sanctions.” The UAE can do this through intelligence co-operation, better law enforcement and export controls already in place, he added. Anwar Gargash, the minister of state for foreign affairs, said the Government was debating the best approach. “We are part of the global consensus that usually produces the Security Council resolutions and we are discussing these things,” he said. “I think that on the one hand we have that commitment.

RCA in Pakistan to assess relief essentials for flood-victims

A high-level delegation from the UAE Red Crescent Authority (RCA) arrived here yesterday to step up efforts for prompt delivery of relief assistance so as to alleviate the sufferings of victims of the devastating floods. Head of the RCA delegation Khamis Mohammed Al Suweidi told WAM that he would meet tomorrow with representatives of the National Disaster Management Authority, Pakistani Red Crescent and UN specialised agencies who are operating in the flood-hit regions. He added that he would pay a field tour of the flood-affected areas to assess most needed basic food supplies and sheltering materials. Relief operations will be carried out in coordination with the UAE embassy in Islamabad, he said. According to him, the RCA has immediately swept into action after the flood hit Pakistan to put instructions of President H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan for delivery of urgent relief assistance into place. The RCA, he indicated, has completed preparations to implement a massive humanitarian programme to aid and relief internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are living under abject circumstances.

Political Fornt

UAE foreign affairs ministry forms rights department

The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Dr Anwar bin Mohammed Gargash, disclosed on Wednesday that the UAE Government has constituted a separate department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to deal with the issues relating to human rights as part of the country's effort to improve its human rights records. “This is one of the components of restructuring initiatives being implemented in the MoFA, which will now play important role in improving the country's capacity in tackling human rights issues,” he said. “The labour issue will remain with us for decades to come, and it will be a ‘work in progress’ for us in terms of improving the labour situations. We are trying to build the capacity and knowledge of the MoFA in dealing with the labour-related issues,” he said. He said the MoFA has already obtained sanction to start the UAE mission offices in countries like Uganda, Kenya, Chile and Norway. “We have about 77 embassies now in different parts of the world. We are trying to increase our presence in Africa, particularly in the East Africa region where we have considerable commercial transactions.”

'UAE to open more diplomatic missions'

Dr. Anwar Mohammed Gargash, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, said that the UAE has 77 embassies across the world and is aspiring to expand its diplomatic network into east Africa by opening new missions in Kenya and Uganda. "We are also planning to boost our presence in Latin America by opening an embassy in Chile," he told reporters after the opening session of the Fifth Forum of UAE Ambassadors and Heads of Diplomatic Representations abroad. The minister admitted that despite this massive expansion, the UAE is facing a shortage in diplomatic cadres. "However, we will attract more Emirati nationals and train them to join the diplomatic corps," he indicated. He highlighted the critical role the UAE embassies abroad are playing in serving interest of the UAE and its citizens, noting that over 31,000 citizens has registered with Tawajedi, a Foreign Ministry initiative to serve UAE citizens traveling abroad at times of crises and emergencies. He said that Emirati women are playing a commendable role in representing the UAE abroad.

Social Front

UAE growth spurred by education

A well-planned education programme has helped Abu Dhabi's vibrant economy, Louis V. Gerstner Jr said during his lecture on education in the Capital. Gerstner Jr, Retired Chairman and CEO, International Business Machines (IBM) and Chairman of Broad Institute, University of Harvard and MIT, delivered a speech titled 'Education: from Nursery to G12 : The Path to Global Competitiveness', which was attended by General Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, at his Ramadan majlis, on Thursday. The lecturer said he was impressed by Shaikh Mohammed's support and care for development of education in the emirate of Abu Dhabi, which he said, goes parallel with the government's attention to education nationwide as education is seen as a major mainstay of the vibrant economy in the 21st century. Giving observations about Abu Dhabi programme for revamping the education after he met officials here, he noted that the emirate is conscious about the urgency of reforming the education system as part of its drive for introducing reforms relating to other national priorities mainly the call for knowledge-based economy. He said that he was impressed with the Abu Dhabi's integrated educational development plan, which he said he has never seen elsewhere in the world. According to him, Abu Dhabi is capable of solving its educational challenges through developing creative solutions to them.

Economy Front

UAE-Japan H1 trade up 84% at Dhs66.92b

The surplus of the UAE balance of trade with Japan jumped by around 84 per cent to Dhs66.92 billion in the first half of this year, up from Dhs44.68 billion in the corresponding period last year. According to Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), the surge is attributed to the robust growth of the UAE exports to Japan which reached 61 per cent. The value of the UAE

exports to Japan rose to Dhs53.81 billion in the first six months of this year compared with Dhs33.4 billion in the corresponding period last year. The UAE imports from Japan grew by around 16 per cent to Dhs13.1 billion in the first half of this year, up from Dhs11.27 billion in the same period last year. The UAE is Japan's second major trade partner in the Middle East after Saudi Arabia and its share of Japan's total trade with the Middle East reached around 25.6 per cent in the first half of this year.

Latest Iran sanctions will hurt trade

The latest sanctions on Iran will harm trade with the UAE, an Iranian business official said on Tuesday, as UAE authorities said the embargo must not hurt legitimate commerce. "The reality is that this kind of sanctions on Iran will have a negative impact on the trade in the UAE, particularly in Dubai - there is no question about it," said Morteza Masoumzadeh, Vice-President of the Iranian Business Council in Dubai. Because of the sanctions, "the cost of the business has gone up, the (shipping) insurance is a problem," he said. Sanctions do not apply to various types of export cargo from Iran, Masoumzadeh said, but insurance companies will still "say that we cannot cover a ship to go to Iran for loading cargo from Iran to outside" he said. Iran is a significant UAE trading partner, with trade volume between it and the emirate of Dubai alone estimated at about \$ 10 billion a year, mostly imports from the Islamic republic.

