

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

**MADIHA KAUKAB
Weekly Report # 138
18th September- 24th September 2010**

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

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SUMMARY

Yemen

The UK will co-chair the second Friends of Yemen Ministerial meeting today in New York together with the governments of Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The meeting will assess progress in Yemen towards reform and stability since the meeting in London in January. The Friends of Yemen process was set up in recognition that co-ordinated engagement and support is needed in order to work with the government of Yemen to effectively tackle the challenges faced by Yemen.

International Front

GCC

British Foreign Office Minister for the Middle East Alistair Burt met with Ambassadors from the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states Thursday at the Foreign Office to discuss methods of developing ties between the two sides, it was announced here. Minister Burt gave an update to the Ambassadors on how the British Governments desire to elevate its relations with the Gulf was being put into action, the Foreign Office said in a statement. The ministers and Ambassadors discussed a broad range of areas where they would like to deepen co-operation, including regional security, trade and investment, energy and climate change, education and culture and foreign policy and international development.

UAE

The United Arab Emirates is developing its peaceful nuclear energy programme to address the increasing domestic demand in electricity. The decision to commence this programme was based on an extensive assessments of all available alternatives, in terms of economic, environmental feasibility, sustainability, and its contribution to economic diversity. “The UAE decision to embark on this programme took into account all associated regional and international obligations, with the assurance of highest standards of safety, security and nuclear non-proliferation as main pillars,” said Dr Anwar Gargash, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, while addressing the International Atomic Energy Agency 54th General Conference in Vienna.

Oman

The Sultanate affirmed its commitment to co-operation with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and sisterly and friendly countries to use the nuclear power and technologies

that have proven their efficiency and preference over other technologies in finding solutions for the issues and challenges of the sustainable development. The Sultanate, while merging gradually at the IAEA and shouldering its responsibility as an active member, hoped to benefit from the services and potentialities provided by IAEA to member countries.

Social Front

Saudi Arabia

The Shoura Council has thrown its weight behind the King Abdullah International Foundation for Charity and Humanitarian Activities (KAIFCH) and has commended its objectives as spelled out by Prince Khaled bin Abdullah, deputy chief of the KAIFCH board of trustees. The establishment of the KAIFCH, which seeks to promote interfaith dialogue and present a true picture of Islam and Muslims around the globe, was discussed at the 43rd meeting of the Shoura Council on Sunday. Shoura Council Chairman Abdullah Al-Asheikh congratulated Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah for launching the charity, adding that it will go a long way in alleviating the suffering of people worldwide.

Kuwait

The Ministry of Interior yesterday slapped a total ban on "sectarian" gatherings as the government warned of an iron fist policy against those trying to drag the country into a sectarian Shiite-Sunni rift, as it prepared to spell out its actions today. Acting premier and defense minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah told editors of local dailies that the government will firmly confront those who try to drag the country into a sectarian rift. He said the government banned all public gatherings that incite sectarianism after "we saw that the knife has cut too deep to the bone and that the danger has become real and imminent".

Economic Front

GCC

Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi (EAD) is trying to set up a Centre of Excellence in Renewable Energy Research in the Gulf region that could meet at least 10 per cent of electricity demands from solar and renewable energy mechanism by 2015-2020. The centre will exchange all renewable energy related research, mechanism and expertise among the GCC countries targeting to achieve 7-10 per cent energy requirements from renewable energy system, announced Majid Al Mansouri, secretary general of EAD.

UAE

The United States is a key economic and political partner of the United Arab Emirates and this close relationship is greatly contributing to global energy security in an increasingly interdependent world. "There is no escaping the fact that we live in a world that is impacted by globalisation and interdependence. Countries are increasingly dependent on each other for

critical supplies be it food, energy or essential goods. Global trade is at the heart of the global economy and is an important driver of economic development and the creation of wealth for all countries,” said Mohamed bin Dha’en Al Hamili, Minister of Energy of UAE, in his luncheon address at Washington Energy Summit 2010.

Kuwait

UK Commercial Secretary to HM Treasury Lord James Sassoon said Thursday his current visit to the State of Kuwait aimed to boost the bilateral economic and commercial ties. The visit aims mainly to increase the trade exchanges in the framework of the initiative adopted by the new UK government in May and reassure the Kuwaiti investors from the private and public sectors about the business atmosphere in the UK.

Qatar

The minutes of instruments of ratification of the agreement, signed between the governments of Qatar and Iran on the avoidance of double taxation with respect to taxes on income and capital, was signed at the Foreign Ministry headquarters in Doha yesterday.

DETAILED REPORT

GCC

International Front

GCC, UK pledge to further ties

Kuwait News Agency September-23-2010

British Foreign Office Minister for the Middle East Alistair Burt met with Ambassadors from the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states Thursday at the Foreign Office to discuss methods of developing ties between the two sides, it was announced here. Minister Burt gave an update to the Ambassadors on how the British Governments desire to elevate its relations with the Gulf was being put into action, the Foreign Office said in a statement. Ministers and officials from seven other Government departments also attended the meeting. The ministers and Ambassadors discussed a broad range of areas where they would like to deepen co-operation, including regional security, trade and investment, energy and climate change, education and culture and foreign policy and international development. Burt and his colleagues "welcomed the Ambassadors ideas and suggestions as to how they could work together more closely across the board". As Burt set out, the forthcoming "GCC Days in Europe Expo" (cultural event), which will take place in London on the 18-22 October, will be an excellent opportunity to exchange more ideas and build the relationship even further. Following the meeting, Alistair Burt said in a statement: "This was another valuable opportunity to further the relationship between the UK and the GCC States, and I was glad of the opportunity to hear the views of the Ambassadors on how we can build on the efforts that have already started. I am pleased that our desire for a real deepening and widening of that relationship is already turning into reality."

Disaster response plan for GCC

Gulf Daily News September-21-2010

Disaster victims in Bahrain could be treated at hospitals across the region under a new agreement being drawn up at GCC level. The agreement is being finalised as Iran goes ahead with plans to fire up its first nuclear plant just across the Gulf waters in Bushehr. Iran hopes its Russian-built reactor in southern Iran will be up and running by next month or in November, denying accusations that its drive to acquire atomic energy was a covert atomic weapons programme. Critics have expressed concern at its proximity to the Gulf in the event of a leak, but the hospital contingency plan being drawn up by Bahrain and its neighbours would also come into effect in the event of a chemical attack, a bomb going off, a plane crash, building collapse and tornado, among other things.

Under the terms of the deal, victims of disasters in neighbouring countries could also be brought to Bahrain for treatment. "Incidents such as plane crash, bus crash, building collapse and tornadoes will be considered major disasters," Accident and Emergency department senior resident Dr Nasser Mohammed told the GDN. "We have never had any huge disaster in this region so far, but this agreement is in line with our future plans. "You can expect a huge disaster in spite of the best laid out prevention measures, so it is always better to be ready and use each other's facilities if needed."

Dr Mohammed, who is charged with preparing the Health Ministry's disaster response plan, said the Mutual Aid Agreement would come in useful. It means in the event of a disaster in Bahrain, measures are already in place to transport the victims to neighbouring countries for treatment or vice-versa - if outside help is required. Details of the GCC-wide agreement are now being finalised and should come into effect soon, added Dr Mohammed a member of the Health Ministry's disaster committee. He revealed that Bahrain's Health Ministry had already successfully tested its own response to a disaster. "We have done several drills within the Salmaniya Medical Complex (SMC), in other ministry facilities and in co-ordination with several other departments, under the aegis of the Interior Ministry's National Disaster Committee, and found that everything is working as planned," he added.

Economic Front**Gulf nations plan to go for renewable energy**

Khaleej Times September-23-2010

Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi (EAD) is trying to set up a Centre of Excellence in Renewable Energy Research in the Gulf region that could meet at least 10 per cent of electricity demands from solar and renewable energy mechanism by 2015-2020. The centre will exchange all renewable energy related research, mechanism and expertise among the GCC countries targeting to achieve 7-10 per cent energy requirements from renewable energy system, announced Majid Al Mansouri, secretary general of EAD. Representatives from UNESCO, ISESCO and six Gulf countries will meet on Friday to discuss the establishment of this centre in one of the Gulf countries, Al Mansouri said. A five-day conference on renewable energy, titled 'Eleventh World

Renewable Energy Congress and Exhibition 2010', will start from Sept. 26 at Armed Forces Club in Abu Dhabi in which over 500 renewable energy experts and researchers will take part. The conference will aim to network among the GCC countries and the world for green building and renewable energy projects. Professor Ali Al Sayigh, chairman of the World Renewable Energy Congress and director-general of World Renewable Energy Nations, said the congress would discuss about biomass conversion technology, fuel cell, hydrogen, intelligent energy systems, geothermal applications, low energy architecture, ocean energy, photovoltaic technology, radiation, wind energy and solar materials.