Foreign Trade Ministry discusses trade and investment cooperation with China

Abdullah Ahmed Al Saleh, Director General of Foreign Trade Ministry, today met a Chinese delegation led by Deng Kuang, deputy director-general of Ningxia's Department of Commerce.

During the meeting, they discussed ways to develop trade and investment relations between both countries and to enhance communication between their business communities. Al Saleh also got invitation for the participation of the UAE in the China (Ningxia) International Trade and Investment Fair and the first session of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Arab Countries in late September.

Green awareness in the UAE growing fast

The UAE is increasingly becoming an environment-friendly place to do business with the quick adoption of a slew of green initiatives, according to Design solutions company Summertown Interiors. In an e-mailed statement to Khaleej Times, Summertown Interiors Managing Director Marcos Bish said that one does not have to look far to see how much the country is well aware of being environmentally sound. "We only have to open newspapers to see stories on the environment, sustainability, corporate social responsibility, carbon footprints and other green issues," he said. "The increasing emphasis on 'green rating' systems for buildings and interiors, initiated by both the government and companies, gives testimony to this."

The company has three independent entities in the UAE — Summertown International in Abu Dhabi, Summertown Interiors in Dubai and Summertown Joinery at the Jebel Ali Free Zone, which is the first joinery company in the UAE to be awarded an ISO 9001-2000 certification. Summertown also held a workshop recently to demonstrate the importance of implementing

environmental standards, with more of these activities soon to follow. Bish highlighted a number of benefits businesses can reap from going green. "There are economic rewards in terms of reduced operating costs through energy savings of up to 75 per cent and reduced water consumption of up to 50 per cent," he said. Aside from these benefits, revenues and employees are also affected positively by going green, Bish said. "Not only will businesses reduce their operating costs, substantially, but there is also the fact that green buildings and interiors result in improved productivity for employees and employers, by creating a working environment," he said.

KUWAIT

International Front

Kuwaiti FM discusses bilateral ties with Feltman

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah met on Thursday with the visiting US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman. The two sides discussed bilateral relations between Kuwait and the United States as well as issues of common concern. The meeting was attended by Foreign Undersecretary Khaled Sulaiman Al-Jarallah, the director of the follow-up and coordination at the foreign ministry, Ambassador Khaled Mohammad Al-Maghames, the director of the bureau of the deputy premier and foreign minister, Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, the deputy head of the two Americas of the ministry, the counselor Hamad Sulaiman Al-Meshaan, the US charge d'affaires, Thomas Williams, and other US officials.

Iraq owes Kuwait \$ 22.3 bn in reparations: report

Iraq still owes Kuwait \$ 22.3 billion in reparations from its invasion of the Gulf Arab state two decades ago and the Gulf War that liberated it, a Kuwaiti official said in remarks published on Tuesday. Mansour Hayat, of the state committee that is coordinating the claims with a UN compensation commission, told Al-Seyassah daily in an interview all of the outstanding payments were due to the government and the oil sector. He said individuals and companies had received a total of \$ 18.78 billion. Iraq is seeking forgiveness of outstanding compensation, or a reduction in the amount of annual oil revenue it has been setting aside to pay war reparations to Kuwait and other countries affected by the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis. Baghdad argues it needs the extra cash to help fund rebuilding after the 2003 US invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein. Kuwait resumed diplomatic ties with Iraq after the invasion but has so far opposed forgiving the reparations.

Kuwait-Bahrain relations 'legacy we are proud of': Bahrain PM

Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, said here on Tuesday that the distinguished bonds of love and brotherhood tying Bahrain and the sister State of Kuwait "is a legacy which we are proud of" and that the continuous meetings of the two countries is a mean for expansion of horizons of cooperation and consolidation in the interest of the two peoples. In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on the occasion of his visit to

Kuwait on Wednesday, Prince Khalifa expressed pride and appreciation for the spirit of fraternity that prevail at the meetings of the two countries, saying that "such meetings help renew the two countries' keenness and determination to strengthen the bonds of cooperation and deepen the rapprochement between them and push forward ties in various fields and at all levels."

He said the month of Ramadan and its great spiritual atmosphere is an opportunity to pay tribute to the fraternal spirit that combines the two brotherly countries, noting that it was also an opportunity to be seized to enjoy the hospitality of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He said the visit is an opportunity to express the cohesion as one family bond by the spirit of love and brotherhood. "Our meeting on the land of Kuwait, the land of glory and nobility and achievement is a chance to express to Kuwait, leadership and people our sincere appreciation for its efforts and its noble and sincere contribution in supporting development projects in Bahrain," Prince Khalifa said.

India stresses on strong, historic relations with Kuwait

India celebrates on Sunday its 64th anniversary of Independence, securing after more than six decades a unique and respected place in the comity of nations, and strong political, trade and economic relations with GCC countries, especially Kuwait. On this occasion the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Ajai Malhotra addressed the Kuwaiti people and the Indian community in Kuwait in a statement, extending warmest greetings and good wishes on this historic event. "India has had long-standing interaction and friendship with the GCC countries, which is India's largest trading partner, the dominant source of our energy requirements, and residence to over five and a half million Indians, " the Ambassador said.

He stressed the strong and friendly relations between India and Kuwait that go back several centuries. "Our multifaceted ties have been consolidated by the continuous intermingling of our people and civilizations," he said, highlighting significant political, trade and economic cooperation between the two sides. Indian-Kuwaiti relations are continuously reinforced by exchanged visits of top officials of both countries, foremost His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's trip in 2006 which gave fresh momentum to bilateral relations, in addition to the Indian Vice President Hon'ble M. Hamid Ansari's visit in 2009. The Ambassador also referred to a Festival of India in Kuwait in November 2009, in which 130 artists from India provided a glimpse of the Indian rich cultural heritage.

Political Front

Bahraini woman tries to echo Kuwaiti females' experience to reaching parliament

Woman in Bahrain is admiring experience of women in Kuwait and the fact that four females made it to the National Assembly, an overwhelming victory for women in Kuwait and indeed the Arab Gulf countries in general. Nine Bahraini women announced desire to run for parliamentary elections in the Arab Gulf Kingdom, slated for October 23, in a bid to win as many places as possible in the 40-seat house. Chairperson of the woman issues in Bahrain's National Democratic Action Society, Fareeda Gholam, said the Kuwaiti (democratic) experience is deep-rooted, and the Kuwaiti voter has tested all political forces in the Kuwaiti society, and has tested the

performance of these forces in the National Assembly. "So when the voter had chosen to get a woman to the parliament it reflected complete confidence," Gholam told KUNA in an interview Tuesday. "In Bahrain, however, the parliamentary experience did not reach the level in the State of Kuwait thus the voter awareness is relatively less," she said.

Parliament waits for Cabinet's response: Kuwait

Discontent is growing within the parliamentary public facilities committee as the Cabinet has not returned a draft law that concerns the establishment of a communication authority. The meeting was scheduled to be held tomorrow where concerned government bodies were to finalize the project in order to curb monopoly. Committee member MP Naji Al-Abdulhadi asserted that the meeting would be classified as a sub-committee meeting to avoid being called off owing to a lack of quorum. Separately, the financial and economic committees have not received any information that is related to the Cabinet's vision on the development of the plan's financing process, announced member MP Khalid Al-Sultan who asserted that MPs' intervention is a necessity to address any flaws, in light of the differences in opinion that exists between its members. Al-Sultan sees that banks alone will not be able to finance the development plan "so, the law should be enforced." Meanwhile, according to officers within the Development and Reform Bloc (DRB) a majority of the bloc members have reservations over the concept of government financing. At the same time, they are still waiting for the Cabinet's vision to be released before a stance is announced, reported Al-Qabas.

Kuwaiti ministry keen to solve laborers' issue

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) plans to implement specific regulations in the near future on labor and expatriate workers' issues. This is in order to improve Kuwait's international image on human rights issue. The ministry is currently studying the implementation of laws to assess the offenses that were committed then, and prevent them from happening again in the future while enforcing regulations. The Cabinet is also keen toward promoting the establishment of exclusive residential areas for bachelor laborers while ensuring that security is maintained there. This supervision will provide necessary information to grant police officers easy access in case rioting occurs. The ministry had held combined studies with the Interior and Public Works Ministries to review the recommendations made by the Kuwait Municipality on the most suitable locations that can be converted into laborers' areas, including Al-Shaddadiya and Subhan.

In the meantime, contracts are being drawn up to provide these cities with the necessary requirements such as sewage facilities. Another subject that the ministry is currently taking follow up action is on the issue of sponsorship, as it is keen to find the best possible mechanism to replace it, similar to the regulation according to which workers with at least three years' of service at a single job are allowed to transfer residence permits without obtaining prior permission from original employers, reported Al-Qabas.

Companies to be fined for holding passports of employees: Kuwaiti minister

In an ongoing fight against people trafficking in human beings the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Dr Mohammed Al-Afasi has issued decisions to regulate work in the private sector, reports Al-Seyassah daily. According to decision No 141/2010 a telephone line has been allocated to receive complaints from employees in the private sector. The telephone number is 128. The minister also issued another decision under No.143/A/2010 which forbids companies to hold passports of workers in the private sector and the oil sector. Article 141 of Law No 6/2010 states employers who do not abide by the decision within a period of three months the company will be fined not less than KD 100 and not more than KD 200 for each passport held by the company.

In case the employer commits the violation for a second time within three years the penalty will be doubled. The third decision bearing No.142/A/2010 obligates every employer in the private sector to provide a first aid box containing medicines, bandages and antiseptics. Meanwhile, "the Ministry of Interior will strongly and vigorously confront beggars who are indulging in this illegal activity during the holy month of Ramadan and other religious occasions," says Director of Information Security Department at the Ministry of Interior, Brigadier Mohammed Hashim Al-Sabri, reports Al-Watan Arabic daily.

Social Front

Infidelity causing 10 percent of Kuwait divorces

Marital infidelity is responsible for ten percent of divorce cases recorded in Kuwait, according to a senior member of the country's judiciary. Judge Adel Al-Failakawi also told Al-Qabas that 50 percent of the marriages in which the couples knew one another before marriage end in divorce.