“Our aim is to set up one centre in each GCC country for better coordination. We need to activate them to generate renewable energy. This is one of the recommendations we are going to put in the conference”, Al Sayigh said. Al Sayigh said the UAE and other GCC countries have plenty of sun than Europe and it's far valuable source of energy than oil as oil has to finish at some extent of time. “If you are going to put up solar system for energy production in 200X200 kilometres, it would be sufficient to produce electricity for entire Europe. So, think, how much desert is available with GCC countries and we don't use it,” Al Sayigh said. “We will be communicating among ourselves where to establish its headquarter later on. All these centres are to be set up under auspices of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO).

Lending in GCC could surge up to 10% in 2011

Khaleej Times September-23-2010

Lending in the GCC is set to grow between eight and 10 per cent in 2011 after nearly three years in the doldrums as banks in the region now boast a collective liquidity of \$ 300 billion, Adnan Ahmed Yousef, chairman of the Union of Arab Banks said on Wednesday. “As long as oil prices stay between \$ 60 and \$ 75 per barrel, GCC countries, which pump nearly 17 per cent of the world's oil supplies, will continue to have excess cash that would be invested in development projects,” Yousef said on the sidelines of conference in Dubai. Yousef said the UAE banking sector is set for a rebound in 2011 as all banks are expected to clear their balance sheets by end-2010. He said lending activity in the UAE was projected to grow by eight per cent in 2011. Official data shows that deposits with the UAE's 51 banks grew by nearly Dh30 billion in the first seven months of 2010 to reach Dh998 billion at the end of July while credit grew at a slower pace, rising by about Dh10 billion to Dh1.025 trillion in the same period.

GCC banks, which have a combined balance sheet in excess of \$ 3 trillion, have sufficient liquidity to resume normal lending in the fourth quarter following a pick in deposits over the past few months, analysts said. In 2009, the loan books of Gulf banks grew by 3.6 per cent in 2009 and a slump in the real estate market forced many banks to set aside higher provisions for bad loans. Kuwait-based investment firm Kamco said in its latest report that GCC banking sector would continue to make profits despite higher provisioning and a slowdown in credit growth. “The GCC banking system has shown resilience to the financial crisis helped by the liquidity and prudential measures introduced by the monetary authorities. “The banking systems had few vulnerabilities that were revealed by the financial turmoil and the adverse impact it had on the economies of the GCC countries,” the report said.

GCC, ASEAN FMs discuss ways to improve economic cooperation

Kuwait News Agency September-22-2010

Foreign Ministers of GCC countries, chaired by Kuwait Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister sheikh Dr. Mohmmad Sabah Al-Sabah, on Tuesday discussed with their ASEAN counterparts ways to improve economic cooperation between the two regional groups. In a statement to KUNA following the meeting, Kim Hourn, the Second of State of the Foreign Ministry in the Kingdom of Cambodia, who chaired the meeting on the ASEAN side, said "We are looking forward to our close cooperation and partnership bweteen the two regions ... We have a lot to gain from our cooperation in trade, investment, tourism and in a wide range of issues. "The idea is to speed up an action plan," he said on the annual ministerial meeting, which took place on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) 65th session, to follow up to the two-year action plan of the second GCC-ASEAN ministerial meeting that took place in late May early June of this year in Singapore. He added that the GCC Secretary General Abdulrahman Al-Attiyah is scheduled to visit ASEAN Secretariat next January. Sheikh Dr. Mohammad had also chaired earlier today a GCC troika meeting with the Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi to discuss regional issues. The GCC troika was represented by foreign ministers of Kuwait and the UAE, and Al-Attiyah.

Lack of IT skills challenging GCC firms: Study

Khaleej Times September-22-2010

The Internet and the penetration of technology in the Gulf Cooperation Council, or GCC, countries is moving at a fast rate, but the lack of skills necessary to fully hone them is creating a hindrance for organisations, a new study has revealed. The research, conducted by the International Data Corporation, or IDC, in cooperation with security software maker Symantec Corp, showed that chief information officers, or CIOs, face these challenges not only within their respective organisations but as well as with their partners or other solution providers in the region. Respondents of the study also said that skills were rated the most important consideration when choosing a partner to work with. A common view held by CIOs was that generally, vendors had sales offices in the GCC, but lacked qualified personnel to advise customers, implement solutions and support end-users. According to the research, 76 per cent still prioritise skills as the number one characteristic required from a partner firm, with integrity, services level agreements, up-to-date technology and financial stability next.

“The study has identified that regulatory compliance is also a concern for GCC corporations,” said Rajit Rajan, IDC MEA’s Research Director. “Over 90 per cent of CIOs have currently invested or are planning to invest in governance, risk and compliance solutions highlighting regulatory compliance as a major driver of security and storage investment,” he added. The study also showed that spending on IT — particularly in the security segment — by GCC companies have remained robust, although it had definitely been affected by the recent global economic downturn, forcing them to make the necessary adjustments in the organisation’s overall budget. A vast majority of those surveyed — 75 per cent — said that their companies have increased their budgets for IT in 2010, with 19 per cent saying that it has decreased and six per cent claiming it has stayed the same. However, when asked if they expect this to continue into 2011, only 56 per cent think that it will go up, with 29 per cent saying it will not and 15 per cent

claiming it will stay the same. Of those who said their budgets increased in 2010, less than five per cent claim that it has gone up by over 50 per cent, the same percentage of those who said their budgets decreased by that margin. "The research has shown that business applications are less likely to move to a cloud environment as opposed to Web applications that are most likely to be deployed on a public cloud environment," said Johnny Karam, Symantec's Regional Director for MENA.

Islamic derivatives struggle for traction in GCC

The Peninsula September-20-2010

Islamic derivatives are still struggling to gain traction in the Gulf, six months after the launch of a much-touted over-the-counter contract aimed at creating a standard legal framework for hedging products. Experts said the contract, known as the Tahawwut Master Agreement, in theory provides Islamic institutions with a simpler template for risk management that has been approved by Shariah scholars. But the contract has been slow to catch on among Islamic institutions in the region as many are put off by the dense language of the document and still question the Shariah compliance of hedging products, which are often associated with speculation. "Some of the provisions are difficult to understand for lay people because the document itself is very technical and difficult to navigate for those that aren't as familiar with derivatives," said Muneer Khan, partner for Islamic finance at law firm Simmons & Simmons.

The concept of tahawwut in Islam means to manage risk. But in the financial industry, hedging can either imply managing risk or can be used as a form of gambling and speculation, which is forbidden in Islam. Sheikh Muddassir Siddiqui, an Islamic scholar and partner at Denton, Wilde Sapte, said hedging risk was especially important within the growing \$ 1 trillion Islamic finance industry to keep institutions competitive with their conventional counterparts.

But since the tahawwut agreement provides a template, rather than a standardised hedging product, there is concern that different products may vary in compliance based on additional documentation. And some institutions that are not as familiar with the derivatives industry are reluctant to take the risk. "The international banks have already had their own bespoke derivatives contracts in place for some time, making it easy to adapt to the tahawwut agreement," said one Bahrain-based Islamic banker who asked to remain anonymous. "But many local Gulf institutions struggle with the concept, which has negative connotations, and rather than going out to get more education about Islamic derivatives, they prefer not to act at all." He said despite efforts to publicise the tahawwut agreement since its launch and industry workshops to explain how Islamic derivatives work, interest among local banks has been lacklustre. "It's unfortunate because bankers need to be able to sell derivatives to their sharia boards and if they're not comfortable with the agreement, then the sharia boards don't stand a chance," he said. Harris Irfan, head of Islamic products at Barclays Capital, said the tahawwut agreement was an important first-step in creating much-needed derivatives products in the Islamic finance industry, but the fear of the unknown was hindering growth.

SAUDI ARABIA

International Front

Egyptian editors applaud Saudi role in defending Islamic causes

Saudi Gazette September-24-2010

Several Egyptian editors Thursday lauded Saudi Arabia's prominent role in defending Arab and Islamic causes and cited its economic, political, cultural, religious and social achievements, including its call for dialogue among followers of different regions, cultures and civilizations. In editorials and columns to mark the 80th anniversary of the National Day of the Kingdom, the editors extended their sincere felicitations to King Abdullah, Crown Prince Sultan and Prince Naif, Second Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior, on the National Day. They said the Kingdom and Egypt were bound with strong ties, particularly during the current era of King Abdullah and President Hosni Mubarak. The columnists lauded the stance of the Kingdom in support of the people of Palestine and praised the facilities the Kingdom was extending to pilgrims and Umrah performers.