The prominent judge asserted that the time has come to amend the "personal affairs" law, which has been in effect in the country for 25 years in order to accommodate contemporary social developments. He said that while the law itself does not favor the husbands in divorce cases, there is a widespread feeling that it imposes severe financial burdens on them in terms of alimony and other post-divorce payments.

Strict Kuwaiti steps to curb influx of beggars

Begging is illegal in Kuwait yet many outsiders try to penetrate the country just before Ramadan because it is an opportune time for beggars to make lots of money. Muslims in Kuwait often give generously during Ramadan and beggars try to take advantage of the chance to make seasonal benefits. The Ministry of Interior has made restrictions in order to eliminate this form of negative "tourism." Each of the Ministry's sectors is working to fight the growing number of beggars. As a measure to curb the influx of beggars, they have stopped issuing entrance visas for visitors from certain countries including Syria, Jordan and several others. The Directorate of Security is responsible for clearing each area and ensuring that it is beggar-free. Each of the six governorates has such a department and every year they hold campaigns to reduce the numbers of beggars.

According to Colonel Abdulrahman Ali Al-Sharah, the Central Area Commander of the Directorate of Security of the Capital, the majority of the beggars caught are women who entered Kuwait on visiting visas. The majority of them are Syrian, Jordanian, Palestinian or bedoon. Some beggars collect money and beg for clothes and food in the Shuwaikh residential area. In many cases Shuwaikh residents have reported beggars knocking on their door. According to the rules and regulations of the country, however, a person is immediately deported from Kuwait if they are caught begging. The deported person is then unable to enter Kuwait again, even if on a different passport. The directorate also reported a few cases of beggars with Kuwaiti residency. They all face the same punishment of deportation if caught begging.

Economy Front

Kuwait expected to post healthy budget surplus

Kuwait is expected to post a budget surplus of up to \$ 19.6 billion in the current fiscal year despite boosting spending by 33 percent, a report said yesterday. The National Bank of Kuwait, the emirate's largest lender, said in the report that the size of the surplus would depend on the price of oil, which contributes more than 94 percent of the Gulf state's revenues. The budget surplus for the 2010-2011 fiscal year (April 1 to March 31) is forecast to range between "3.2 billion dollars and 19.6 billion dollars depending on oil price scenario," NBK said.

The budget, passed by parliament in June, projects a deficit of 22.7 billion dollars at the assumption of an oil price of 43 dollars a barrel while actual price has so far been between 70-80 dollars a barrel. Revenues are estimated at 33.5 billion dollars while spending is estimated at 56.2 billion dollars. NBK expected the price of Kuwaiti oil throughout the fiscal year to range between 67 dollars a barrel and around 80 dollars. Kuwait, OPEC's fifth largest producer with 2.3 million barrels per day, has projected a deficit in each of the past 11 fiscal years but ended up with a healthy surplus each year, accumulating more than 140 billion dollars.

OMAN

International Front

Indo-Oman ties flourishing: Envoy

There has been a significant progress in bilateral trade and commerce between Oman and India in the past few years. "Bilateral trade has touched a new peak by crossing \$ 3,314 million in 2009 as compared to \$ 900 million in 2006," said Anil Wadhwa, the Indian ambassador to the Sultanate. Besides, he also informed about the proposals to open new schools in Massirah and Thumrait. In connection with the 63rd Indian Independence Day, the Indian ambassador, who has completed three years of his assignment in the Sultanate spoke to Times of Oman about some of the significant achievements that were accomplished during his tenure. Saying that he is particularly happy with the significant progress in bilateral trade and commerce, Wadhwa informed that few big investment proposals have also been finalised recently.

These include Omani investment in Bharat Oman Refinery Ltd in India, acquisition of Shadeed Iron and Steel Plant in Sohar by India's Jindal Steel Group, Voltamp's joint venture with Al Anwar Group to set up transformer manufacturing unit in Sohar and Al Tamman Indsil Ferrochrome LLC, a joint venture between Indsil group of India and Al Tamman Group of Oman to set up a Ferro alloy venture in Sohar. The Indian ambassador said, "I have worked hard with our commercial wing to ensure that our trade and investments keep growing in the future by setting up institutions like the India-Oman Joint Investment Fund, the India-Oman Business Forum and organising India-centric business seminars in cities outside Muscat. This year, we will continue these seminars and also launch new India-centric investment funds. I am certain that we are going to witness a boom in trade and commerce between our two countries in the coming years."

Social Front

Deals signed to provide training to Omani youths

More than 1,200 young Omanis will receive training in various disciplines under agreements signed here between the government and private institutes in the country. They will be trained for administrative and technical professions in private sector companies such as customer service, heavy equipment driving and refinery operation, as well as jobs in the tourism industry. A total of 1,223 youngsters will benefit under the RO2.7 million scheme. The deals were signed by Manpower Minister Shaikh Abdullah bin Nassir Al Bakri with heads of a number of training centres and institutes. Speaking to reporters later, Hamad bin Khamis Al A'mri, Under-secretary for Technical Education and Vocational Training, said the ministry had drawn up an ambitious training plan for young nationals to be carried out as part of the current Five Year Plan. He said the agreements underlined the ministry's goal to "train and rehabilitate national manpower" in all professions and trades required by the private sector and in line with market needs. A national manpower development project had achieved "great success" thanks to the cooperation of private sector, A'mri added.