Accord eases Saudi-Kuwait travel rules

Arab News September-23-2010

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait signed on Wednesday an agreement enabling their citizens to travel between the two countries carrying only their national identity cards. "The agreement of the two Gulf Cooperation Council countries for travel carrying their personal identity cards was signed between the Second Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Prince Naif and Kuwait's Interior Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Khaled Al-Sabah in Manama on Wednesday," Bahrain's Interior Minister Gen. Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa said in a statement to the Saudi Press Agency. While addressing the conference of Iraq's neighboring countries, Prince Naif affirmed the strong link between the security of Iraq and the security of its neighboring countries. "The welfare and safety of Iraq are in the hands of Iraqis themselves. They should give priority to their welfare and safety above all other considerations," the prince said. He also condemned the terror attack in Iran on Wednesday that targeted a military parade. "We strongly condemn the terror explosions targeting the security in Iran in which many people were killed and injured," said the statement. "This kind of attack is unacceptable and we stand beside our brotherly Iran with all our security potentials to assist in reaching its perpetrators and bringing them to justice."

S. Arabia assures Lebanese about keenness on keeping conditions calm

Kuwait News Agency September-23-2010

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is keen on maintaining unity and solidarity among all Lebanese for sake of safeguarding the country's stability, the Saudi Ambassador here affirmed on Wednesday. Ali Awad Assiri, speaking during a meeting with a Hezbollah delegation at the Saudi embassy, said gates of the diplomatic mission building would remain open for all Lebanese parties, hoping that internal tension would ease off as a result of cooperation among the natives as well as the understanding between Saudi Arabia and Syria. The ambassador was alluding to a much reported recent understanding between Riyadh and

Damascus to keep the Lebanese arena calm and under control -- depicted with a summit in Beirut that grouped King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz, Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad and Lebanese President Michel Suleiman.

Saudi king meets top counter-terror officials

The Peninsula September-21-2010

The Custodian of The Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia and security czar Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz have held talks with top intelligence and counter-terror officials from the United States and Canada, the SPA news agency reported. John Brennan, assistant to US President Barack Obama for homeland security and counter-terrorism, discussed in Jeddah on Sunday "issues that concern the two countries" with King Abdullah, Deputy Interior Minister Prince Mohammed bin Nayef and intelligence chief Prince Muqrin bin Abdul Aziz, the state news agency said without elaborating. Afterward, Brennan held talks with Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz, the country's senior domestic security official for 35 years. "The meeting focused on the need to ... build strong and fruitful cooperation to reduce the spread of terrorism in all countries in the world, especially in the Middle East, and the importance of working together to fight Al-Qaeda and terrorism," SPA said.

King Abdullah, Brennan discuss issues of mutual concern

Arab News September-20-2010

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah held talks with John O. Brennan, assistant to the US president and deputy national security adviser for homeland security and counterterrorism, at his palace in Jeddah on Sunday. According to the Saudi Press Agency, King Abdullah and Brennan discussed issues of mutual concern. The talks were attended by Prince Muqrin, director of intelligence, and Prince Muhammad bin Naif, assistant interior minister for security affairs.

Social Front

Saudi Arabia gears up to mark 80th National Day

Saudi Gazette September-23-2010

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia celebrates its 80th National Day today, marking the unification of the country by late King Abdul Aziz in 1932. Both Saudis and expatriates are all geared up to celebrate the event all over the Kingdom. A variety of events have been planned to mark the event. On the occasion of the National Day, Prince Naif Bin Abdul Aziz, Second Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior, congratulated King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques; Crown Prince Sultan, Deputy Premier, Defense and Aviation Minister and inspector general; and the Saudi people. In his address on Saudi television, Prince Naif spoke of the Kingdom's accomplishments in various fields and also highlighted the fight against terrorism. "Despite the world and particularly our region being in turmoil, the Kingdom is proud that, due to the directives of the wise leadership, it has been able to repulse the attacks against this nation's faith and stability," he said.

Shoura gives strong backing to King Abdullah's new charitable initiative

Arab News September-21-2010

The Shoura Council has thrown its weight behind the King Abdullah International Foundation for Charity and Humanitarian Activities (KAIFCH) and has commended its objectives as spelled out by Prince Khaled bin Abdullah, deputy chief of the KAIFCH board of trustees. The establishment of the KAIFCH, which seeks to promote interfaith dialogue and present a true picture of Islam and Muslims around the globe, was discussed at the 43rd meeting of the Shoura Council on Sunday. Shoura Council Chairman Abdullah Al-Asheikh congratulated Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah for launching the charity, adding that it will go a long way in alleviating the suffering of people worldwide. The foundation, he said, would confront the challenges facing the Muslim Ummah, extend aid to needy people and help disseminate Islamic ideals regarding world fraternity, tolerance, peace and justice. The foundation, according to a report, will promote Islamic values, publish books and magazines on the issue, help those institutions that support poor and underprivileged people and organize conferences and lectures on a range of subjects. "The house was very happy to note that Islamic values, loyalty to homeland, respect for humanity, tolerance, peace, progress and donor spirit are the cornerstones of KAIFCH's philosophy," said Al-Asheikh. The Kingdom has always been on the forefront in terms of extending aid and support to needy people worldwide.

600 Saudis blacklisted for illegal visa trading

Saudi Gazette September-19-2010

The Ministry of Labor has started blacklisting Saudi nationals who recruited workers so that they could illegally trade their visas. Those blacklisted will be barred from receiving all services from the Ministry of Labor. This was disclosed to Okaz/Saudi Gazette by Ahmad Al-Obeid, Director General of the Labor Office in the Eastern Province. He pointed out that the Eastern Province Labor Office has blacklisted 600 Saudi nationals for visa violations. The violations include the non-existence of the business or work for which the workers were recruited, and employment in professions for which they were not recruited. Al-Obeid said that some citizens have tried to dupe the ministry by renting shops temporarily and fixing signboards indicating some business activity. However, once the visa is issued, the signboards and workers disappear, he said.

Political Front

Saudi ministry may cancel chambers elections

Saudi Gazette September-22-2010

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry may cancel elections usually conducted by the chambers of commerce to elect one-third of their members, a source told Okaz/Saudi Gazette. The ministry is considering the action because it found that a majority of the prominent businessmen show little interest in nominating themselves because they consider the election process as unpleasant and difficult, the source said. The source added that if the elections are abolished, the ministry may reduce the number of elected members. It has noticed that those who are elected are insignificant people representing commercial and industrial sectors in major chambers. Circumstances at the Madina Chamber of Commerce are such that the ministry may

form a transitional board of directors before a final decision is made about canceling elections in chambers throughout the Kingdom, according to the source. A group of businessmen in Madina has started forming a bloc to select a legal team to sue the Ministry of Commerce for freezing elections of the second session without legal grounds and for its intention to appoint members from outside the candidates' list. They said the ministry appointing influential names to the Madina chamber's board would be unprecedented.

Economic Front

Saudi construction sector to sustain expansion in Q3

Saudi Gazette September-22-2010

Contracts awarded in the Saudi construction sector "have dramatically increased" in the second quarter of this year, according to the latest NCB Quarterly Review of Contract Awards in the Construction Sector. The NCB Construction Contracts Index, as a result, reached 80.36 points by the end of the period and with contract awards expected to continue to rise through the third quarter of 2010, the report added. The second quarter of 2010 witnessed a consistent increase in the value of awarded contracts. The total awarded contracts during Q2 grew to more than SR24.2 billion compared to SR8.8 billion during Q1, increasing by 175 percent. Given the growth trend exhibited during Q2 of 2010, the value of awarded contracts are expected to further expand during the rest of the year. With high oil prices forecast to continue to fuel growth across the entire spectrum of the Saudi economy, the number of awarded contracts are expected to continue to increase in the near to medium-term, the bank said. Recently announced projects that are currently in the bidding process and are expected to be awarded during 2010 include projects such as Saudi Aramco's major onshore construction package for its Wasit gas development program amounting to SR22.5 billion.