RAFO to purchase 2 new transport planes

Sayyid Badr bin Saud al Busaidy, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs, signed here yesterday a contract for purchasing two C130J transport planes. The deal was signed on behalf of the company by the deputy chairman of Lockheed Martin. Sayyid Badr also signed a contract for purchasing one Airbus A320 from the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company (EADS NV). The president of Airbus for the Middle East signed on behalf of the company. The purchase of these planes is aimed at reinforcing the standard of performance and quality of the Royal Air Force of Oman in order to cope with the requirements of modernisation and development, as well as the needs of the Sultan's Armed Forces to contribute in boosting the Sultanate's comprehensive development. The signing ceremony was attended by Air Vice Marshal Yahya bin Rasheed al Jumaa, RAFO Commander, and Mohammed bin Nasser al Rasbi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Defence.

Omanisation campaign on track: official

Omanisation of jobs, one of the country's top priorities, is proceeding well, thanks to wholehearted cooperation from the private sector, a key official said. Hamed Khamis Al Amri, Under-secretary for Technological Education and Vocational Training at the Manpower Ministry, said public-private sector collaboration had seen a steady rise in number of nationals employed by private companies in recent years. He was presiding over a ceremony here to mark the launch of the second phase of a 'Management Training Programme' (MTP) by the Al Hassan Group of Companies, one of Oman's leading business houses. "The ministry encourages such initiatives which help to strengthen the Omani workforce," Amri said, urging the new trainees to take full advantage of their training. The new batch consists of 20 engineering graduates. Amri presented certificates to 17 young Omanis who successfully completed the company's first MTP after a three-month rigorous training. "The aim of the MTP is to recruit and retain the best and brightest young Omani talent," Hassan bin Ali Salman, Chairman of the Al Hassan Group, said, adding: "The programme has been created to develop the leaders of tomorrow and to teach aspiring youngsters the fundamental principles of working in the industry."

Economy Front

Oman economy enjoys stable, strong forecasts

Oman's economy enjoys stable and strong forecasts. The political stability index (2009), published by the Economic Intelligence Unit ranked the Sultanate No 1 among the GCC and Arab countries and 17 among 165 other countries. This was disclosed here yesterday by Ahmed bin Abdulnabi Macki, National Economy Minister and Deputy Chairman of the Financial Affairs and Energy Resources Council while visiting Oman's pavilion at Shanghai Expo.

He noted that the Global Competitiveness Report 2008/2009 showed remarkable improvement in the country's classification as its ranking improved from 42nd to 38th among 134 countries.

Macki told ONA that the government of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos attaches great attention to economic diversification strategy, which aims at developing the non-oil sectors, expanding production base and reliance on high value added products that target export. In this context, a number of major projects have been approved and are under way.

He underlined the current developmental seventh five-year plan (2006-2010) that has ambitious objectives of achieving an annual growth rate of not less than three per cent for fixed prices, as well as improving the standard of living of nationals and establishment of a number of major industrial and tourism projects.

Oman Air to start adding Dreamliners to fleet from 2014

The Sultanate's national carrier will add six Boeing Dreamliners to its fleet starting from 2014, said Oman Air general manager marketing Abdul Razzaq Al Raisi on Tuesday. The world's second-biggest commercial-aircraft maker, Boeing, will start the delivery of ordered Dreamliners from 2014, two every second year, said Al Raisi while attending the Holy Month of Ramadan

evening programme organised by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI). The national carrier, who is in an expansion mode, will also add Brazilian aerospace conglomerate's Embraer aircraft to its fleet, added Al Raisi. Raisi said that Oman Air will start its long awaited Muscat-Dammam, Saudi Arabia, daily services from early September. The carrier will also fly four times a week to Katmandu, Nepal, and Milan. According to him, during the last two years, the national carrier has increased the number of its commercial planes, while adding new destinations to its map.

Macki's China tour to boost investment ties

Ahmed bin Abdulnabi Macki, Minister of National Economy and Deputy Chairman of the Financial Affairs and Energy Resources Council, heads today for China on a working visit. During the visit, Macki will hold talks with Chinese public and private sector officials on developing bilateral ties in various economic and investment spheres. He will also visit the Sultanate's pavilion at Shanghai Expo. Macki will be accompanied during the visit by a delegation that includes officials from the ministries of Finance and National Economy, Oman Shipping Company and Oman Oil Company.

Oman inks deal to buy four tankers from China

The Sultanate yesterday signed an agreement with the Export-Import Bank of China to finance four giant tankers that are being built there for Oman Shipping Company (OSC). Under the agreement, the Export-Import Bank of China will fund the building of four giant tankers with a capacity of 400,000 tonnes each for OSC to carry iron ore pellets from Brazil to Vale's plant at the Sohar Industrial Estate. The agreement was signed on behalf of Oman government by Ahmed bin Abdulnabi Macki, minister of National Economy and deputy chairman of the Financial Affairs and Energy Resources Council and OSC chairman, while it was signed on behalf of the Export-Import Bank of China by Li Ruogu, chairman and president of the bank.

Macki, who is on a short visit to China, said that this funding confirms the confidence of the leading international financial institutions in the economic policies of the government of His Majesty the Sultan over the past four decades. Macki added that the four tankers are being built by Jiangsu Rongsheng Heavy Industries Group. It is expected to receive two tankers at the end of next year and remaining two in 2012, which will be leased to Vale under a long-term contract.

BAHRAIN

International Front

9/11 mosque plan imam in Bahrain

A US imam, at the centre of controversy over a proposed mosque near the Ground Zero site in New York, arrived in Bahrain last night. Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf is on a US government-sponsored 15-day trip to Bahrain, the UAE and Qatar during Ramadan. In Bahrain, the imam will be meeting local audiences, including religious leaders, youth and prominent personalities. A US Embassy spokeswoman said Imam Abdul Rauf's visit was to discuss Muslim life in

America as well as religious tolerance. She said that Ramadan was a good time to focus on Muslim life in the US and increase understanding. Imam Abdul Rauf, who will be in Bahrain until Monday, is behind plans for an Islamic centre that will be open to all visitors to demonstrate that Muslims are part of their New York community. The centre will include a mosque, sports facilities, theatre and a restaurant. The proposed location is two blocks from the gaping Ground Zero hole, where the Twin Towers were destroyed by Al Qaeda terrorists on September 11, 2001, killing nearly 3,000 people.

The proposal and the trip have been criticised by a group of US legislators, including Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, the ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Peter King, the ranking Republican on the House Homeland Security Committee. They fear that he would utilise the trip to raise funds for the proposed project, according to media reports. However, US State Department spokesman P J Crowley said that Imam Abdul Rauf had been strictly told to stay away from engaging in any personal business and raising funds for the mosque on the trip, according to media reports. He said that the US government-sponsored trip was under a programme run by the department's Bureau of International Information Programmes and estimated to cost about \$ 16,000 (BD6,000). He will get a daily \$ 200 honorarium for the tour. Airfare is included, as well as the standard federal government per diem for expenses and lodging in each of the cities he will visit, AP reported, quoting Crowley. Imam Abdul Rauf, the preacher of Masjid Al Farah (Mosque of Happiness) in New York, is on his second government-sponsored trip to Muslim countries.

Bahraini PM concludes visit to Kuwait

Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa wrapped a brief visit to Kuwait on Wednesday and flew back home. Prince Khalifa was seen off at Kuwait International Airport by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Sheikhs, ministers, governors, senior commanders of the Kuwaiti Army, the Kuwait Police, the National Guards, senior State officials and the ambassadors of the two countries. The prime minister, upon conclusion of his visit to the country, visited HH the Chief of the National Guards Sheikh Salem Al-Ali al-Sabah, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Kuwait-Bahrain relations 'legacy we are proud of': Bahrain PM

Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, said here on Tuesday that the distinguished bonds of love and brotherhood tying Bahrain and the sister State of Kuwait "is a legacy which we are proud of" and that the continuous meetings of the two countries is a mean for expansion of horizons of cooperation and consolidation in the interest of the two peoples. In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on the occasion of his visit to Kuwait on Wednesday, Prince Khalifa expressed pride and appreciation for the spirit of fraternity that prevail at the meetings of the two countries, saying that "such meetings help renew the two countries' keenness and determination to strengthen the bonds of cooperation and deepen the rapprochement between them and push forward ties in various fields and at all levels."

He said the month of Ramadan and its great spiritual atmosphere is an opportunity to pay tribute to the fraternal spirit that combines the two brotherly countries, noting that it was also an opportunity to be seized to enjoy the hospitality of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He said the visit is an opportunity to express the cohesion as one family bond by the spirit of love and brotherhood. "Our meeting on the land of Kuwait, the land of glory and nobility and achievement is a chance to express to Kuwait, leadership and people our sincere appreciation for its efforts and its noble and sincere contribution in supporting development projects in Bahrain," Prince Khalifa said.

Political Front

Take tough action to protect the country's stability: Bahraini mini

Interior Minister Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa last night told security forces to take tough action to protect the country's stability. He urged senior security officials to clamp down on the latest challenge to Bahrain's security. They must do their best to fend off dangers threatening social safety, he said as he received them, in the presence of the ministry under-secretary. Those who carry out acts of sabotage had only themselves to blame for the recent security clampdown, Shaikh Rashid said. The minister warned that such acts could lead to civil confrontation, should they continue. He said the ministry will use the force of law to maintain order and security, because civil divide and sectarianism are the most dangerous problems a nation can face. "Whoever thinks of disrupting the country's security will face a mass reaction from security officers, the society, judicial authority and the media," Shaikh Rashid warned.

Violence must be stopped: Bahraini Ministry

Bahrain's political societies were yesterday urged to help stamp out acts of sabotage and violence. National unity must be preserved at all costs under the constitution, said a Justice and Islamic Affairs Ministry statement. Political groups have a duty to work within legal limits to achieve social peace and democracy in the manner laid down by Bahrain's National Action Charter, said the statement. The strong announcement follows "frequent acts that target domestic peace and security through arson, vandalism, destruction and endangering citizens' lives, freedom and property." Members of such societies "must exercise extreme vigilance and caution in all matters with a view to maintaining national unity, and abide by political societies' laws, added the statement. Legitimate political work of the highest priority "requires clear and unequivocal rejection and condemnation without any hesitation or diluting any of the situations to incite or encourage or justify acts of arson, vandalism and destruction compromising people's lives". Such behaviour cannot be tolerated, in order to preserve the achievements of this nation and protect future generations, the statement concluded.

Parliament quota for women urged: Bahrain

Bahrain should adopt a women's quota in parliament to ensure equal representation in the country's legislative body during the upcoming elections, say activists. It should also target the involvement of the country's youngsters, as experts predict they could play a major role in changing the make-up of parliament and municipal councils. His Majesty King Hamad issued a

Royal decree on August 8 announcing that Bahraini voters will officially go to the polls on October 23. He also directed nominations be opened for the next parliamentary and municipal council campaigns - urging the nation to exercise its constitutional right to choose its representatives. Female candidates are already focusing on educating women voters and raising awareness on their right to vote.