Other projects that are expected to be awarded in 2010 include Saudi Aramco's design and construction of the first phase of the Jizan Refinery, which will be built near Jizan City at a cost of SR26 billion. The Index rose slightly to 80.36 points or by 2 percent compared to Q1. The value of awarded contracts during Q2'10 matched that of Q2'09. The total value of awarded contracts during H1'10 totaled SR33 billion, decreasing by 67 percent from H1'09 total of SR100 billion in awarded contracts. "The number of construction contract awards and activities in recent years have dramatically increased on the back of priorities set forth by the government as well as private institutions. These priorities have spurred numerous mega-projects across the Kingdom as the focus on construction activities signaled the intention to successfully expand the infrastructure capabilities as well as increasing the production capacity of all of the sectors effecting the construction industry," the report said.

Saudi Hollandi to focus more on retail banking

Arab News September-20-2010

Saudi Hollandi Bank, the Kingdom's oldest bank, will put more focus on retail banking in the short-term to boost profit growth after multibillion dollar defaults by some Saudi family-owned firms. The lender, part-owned by Royal Bank of Scotland, does not have a new cost-cutting policy, Managing Director Bernd van Linder told Reuters on Sunday, after a 50 percent drop in

costs led it to a stellar profit growth performance during the second quarter. This performance had prompted analysts to wonder whether the savings were one-offs or Hollandi had started a cost-cutting strategy that could help it sustain strong profit growth performances. “The main goal of our new strategy, approved by the board, is focus on personal banking considering the Kingdom’s young population ... We feel there is a market for it and will balance the bank’s recurrent income,” van Linder said in a telephone interview. Van Linder did not put numbers on the targets of the retail banking push. Its contribution to Hollandi’s net profit fell to 8 percent by end-June down from 15 percent a year earlier, while corporate banking’s contribution to net profit rose to 71 percent from about 56 percent in the first half of 2009.

“We want to raise the contribution of personal banking which will help us stabilize net profit,” van Linder said. He declined to talk about the financial cost of the new strategy. The bank has 44 branches, or about 3 percent of total banking branches in the Kingdom. Growth in bank lending, especially to the private sector, has been slow since early 2009. Saudi bank credit growth was flat throughout much of 2009 due to the global slump and after defaults the same year by local family firms. “The issue of family-owned firms is an isolated incident that does not reflect the overall strength of the Saudi economy,” van Linder said. For Hollandi, the impact translated into an 11.1 percent drop in its loan portfolio by end-June, 2010, an acceleration from a 7.4 percent decline in the 12 months to end-March 2010. Like several other Saudi lenders, substantial provisions for non-performing loans and a low-interest rate environment eroded Hollandi’s profitability in 2009. Hollandi responded by setting aside enough provisions to cover all non-performing loans and which stood at SR2.24 billion by end-2009. “We had strong control on costs, we have been happy especially that this was achieved without compromising revenue growth ... But I am not sure there is a cost-cutting strategy,” van Linder said. “Provisions for non-performing loans caused volatility in profit performance ... We continued to maintain a 100 percent coverage of non-performing loans in 2010,” he added.

UAE

International Front

UAE pledges all-out help in global poverty war

Khaleej Times September-22-2010

The UAE supports the Millennium Declaration based on its firm conviction that implementation of the declaration is key to maintaining peace, security and prosperity in the world. UAE Minister of State Reem Ibrahim Al Hashimi told a high-level plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted in 2000 by all 189 member-states of the UN General Assembly, were a defining moment for global cooperation in the 21st century, as they set out the key challenges facing humanity and established time-bound targets for addressing extreme poverty in its many dimensions — income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion — while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability. “Today, we renew our support to the declaration and affirm our intention to continue working towards achieving the MDGs by 2015 as we have pledged,” she said, following up on the outcome of the Millennium Declaration. The minister congratulated Switzerland for its election as president of the General Assembly at its 65th session.

The recent international economic, financial and security conditions have demonstrated how interlinked the interests and concerns of countries of the world are. The economic crisis has proved that no country is safe from its impact, regardless of economic differences, the minister said. The UAE strongly believes that success in achieving the MDGs requires an effective global partnership within the framework of the Millennium Declaration and other conferences on development, especially the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development. "And while we recognise that the global economic and financial crisis led to recession in developed donor countries, we urge those countries not to withdraw their commitments and keep working towards achieving the 0.7 per cent of their gross national income as official development assistance for developing countries; take effective steps towards alleviating or cancelling their debts; and provide them with latest technology to help them build sustainable development," she said.

N-energy programme peaceful and secure: UAE

Khaleej Times September-22-2010

The United Arab Emirates is developing its peaceful nuclear energy programme to address the increasing domestic demand in electricity. The decision to commence this programme was based on an extensive assessments of all available alternatives, in terms of economic, environmental feasibility, sustainability, and its contribution to economic diversity. "The UAE decision to embark on this programme took into account all associated regional and international obligations, with the assurance of highest standards of safety, security and nuclear non-proliferation as main pillars," said Dr Anwar Gargash, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, while addressing the International Atomic Energy Agency 54th General Conference in Vienna. He said: "We renew our confidence in the leading role that the agency plays in supporting the expansion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and our readiness to support the work of the agency in this regard." The UAE government hopes to establish a model for other countries that do not possess nuclear energy programmes to be able to develop national nuclear energy programmes with the full support and confidence of the international community, Dr Gargash remarked. "The UAE considers international partnership and cooperation as the cornerstone for the success of nuclear energy programmes. This was a main pillar of the UAE policy. We believe that the technologically advanced countries should make increasing efforts to facilitate the uses of peaceful nuclear energy to the less advanced countries," he added.

Iran-UAE ties 'excellent' - spokesman

Kuwait News Agency September-22-2010

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast said Tuesday the relations between the Islamic Republic and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are at "a very favorable level." Addressing the weekly press briefing here, Mehman-Parast said the bilateral trade exchanges are excellent. He made the remarks in response to question about UAE's inspection of Iranian cargo vessel recently. "The leaders of the two countries are determined to further boost bilateral ties in all areas," he affirmed. Commenting on the resignations of two Iranian diplomats, the spokesman said they resulted from "personal motives." "The two diplomats served at overseas Iranian embassies for a year and a half; nobody can believe their resignations were politically-

motivated," he affirmed. Meanwhile, Mehman-Parast condemned what he called the policy of double standards used by the west towards his country in issues such as defense, democracy, human rights and combat against illicit drugs.

UAE, Brazil review military and defence cooperation

Emirates News Agency-WAM September-20-2010

General H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces received this evening at Al Bateen Palace the visiting Brazilian Defence Minister Nelson Jobim and his accompanying delegation. They reviewed bilateral ties and ways to boost them in all fields, particularly military and defence cooperation. They also discussed topics of mutual interest and exchanged views on the current regional and international developments. The meeting was attended by Lt. General Hamad Mohammed Thani Al Rumaithi, Chief of Staff of the UAE Armed Forces, Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Mazrouei, Under Secretary of the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince's Court and a number of senior officials.

UAE reaffirms commitment to Pakistan for the long term

Emirates News Agency-WAM September-20-2010

The UAE leaders and people have so far contributed \$ 60 million in financial and in-kind assistance to Pakistan, including the deployment of three UAE Army helicopters to airlift goods and repatriate victims of flood. UAE Foreign Minister HH Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, said in an article carried today by English language local daily, The National, that the generosity of governments and individuals from around the world is, we hope, getting help to where the need is most acute, and will offer some comfort to the people and government of Pakistan as a whole. They are not in this alone." He added that the generosity of governments and individuals from around the world is, we hope, getting help to where the need is most acute, and will offer some comfort to the people and government of Pakistan as a whole. They are not in this alone. "The UAE and Pakistan are old friends and we stand ready to help, and not just in this pressing hour of need but into the future. The UAE has focused its policy on promoting the long-term interests of both countries, which it believes lie in stability and prosperity", Sheikh Abdullah said. Ten years ago, world leaders came together at the United Nations in New York and agreed to implement eight Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Ranging from a commitment to halving extreme poverty to providing universal primary education, these goals represented an unprecedented international agreement to make genuine progress on some entrenched barriers to development. Next week, heads of state and foreign ministers will gather in New York to examine how much progress has been made.

Identifying the root causes hindering development and setting out basic goals to lift developing nations has been an essential first step. While all countries in our inter-connected world face a multitude of challenges, developing countries are the hardest hit when disasters strike. Some come as man-made problems like violent conflict or social unrest. More often challenges take the form of natural disasters that require immediate attention and aid. Often when faced with an emergency, long-term commitments to development can get side-tracked and the underlying causes of social or economic difficulties fade into the background. The UAE has always been

very careful not to lose sight of these two tracks. Pakistan has witnessed one of the worst natural disasters in modern times and the plight of the Pakistani people has led to an outpouring of sympathy from across the globe. The leaders and the population of the UAE have so far contributed \$ 60 million in financial and in-kind assistance, including the deployment of three UAE Army helicopters to airlift goods and repatriate victims. The generosity of governments and individuals from around the world is, we hope, getting help to where the need is most acute, and will offer some comfort to the people and government of Pakistan as a whole. They are not in this alone.

Social Front

UAE Ministry calls for caution in sale of energy drinks

Khaleej Times September-24-2010

Residents have welcomed the new rules set by the Ministry of Economy (MoE) with regard to the sale of energy drinks. Wholesale suppliers of these drinks have been told to place warning advertisements on the packaging of all their products so as to protect the consumers. Mohammed Hamdan, an Emirati resident of Khozam said placing such warnings was a good decision. "Many people, especially pregnant women, children, those with heart diseases and others who are said to be adversely affected by certain energy beverages have been consuming them without knowing that they are risky," said Hamdan. Omar Khalid, an Egyptian expatriate who lives in the Nakheel area said he had been consuming energy drinks since several years, but he was unaware of the risks involved, especially when there were health problems. "I hear people talking of certain risks involved in the excessive use of some energy drinks, but I have never taken the trouble to know more about them. I know there are many people like me who do not know the negative effects of such drinks. Committing the suppliers to place warning advertisements will help many people, especially those with health problems," said Khalid. The MoE on Wednesday met a number of wholesale suppliers of energy drinks across the country in its bid to implement the rules. Dr Hashim Al Nuaimi, director of consumer protection at MoE, said that after the meeting, the ministry had notified all local departments concerned with handling the sale of energy drinks to make sure the new specifications were in place by October 29. He stressed that consumers would be educated through brochures and posters on the risk of certain energy drinks for pregnant women, children less than 16 years, people suffering from heart diseases and those with caffeine allergies and athletes.

Work ban can be lifted if employers violate norms: UAE ministry

Khaleej Times September-21-2010

Workers cannot be forced into jobs they are not qualified or trained for and, the job ban of six months to one year cannot be applied to such cases, according to the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry was reacting to a complaint forwarded by a group of workers demanding the lifting of a one-year ban their sponsor had slapped on them to prevent them from working in the country. The sponsor imposed the ban and cancelled their labour cards because they asked him to place them as concrete work carpenters which they were brought to do. He insisted on them working as helping hands with various chores. Upon examining the complaint, the ministry found the

workers were right and lifted the ban granting them the right to shift to another employer with the consent of the current sponsor.

Political Front

UAE elected member of IAEA board

Khaleej Times September-24-2010

The UAE was chosen here on Thursday a member of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The board includes 35 countries from the Middle East and South Asia. The UAE's Permanent Representative to the IAEA, Hamad Ali Al Ka'abi, described the selection of the country to the Board of Governors, which includes Jordan, as a significant step and a great opportunity to play a role in decision-making in the global forum to help the Agency achieve its goals and strengthen its role in working on nuclear non-proliferation and international expansion in the field of clean energy use and the peaceful use of atomic energy.

Expressing his pleasure at the selection of the UAE, Al Ka'abi noted that the move also coincides with the steps taken by the UAE in terms of its peaceful nuclear energy, which depends on transparency, clarity and commitment to the highest standards of safety and security. He was referring to a recent contract signed by the UAE with Korean companies to build nuclear reactors. He said that the selection of the UAE also confirms its right policies and effective role in international forums under the wise leadership of the President, His Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Economic Front

UAE, US ties contributing to global energy security

Khaleej Times September-24-2010

The United States is a key economic and political partner of the United Arab Emirates and this close relationship is greatly contributing to global energy security in an increasingly interdependent world. "There is no escaping the fact that we live in a world that is impacted by globalisation and interdependence. Countries are increasingly dependent on each other for critical supplies be it food, energy or essential goods. Global trade is at the heart of the global economy and is an important driver of economic development and the creation of wealth for all countries," said Mohamed bin Dha'en Al Hamili, Minister of Energy of UAE, in his luncheon address at Washington Energy Summit 2010. "I would like to seize this opportunity to make it very clear that countries such as the UAE which have been blessed with major oil and gas reserves are deeply aware of their responsibility to ensure that reliable continuous supplies are available to consuming countries. In practice, this translates into an obligation to make multi-billion dollar investments often without any assurance that there will be a market for the incremental production". "Our record as a responsible energy supplier attests to that fact. For the last half century, we have provided stable and regular supplies of oil and gas to customers throughout the world. Whenever there has been a global emergency, we have responded by increasing our energy production. We have been able to do this, because we have invested in spare production capacity — something that no private corporation would even contemplate."

“In recent months, some people have complained that oil prices were too high. Viewed from the perspective of high investments required to have additional production capacity oil prices are not high at all,” Hamili said.

Dubai in bid to host World Chambers Congress

Khaleej Times September-22-2010

Dubai has everything it takes to host the World Chambers Congress 2013 in the Emirate, said Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry Director-General Hamad Buamim. The ICC World Chambers Federation, or WCF, organises the biennial forum in different regions of the world. “Dubai has the credentials needed to make a success of an international event of the stature of the World Chambers Congress,” Buamim said. Buamim, who is also the Vice-Chairman of the WCF, said that the Congress will not only boost Dubai’s economic prospects but will also help in improving bilateral ties between participating chambers, open up channels of communication among the global chambers and their Arab counterparts by putting the region on the world economic map.

UAE tops GCC in per capita spendings

Gulf Today September-21-2010

The UAE stands first in the GCC countries and ninth worldwide in terms of market opportunities, according to a recent report by Britain’s Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). This coincides with the rising levels of per capita local consumption and the EIU is expectating that growth will continue on the short run. According to EIU estimates, the per capita consumer spending in the UAE is expected to reach \$ 23,790 (Dhs87,310) per year. The UAE per capita consumer spending is likely to rise to \$ 36,310 (Dhs133,260) per year by 2014. The UAE per capita consumer spending is regarded as the highest in the region, the EIU said, noting that the per capita consumer spending is expected to reach \$ 12,410 in Kuwait, \$ 6,950 in Bahrain and \$ 5,390 in Saudi Arabia. The per capita consumer spending is likely to rise at a slower pace in the rest GCC countries to \$ 14,740 in Kuwait, \$ 12,900 in Qatar, \$ 7,280 in Bahrain and \$ 6.830 in Saudi Arabia by 2014m the EIU said.

IMF to raise UAE growth forecast

Gulf Times September-19-2010

The International Monetary Fund will raise its economic growth forecasts for Dubai and the UAE as progress in debt restructuring and government spending boosts the economy, IMF Middle East director Masood Ahmed said. Growth in the UAE will be better than the current forecast of 1.3% and the 0.4% contraction for Dubai this year, Ahmed said in a telephone interview on Thursday. He declined to give the new figures, which are due in four weeks time. Dubai had to seek a \$ 20bn bailout from Abu Dhabi last year after borrowing \$ 109bn, according to IMF estimates, to build itself into a tourism and financial center. “We see this revision coming about in part because of the removal of uncertainty over the debt issues,” Ahmed said. “Growth of the services sector in Dubai, which mirrors global growth and growth in Asia, and continued spending by the Abu Dhabi government are also factors.” Last year’s forecast of a 1% contraction for the UAE will be increased after more data was released showing a greater

contraction, Ahmed said. Dubai's economy contracted 2.5% last year, according to government estimates obtained by Bloomberg News.

BAHRAIN

International Front

Bahraini PM says cooperation with Kuwait special

Kuwait News Agency September-23-2010

Bahrain Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa said Wednesday cooperation with Kuwait has "its own special character" which was governed by brotherhood between leaderships. Prince Salman, in a meeting with Kuwait's Interior Minister Lt.-Gen. Sheikh Jaber Al-Khaled Al-Sabah (ret.), said the relations between Kuwait and Bahrain were solid and deep-rooted, Bahrain News Agency (BNA) reported. Prince Salman and Sheikh Jaber discussed political and security cooperation, it added. The Bahraini Prime Minister said his country was determined to continue cooperation and coordination with Kuwait to guarantee security and stability of the Kingdom. Sheikh Jaber conveyed greetings of the Kuwaiti leadership to Prince Salman. He appreciated the solid relations between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The Kuwaiti Minister is visiting Bahrain to participate in a meeting of Interior Ministers of countries neighboring Iraq.