"Authorities need to adopt a quota for women in order to secure a specific number of women in parliament," said National Liberal Thought Society (Al Watan) general-secretary Layla Rajab. "The percentage for the quota depends on the number of women voters we have in Bahrain, but obviously to start with we are not demanding a large number but just a small percentage to secure our stance in the legislative body. "This would make it easier for women to run for the elections especially after years of backlash we have received because we keep seeing women stepping up to the plate but not being elected. "The quota will also push more women to participate in the political arena and provide them with the additional hope that the system could change and could be more open to women in leadership positions."

Social Front

Jobs fear for 250 Bahrainis

More than 250 Bahraini workers at Bahrain Airport Services (BAS) fear they will lose their jobs if major client Gulf Air decides to dispense with some ground services. These include passenger handling, clearing and catering, among other things, which could allegedly be handled by the airline in-house instead of BAS. "We fear that the services we offer will no longer be required from our biggest client and we will not be needing so many Bahraini employees," said BAS Trade Union chairman Yousef Al Khaja. He said that they were hoping for further explanation from the airline on a decision that could drastically harm BAS, which employs more than 2,000 people. Mr Al Khaja said that they believed Gulf Air had not been carefully studying the situation before making the move. "On the one hand, they are offering huge sums to their staff to retire voluntarily in a bid to reduce operating costs and on the other they are getting rid of BAS' services to hire more of their own people to take over," said Mr Al Khaja.

Bahraini polling contenders begin campaign for seats early

Up to 134 Bahraini nationals have declared intention for nomination for the upcoming parliamentary elections due on October 23. Well-informed sources told KUNA the King, Hamad Bin Issa Al-Khalifa, was expected to issue a Royal Order, in a few days, confirming the forecast date of the polls and officially giving the go-ahead for nominations. The monarch had tentatively declared the date of the polls during a cabinet session last week. And on Thursday, Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa also declared the forecast date of the electoral process, as well as the simultaneous polling for the municipal councils. He set the nomination period for these councils between September 20 and 24. Electoral constituencies in the kingdom are divided into 40 districts in five governorates; the capital, Al-Muharraq that includes eight constituencies, the northern province, the central governorate, each including nine electoral districts, and the southern province, with six constituencies. The Bahraini Parliament comprises

the 40-seat Shura Council -- whose members are chosen by a Royal Decree, and the parliament, which also groups 40 seats. Its members are elected.

Economy Front

Bahrain's key role in spotlight at roadshow

Bahrain-based Hilal Conferences and Exhibitions (HCE) is conducting a three-day roadshow in India starting today to highlight opportunities in the multi-billion-dollar Gulf economies and raise awareness of Bahrain's role as a prime gateway to the region. HCE representatives will deliver high-level briefings and presentations to Indian business leaders, entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce, export promotion councils and more than 120 prominent companies in the cities of New Delhi and Bangalore. "The combined value of the 100 largest projects either completed or underway in the last two years in the GCC is more than \$ 1.3 trillion," said HCE conference director Ahmed Suleiman. "The roadshow will promote Bahrain's unrivalled access to these markets through HCE's flagship trade exhibitions and conferences. "HCE is promoting to the business audience of one of world's fastest growing economies the entrepot status and reputation of Bahrain," he said. "HCE's vision is to work alongside the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Economic Development Board to promote Bahrain and its economic potential. "Bahrain has the potential to become the Davos of the Middle East, a place where minds meet at world-class conferences and exhibitions to exchange knowledge and do business," he added.

New tourism watchdog vow in Bahrain

A Tourism Authority will be set up in Bahrain as part of plans by the Supreme Committee of Tourism to regulate the sector and toughen punitive measures against violating hotels. The Culture Ministry is preparing a law to be referred to parliament. The decision will be published in the Official Gazette soon, Under-Secretary Dr Isa Amin told our sister paper Akhbar Al Khaleej. The 10-member watchdog will be in charge of the tourism sector, operating as an independent entity under the ministry. It will comprise three members representing hotels and travel and tourism agencies and the remaining will represent government bodies. It will be headed by a chairman. The tourism sector under-secretary will be chief executive. All tourism employees will be transferred under it, Dr Amin said. = He said the ministry is also in the process of setting up a Supreme Council for Tourism. The minister, Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa, will submit a memorandum to His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa.

QATAR

International Front

Qatari PM meets Iran leader

HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani meets Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at the White Palace in Tehran last night. During the meeting Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani conveyed a verbal message from HH the

Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani to the Iranian leader, dealing with bilateral relations and matters of mutual concern. Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim also met separately Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki and Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Secretary Saeed Jalili.

Qatar Emir calls for more talks to resolve Mideast crisis

The Emir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani has stressed the need to intensify efforts to resolve the Middle East crisis through dialogue and negotiation in accordance with the international resolutions, and welcomed the position of Paraguay on the Palestinian cause. The Emir, in a press statement after talks with President Fernando Lugo of Paraguay, at the Government Palace here today, said: “We stress the need to intensify efforts to achieve world peace and coexistence among peoples and civilizations, as we also stress the need to resolve the crisis in the Middle East through dialogue and negotiation accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, and we welcome the position of the Republic of Paraguay on the Palestinian cause. “The Emir voiced his happiness at visiting the country and meeting the Paraguayan leader, noting that the latter had visited Qatar last year. The Emir also expressed his thanks for the warm reception and hospitality extended by the government and people of Paraguay.