Terror plots in Bahrain condemned

Gulf Daily News September-23-2010

Countries throughout the region last night condemned terrorism plots and sabotage in Bahrain and backed the government's crackdown on the perpetrators. Top officials also condemned acts of terror committed in Iraq and neighbouring countries that endanger lives of innocent people. They also called for the speedy formation of a new government in Iraq, following the elections in March, saying it was in the national, regional and global interest. A pledge to help Iraq combat terrorism, protect its borders and to secure its stability went out in a final communiqué at the end of the seventh meeting of Interior Ministers from Iraq and its neighbours, hosted by Bahrain. They agreed enhanced co-operation to stop Iraq being used as a haven for terrorists, to exchange intelligence on potential terror attacks, to strengthen mutual protection along its land borders, to help train its police and to monitor its security situation as it develops. Ministers also called for the closure of unofficial border crossings between Iraq and its neighbours to combat smuggling.

Bahrain declares unwavering support for Iraqi Gov't

Kuwait News Agency September-20-2010

Bahrain declared anew on Sunday its unwavering and full support for the Iraqi Government in its efforts aimed at restoring peace and security to the country and its regional and international role. The Kingdom of Bahrain respects unity, territorial sanctity, independence, Arab and Islamic identity of Iraq and asserts its backing for the Iraqi Government efforts aimed at enforcing security and stability of Iraq as well as enabling it practice its significant and positive role regionally and internationally, said the Minister of Interior Sheikh Rashed Bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa. Sheikh Rashed, who made the remarks during a meeting with delegations taking part in

the seventh preparatory meeting of the interior ministers of states neighboring Iraq, scheduled here on Wednesday, expressed hope that the meeting would be crowned with outcomes that might serve the consolidation of the security and stability so that Iraq might restore its effective role in the region. Meetings at this level have contributed to improving the security conditions in Iraq, through the continuous cooperation among the neighboring countries, Sheikh Rashed added. The meeting on Wednesday is due to group the interior ministers of Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Iran, Turkey, representatives of the United Nations, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Conference and the Arab Council of Interior Ministers.

Top UN honour for Bahraini Prime Minister

Gulf Daily News September-19-2010

His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa today receives a top UN honour for his pioneering role in furthering the global goal of sustainable growth. He also becomes the first leader in the Middle East to win the honour. The Millennium Development Goals Award recognises HRH the Premier's commitment to the goals and his contributions to turning them into a reality, according to the award's citation. The award is also a recognition of the outstanding achievements of Bahrain's government in this regard. The glittering ceremony at Waldorf Astoria Hotel, New York, will be attended by UN chief Ban Ki-moon and prominent leaders from 192 countries, who will attend a UN anti-poverty summit tomorrow. HRH the Premier will address the ceremony in a televised speech, outlining Bahrain's keenness to work with all countries for the betterment of millions of people around the world.

Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa will receive the award on HRH the Premier's behalf.

Social Front

United we stand, says Bahraini candidate

Gulf Daily News September-24-2010

An independent candidate last night entered the municipal council race in a bid to bridge the divide between Bahrain's Shia and Sunni communities. First-timer Yousif Al Ansari is running under the slogan: "No Shia, No Sunni... My loyalty is Bahraini." He is one of the five candidates who submitted their nomination papers in Manama last night, all of whom were independents. "I am entering the elections with this slogan because I believe this is a very important topic in Bahrain at the moment," said Mr Al Ansari. "We need to forget what sects we belong to and think with a unified Bahraini mind so that the country can move forward." A confident Mr Al Ansari predicted he would secure at least 50 per cent of the votes in Manama's Constituency five - which includes Juffair, Mina Salman and Nabih Saleh - before getting elected in a run-off. "I am confident that I will gain 50pc of the votes and I expect to win the second round because I believe many people share my thought to create a united Bahrain," he told the GDN as he registered his candidacy at the Khawla Secondary School for Girls. Meanwhile, former Gulf Air human resources manager Ebrahim Shareef said the country's biggest problem was a lack of communication between the government and the people. "My experience in the human resources

department has taught me how to connect the dots between the people and the people in charge," he said.

Bahrain won't be "spring board" for attacks against others: King Hamad

Gulf Daily News September-20-2010

His Majesty King Hamad yesterday vowed that Bahrain would never be the launchpad for terrorist plotters. He pledged to protect its security and stability and foil all attempts to endanger its unity or harm brotherly and friendly countries. "Bahrain repeats that it will never accept to be the starting point for any subversive acts which may cause harm, whether to the kingdom itself, or to brothers and friends," he said. "Bahrain's security is but an integral part of the regional security and stability," His Majesty said as he chaired the weekly Cabinet meeting at Sakhir Palace, in the presence of His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa. He stressed the strong bond between the leadership and people in confronting the scourge of terror. "Our will is in total accord with the popular will to combat terrorism, for Bahrain to be secure, stable, aspiring to achieve more progress and prosperity," he said. "The unwavering support for the security measures we have undertaken against the terrorists was visible to the entire world," he said, citing popular festivals being organised across Bahrain to pledge allegiance. "The cables and statements we have received from national and popular parties extended to us citizens' unflinching support, allegiance and mobilisation for the sake of Bahrain's security and stability," His Majesty said. "This popular, regional and international support which was witnessed by everyone, and which we appreciate a lot, has but consolidated Bahrain's solid economic status - one of the terrorists' targets," he said.

Bahraini Govt will not tolerate violence - official warns

Kuwait News Agency September-19-2010

The democratic process in the kingdom will press ahead and the authorities will not allow any bids to undermine it or target peoples' security and properties, a senior official said on Saturday. Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs Sheikh Khaled Bin Ali Al-Khalifa said in a statement, broadcast by Bahrain Television, "What I certainly know, is that there will not be back-down, and there is emphasis on reforms at the economic, political, social and religious levels." Authorities' usage of force to maintain law and order constitutes fulfillment of their duties and assumption of the legal and legitimate responsibilities, he said, warning that the government would not allow bids to jeopardize the democracy and target the security and properties of the people.

His remarks came as an assertion that the government would not tolerate violent disturbances or bids against the democratization process, launched in the early 2000s following disturbances. They also came up in the run-up for the parliamentary elections, scheduled on October 23. Sheikh Khaled denounced offensive rhetoric "that indicated that the handling of the security implicitly targeted some political societies .. Such a linkage is not sound and serves a political bazaar designed to make some petty gains." He indicated that recently-nabbed elements accused of sabotage plots were referred to the legal authorities for prosecution. The minister affirmed that the security situation was under control, that the elections would be held as scheduled, and

rejected any bids to "politicize the violence," affirming the Bahrainis right to express their views in a peaceful and non-violent manner.

Political Front

28 candidates join poll fray in Bahrain' municipal elections

Gulf Daily News September-24-2010

Twenty-eight new candidates, including one woman, came forward last night to contest next month's municipal council elections. This makes 160 candidates so far, three of them women, with tonight the deadline for nominees to file their papers. Eight each were accepted last night in the Central and Muharraq Governorates, five each in the Capital (Manama) and Northern Governorates and two in the Southern Governorate. Muharraq has the highest number of candidates so far, at 48. Today is the last chance to register for municipal council elections, with a full list of candidates due to be published on the official website www.vote.bh tomorrow.

Bahrain Political society files case over ban

Khaleej Times September-22-2010

A political society in Bahrain has filed a case against the Information Affairs Authority for banning publication of its newsletter. A lawyer from the National Action Democratic Society (Waad), Ali Hafidh, filed on Sunday a case against the president of the authority and the General Director of Publication and Press. Waad and another political society, Al Wefaq, were informed by the Information Authority on Sunday that their newsletters had been banned. The action came less than a month after officials blocked the website of Al Wefaq. "The licences granted to these political societies have been suspended and withdrawn for flouting rules and regulations," Publication and Press Director-General Dr Abdulla Abdurrahman Yateem said in a statement on Sunday.

The associations failed to abide by the terms stipulated in the licences and flouted the rules and regulations. "We have monitored the recent editions and noticed the irregularities whether in the format or content of the newsletters," Dr Yateem said. "Most of the articles published in these newsletters are deceptive as they delude the public opinion and defame certain names and personalities," he added. The sanctioned newsletters, he pointed out, have also published a lot of controversial articles aimed to create social chasms, fuel sectarianism and provoke people, slipping in outrageous outright instigation which is detrimental to the public interests in the kingdom.

Two women register for Bahrain's civic polls

Khaleej Times September-22-2010

Eighty-three candidates, including two women, filed their papers for Bahrain's municipal election on Monday, the first day of a five-day registration period. Fatima Salman and Subah Al Dossary will be contesting for separate constituencies in the same district of Muharraq. No other woman has so far registered in the rest of four governorates. In the last municipal election in 2006, five women, out of a total 171 candidates, took part in the race. However, none of them

won. Salman and Subah had also contest the last elections. Fatima Salman is optimistic that this time women would be able to turn the corner. Talking to media she said she did not agree with the perception that because of their soft nature women could not cope with tough municipal responsibilities. She said a large number of Bahraini women were working in various fields and many of them have duties tougher than municipal councillors' responsibilities. Fatima defended her decision to contest the municipal election saying by their very nature women can play a big role in beautifying their surroundings, so female municipal councillors could contribute more than men in developing roads, gardens and the environment.

Economy Front

Bahrain firm signs key India agriculture deal

Gulf Daily News September-23-2010

A leading Bahraini firm has signed a major partnership agreement with an Indian investor, Dana Fresh, to cultivate and reclaim another 1,000 hectares of arable land in India. Nader and Ibrahim Sons of Hassan Group sealed the deal in the Indian city of Pune yesterday. This represents the second phase of a \$ 100 million project which includes cultivation of 4,000 hectares of arable land to be executed over a four-year period. The company is the first Gulf and Arab investor to enter the Indian agricultural and food industry market. This reflects the strong economic relations bonding Bahrain and India and the efforts exerted by His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa and continuous follow-up by Industry and Commerce Minister Dr Hassan Fakhro to meet the kingdom's food requirements.

The agreement is part of a bigger deal which Nader and Ibrahim Sons of Hassan Group has signed with its Indian commercial partner Shanjaha Export, group executive president Ibrahim Al Ameer said. Mr Al Ameer added that an agreement worth \$ 25m was signed last year, bringing the total investment to \$ 50m so far. According to the feasibility study of the project, the existing area of agricultural land, which is 2,000 hectares, is expected to produce about 250,000 tonnes of different crops, to be doubled in the final phase when the area reaches 4,000 hectares. Cultivation will focus on fruits (banana) and rice and sugarcane to extract natural sugar, all of them essential food items in the Bahraini market.

Forum seeks to promote investments in Bahrain

Gulf Daily News September-20-2010

A key forum seeking to promote investment opportunities in Bahrain will open later this month. 'Invest in Bahrain 2010' will be held under the patronage of Industry and Commerce Minister Dr Hassan Fakhro at the Bahrain Exhibition and Convention Centre on September 29. It will highlight economic activities that promote the government's intentions to position the kingdom as a distinct investment hub in the region, in addition to showcasing facilities available to investors, especially in the industrial sector. The event is being held for the sixth time, since its inception in 2003. The other editions were held successively in 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006 as well as in 2009. The Economic Development Board, Central Bank of Bahrain, Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Bahrain Development Bank are also playing a pivotal role in organising the forum. The ministry is throwing its weight behind this year's forum by introducing

a variety of investment opportunities in engineering, construction, aluminium downstream, fibreglass, food and e-commerce. The forum will also host a delegation of women and foreign businessmen, who expressed their desire to attend the event in order to participate in the deliberations on the investment climate in the kingdom and to discuss opportunities for co-operation with their counterparts in Bahrain and the region.

KUWAIT

International Front

Kuwait hails outcome of UN probe into Freedom Flotilla attack

Kuwait News Agency September-24-2010

The report produced by the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) fact-finding mission on the Israeli raid against the Gaza-bound aid flotilla, constitutes a new condemnation of Israel's grave violations of the human rights, a senior Kuwaiti diplomat said here on Thursday. "The report is a new document verifying the Israeli serious violations of the international humanitarian law," Kuwait Permanent Delegate to the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) Dhrar Abdulrazeq Al-Rezouqi told KUNA. "The HRC will probe on September 27 the report which documents the barbaric act perpetrated by the Israeli navy and nullifies the related Israeli claims," he noted. "The report brings back to the limelight the inhuman embargo imposed by Israel on Gaza Strip. The UN condemns the embargo as an illegitimate act of collective punishment against defenseless civilians, which can never be justified under any conditions," the Ambassador affirmed.

The UN probe reached a conclusion that Israel's commandoes broke the international laws during the May 31 raid on aid flotilla which left nine human right activists dead and dozens of others injured. The bloody raid showed an unjustifiable and "disproportionate" use of force and a "level of brutality" which is unacceptable under article 51 of the UN Charter. There is clear evidence for prosecuting Israel for "wilful killing," according to the report unveiled by the HRC last night. The HRC adopted in its June 2, 2010, meeting a resolution forming an international fact-finding mission (like the Goldstone Commission), including lawyers and international law and human rights experts, to probe the attack. The findings of the mission which visited Gaza Strip and contacted Israel, Turkey, Greece, and the flotilla sponsors, are being debated by the HRC during its current three-week session here.

IAEA hails Kuwait's contribution, pledges support to its nuclear program

Kuwait News Agency September-24-2010

The Chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Yukiya Amano praised on Thursday cooperation and Kuwait's contribution to the agency, including its role in minimizing the spread of nuclear weapons, pledging his support for Kuwait's peaceful nuclear program. Amano made his remarks in a joint statement to KUNA and Kuwait State television after meeting with a high-profile delegation from Kuwait. The delegation participated in the 54th IAEA board ordinary session currently held in Vienna with the aim of boosting bilateral cooperation between the IAEA and the State of Kuwait.

During the meeting, Amano said he highlighted a number of issues with the delegation, particularly bolstering cooperation between the two sides and Kuwait's decision to establish a nuclear power plant through the agency. IAEA Chief hailed Kuwait's achievements and giant steps toward its program, despite the program being fairly new, pledging the agency's support at same time to Kuwait through providing the necessary training cadets and technical assistant by the agency. Earlier, the Kuwaiti delegation which is led by Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) Director Nagui Al-Mutairi said that the first meeting was held with the energy experts in the field of the nuclear security in order to discuss the sophisticated scientific and technological methods used for maintaining the safety and security of radioactive materials.

Kuwait, Malta cancel visa requirements for govt officials

Kuwait News Agency September-24-2010

Kuwait and Malta on Thursday signed an agreement to remove visa requirements for their respective diplomats and government officials. The agreement was signed at the Kuwait Mission to the UN by Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and his Maltese counterpart Hon. Dr. Tonio Borg. In a statement to KUNA following the signing ceremony, Borg said "Today we signed an agreement about the removal of visas for diplomats and official passport holders of both countries." Borg expressed hope that this agreement "will lead also to a further elimination of visa requirements and a better visa facilitation between the two countries. But this is a first step which goes to show that our relationship with Kuwait is not static but dynamic." He said this is one of a series of agreements which we have signed this year during the visit of "our Prime Minister" to Kuwait, covering health, culture, education and bilateral consultations between the foreign ministries of both countries.

Kuwait says meeting of Iraq's neighbors achieved objectives

Kuwait News Agency September-23-2010

Kuwait Interior Minister Lt.-Gen. Sheikh Jaber Khaled Al-Sabah (ret.) said Wednesday meeting of Interior Ministers of countries neighboring Iraq has met its objectives set by the top security officials. "Discussions took place in a constructive atmosphere and resulted in an agreement to implementing all agenda items in a way guaranteeing security for all regional countries in general and stability in Iraq in specific," Sheikh Jaber said in a statement to KUNA following the meeting. The "constructive" cooperation between Iraq's neighbors has largely contributed to effective fight against terrorism, exchange of expertise to fight organized crime, drug trafficking and cross-border smuggling, he said. Sheikh Jaber appreciated Bahrain's efforts during the meeting. Iraqi Interior Minister Jawad Al-Bolani said the meeting was held in a "very important time for Iraq. "The meeting took place following the Iraqi elections on one side, and within the process of forming the new government (in Baghdad) on the other," Al-Bolani said in press remarks. He said Iraq sought to strengthen security cooperation and coordination with its neighbors "because the positive and negative security impacts will affect all countries in the region." Al-Bolani said NATO would be training border guards and police forces that protect oil facilities.