Qatar, Paraguay sign agreements

Qatar and Paraguay yesterday held a session of official talks at the Government Palace, chaired by HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani and President Fernando Lugo. The talks were attended by members of the official delegation accompanying HH the Emir. On the Paraguayan side, the talks were attended by Vice President Federico Franco and a number of ministers. The two sides discussed co-operation between the two countries and ways to enhance it in various fields. They also reviewed a number of regional and international issues of common interest. After the talks, the Emir and the president witnessed the signing of two agreements and a memorandum of understanding between the two countries. The agreements covered economic, trade and technical co-operation between the two countries and on exchange of news between Qatar News Agency (QNA) and the General Secretariat for Information and Development in Paraguay.

Qatar Emir holds talks with Abbas

HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas held a session of official talks at the Wajbah palace yesterday evening. The session was attended by HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani and a number of ministers. On the Palestinian side, the talks were attended by Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Executive Committee member and Palestinian chief negotiator Dr Saeb Erekat, Fatah Central Committee member Azzam al-Ahmed, Palestinian Authority presidential spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh and Palestinian ambassador to Qatar Munir Ghanam. Talks dealt with bilateral relations and ways to enhance them as well as the latest Middle East developments.

Social Front

15 women join as food inspectors in Qatar

The Doha Municipality has hired 15 Qatari women graduates from Qatar University to work as food inspectors, while all shops and restaurants in the city have been put under strict vigil during the holy month of Ramadan. The women inspectors, who have graduated in food science from the university, have already joined the inspection team of the Municipality, said Mohammed Lahdan Al Kaabi, assistant director of its Health Affairs Department. "They have been inspecting mostly five-star hotels and top restaurants. They are doing their job exceptionally well, with their good knowledge in the field," said Al Kaabi. The services of these women have also been used to inspect beauty salons, massage parlours etc. The official said his department had not come across any major violations of the health regulations during Ramadan so far, which he said was a positive sign. "Now there is increased awareness among traders about the rules. However, we are keeping a strict vigil to check any possible violations. The public can help us in our campaign if they are also educated about the rules," said Al Kaabi. He said inspectors from the Municipality had been doing rounds at the central market day and night to ensure that traders in fish, meat, fruit and vegetables strictly abide by the health regulations.

Qatar not well equipped for emergencies

Qatar is not well equipped to deal with medical emergencies such as epidemic outbreaks, mainly due to the lack of proper laboratories in the country, according to a recent report released by the Permanent Population Committee. The report, which took note of the tremendous improvements in the health sector in the country over the past few years was, however, critical about several aspects. It said there was total lack of a policy to deal with psychological diseases among nationals and expatriates and the services offered in this field were not up to the mark.

The ratio of doctors in the country was higher compared to the other Gulf Cooperation Council countries. There were 2.2 doctors for every 1,000 people, the report said, citing 2006 figures. However, compared to advanced countries the number of health staff in Qatar is not sufficient. The ratio of nationals working in the health sector was even lower, it said. The major future challenge in the health sector as identified by the report is to curb the spread of diseases resulting from the influx of a large expatriate workforce into the country and the subsequent growth in population. In this context, the report said that the country was not fully equipped to deal with the SARS epidemic in 2003 and the H1N1 influenza outbreak in 2009. In the absence of advanced laboratories, blood samples were being sent abroad for confirmatory tests. The country also had to rely on imported vaccines.

The report identified tuberculosis, renal diseases, hypertension, diabetes and tumours as the major causes of death in Qatar, besides road accidents and bad habits such as smoking. It warned about an increase in chronic renal diseases among the native population in the years to come due to the high prevalence of hypertension, diabetes, obesity and genetic diseases. The number of HIV/AIDS cases in Qatar stood at 242 in 2006 while 306 pulmonary TB cases were reported in the same year. Life expectancy increased from 73.5 years in 1986 to 78 years in 2008. Qatar made remarkable strides in reproductive health with maternal deaths falling to 7.08 per 100,000

births in 2008. The report called for a comprehensive policy for Qatari health staff that can meet the present and future challenges and cover psychological health as well. It also urged looking into the issue of senior citizens and underlined the need for a strategy to keep them healthy and sound and end their isolation from the rest of the society.

Economy Front

Qatar and Uruguay sign economic, trade accord

Qatar and the Republic of Uruguay yesterday afternoon held a session of official talks, chaired by HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, President Jose Mujica of the Republic of Uruguay. The talks were attended by members of the official delegation accompanying HH the Emir. On the Uruguayan side, the talks were attended by Vice-President Danilo Astori, Foreign Minister Luis Almagro, Minister of Communications Enrique Pintado, Minister of Industry and Energy E Derman as well as the Ambassador of Uruguay to Qatar Jose Luis Remedi. At the beginning of the meeting, the Uruguayan president welcomed HH the Emir and expressed hope that the Emir's visit would contribute to further develop the relations between the two countries. The Emir thanked the president for the invitation to visit his country, expressing confidence that this visit would strengthen ties between the two countries in various fields. The two sides discussed ways to enhance relations between the two countries in various fields and reviewed a number of regional and international issues of common interest.