Kuwait, Russia sign memo for nuclear cooperation

Kuwait News Agency September-21-2010

Kuwait and Russia signed here on Monday a memorandum for nuclear cooperation for peaceful purposes. The deal was signed by the Secretary of the Kuwait National Nuclear Energy Committee (KNNEC) Ahmad Beshara and the head of Rosatom Sergei Kiriyenko, with attendance of officials from the two states. Dr. Beshara said in a statement to KUNA following the signing ceremony that the significant memo would be valid for five years, to be renewed in accordance to a request by one of the two sides. The memo, signed on sidelines of the annual general conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, is aimed at boosting the cooperation between Kuwait and Russia in the nuclear sector, Beshara said, adding that it stipulated training cadres, exploration for metals, establishing a network of nuclear reactors in Kuwait and building a relevant infrastructure. He added that Kuwait officials would hold a series of meetings with the Russian officials, in the coming month, to try work out an accord, indicating that Kuwait would receive from the Russians their proposed broad-lines of such an aspired agreement ahead of official talks. For his part, Kiriyenko praised the signing of the memo asserting Moscow's readiness to help Kuwait develop a program for nuclear energy.

UN chief praises Kuwait

Kuwait Times September-21-2010

Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-Moon has commended, during a meeting with the representative of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the support of Kuwait for the organization's activities, particularly in the maintenance of international peace and security. Speaking to KUNA and Kuwait Television following the meeting late last night, Kuwait's permanent representative to the UN Ambassador Mansour Ayyad Al-Otaibi said that the Secretary-General thanked His Highness the Prime Minister for his participation in the deliberations of the 65th UN General Assembly which shows Kuwait's keenness to support the United Nations activities in various fields, especially in the maintenance of international peace and security. He also commended in particular Kuwait's hosting of the Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and the Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), wishing Kuwait would continue its support of the activities of the United Nations. Ban also praised during the meeting the contribution of the State of Kuwait and its voluntary donation of relief supplies for Pakistan and noted that the State of Kuwait has always been "proactive" in providing humanitarian assistance to countries exposed to natural disasters. Al-Otaibi said that the meeting touched as well on a number of issues that affect the security and stability in the region, including Iraq and the situation in the Middle East and Lebanon. For Iraq, the Secretary-General asserted that the United Nations will continue to urge Iraq to complete the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions and assures its full commitment to Security Council resolution 833.

Social Front

Kuwaiti Govt totally bans 'sectarian' rallies

Kuwait Times September-20-2010

The Ministry of Interior yesterday slapped a total ban on "sectarian" gatherings as the government warned of an iron fist policy against those trying to drag the country into a sectarian Shiite-Sunni rift, as it prepared to spell out its actions today. Acting premier and defense minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah told editors of local dailies that the government will firmly confront those who try to drag the country into a sectarian rift. He said the government banned all public gatherings that incite sectarianism after "we saw that the knife has cut too deep to the bone and that the danger has become real and imminent". Sheikh Jaber warned that those who defy the government orders will be in fact defying the interests of the Kuwaiti people, adding that all the measures the government will take are to safeguard the security and stability of the country.

At the same time, head of the interior ministry legal department Brigadier Asaad Al-Ruwayyeh told a press conference that the public gatherings law stipulates that no public gathering, procession or demonstration can be held without prior authorization from the ministry. Ruwayyeh explained that violators of the law could face a jail term of up to two years and a fine. Penalties apply to organizers and participants as well, he said. The main aim of the ban is to curb growing sectarian tensions in the country and confronting rifts, he told the press conference. The government actions came as several Sunni Islamic groups said they will hold public gatherings throughout the week in support of Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) wife Aisha who was disparaged by Shiite fugitive Yasser Al-Habeeb from London. But following a meeting of 11 Islamist MPs and their supporters, it was decided to call off the public gatherings to give the government enough time to take actions against Habeeb including the withdrawal of his Kuwaiti citizenship.

Kuwaiti acting PM warns against attempts to sow discord

Kuwait Times September-20-2010

Kuwait will resolutely confront anyone who makes an attempt to cause friction in society, Acting Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah told editors-in-chief of local newspapers in a meeting held at Seif Palace yesterday. Calling it a "brotherly meeting", he reiterated that the pivotal aspect of the event is to "maintain the fabric of our national unity". In his opening remarks to the editors-in-chief, he stressed that certain people are trying to take advantage of the current turmoil for personal benefit. "Some people are trying to instill friction in society," he said, appealing to the press and the role it plays in influencing public opinion. "The press is capable of escalating events or scaling them down," he said.

Taking the point further, Sheikh Jaber emphasized that the power of the press should be used to thwart the current turmoil in escalating to a dangerous level. Emphasizing that the current situation is "new to Kuwait", he said that "few people are looking at segregation of race, religion and tribe". "In the past, Kuwait has never known this type of segregation and we must exert all efforts to prevent this from becoming the norm," he said. Sheikh Jaber said what Kuwait is

undergoing "is not a simple matter". "Society in Kuwait is very fragile now," he remarked. He added that the responsibility now lies with the government and the authorities in charge together with the help of the press to try and support "this fragile society". "The government is playing its role in doing this. Now the press needs to play its role in strengthening the society. It is due time that we now join forces to protect the Kuwaiti public," he said, elaborating that the pillar of this call is "protecting social unity".

Economic Front

UK seeks to boost economic, commercial ties with Kuwait: Sassoon

Kuwait News Agency September-24-2010

UK Commercial Secretary to HM Treasury Lord James Sassoon said Thursday his current visit to the State of Kuwait aimed to boost the bilateral economic and commercial ties. The visit aims mainly to increase the trade exchanges in the framework of the initiative adopted by the new UK government in May and reassure the Kuwaiti investors from the private and public sectors about the business atmosphere in the UK, Lord Sassoon told reporters here. He highly appreciated the role of Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) in promoting investment in the United Kingdom through its office in London. He made the remarks after meeting Kuwait's Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah with KIA's Managing Director Bader Al-Sa'doun and representatives of the private sector attending.

The meeting focused on the ways to promote the Kuwaiti investments in the UK, Lord Sassoon said, noting that the new UK government seeks to lure investments from two regions of the world; one of them is the Arabian Gulf region. The current government of the UK is battling against the country's record high budget deficit; it has worked out a plan to curb the deficit in the coming few years through measure to back up the private sector and attract foreign investment. The measures include cutting down the taxes on foreign investors from 28 to 24 percent, Lord Sassoon pointed out.

Kuwait: Tensions mount over project funding

Zawya September-23-2010

Tensions seem set to mount once again between the cabinet and parliament after the cabinet failed to provide the parliamentary finance committee with the requested documentation on how it plans to fund the projects contained in the national development plan. It had been agreed previously that the cabinet would provide the required explanation and breakdown of its funding plans prior to the end of Ramadan, which finished almost a fortnight ago. Earlier this week, MP Dr Yousef Al-Zalzalah, the head of the parliamentary finance committee, accused the cabinet of "ignoring the projects funding issue," although finance minister Mustafa Al-Shamali has asserted that a detailed study on the issue will be ready within approximately ten days. "The study will contain a clear and definitive vision for the funding process, which has been agreed upon by all the specialists," said the minister, adding that work on the development projects is proceeding smoothly.

Al-Shamali also rejected accusations that he had failed to cooperate with the parliamentary finance committee after he turned down an invitation to attend their meeting due to be held later today, reported Al-Qabas. He said that these accusations had been leveled at him even before he received the invitation and emphasized the cabinet's commitment to attending the committee's future meetings. Al-Zalzal, however, expressed disappointment at "the government's inconsistency regarding the development projects funding process," and warned that MPs would not hesitate to hold the cabinet accountable over any failure to execute the planned projects.

Kuwait to host conference on investment in Syria

Kuwait News Agency September-21-2010

Director General of Syria Investment Agency Dr. Ahmad Abdulaziz said that Kuwait will host a conference on investment in Syria on October 21 and 22. The conference will be organized by the agency in cooperation with the council of Syrian businessmen in Kuwait on the sidelines of the meetings of the higher Syrian-Kuwaiti committee. Abdulaziz said, at a meeting held at the agency to prepare for the conference, that the agency will present at the conference 165 investment opportunities in different Syrian governorates and industrial areas. In addition, it will present successful experiences of Kuwaiti investors in Syria, he said. Kuwaiti investments in Syria are in different fields including economy, tourism, infrastructure, banking, health, agriculture, transport, and oil services, he added. There are 35 Kuwaiti projects in Syria, with a total value of SYP 37.192 billion, he said. He noted that the agency will organize a campaign on available investment opportunities and on the good investment environment in Syria to encourage Kuwaitis and Syrian investors in Kuwait to invest in Syria. Syria witnessed economic and legislative reforms, pointed out.

QATAR

International Front

Qatar Emir deplores 'war on terror'

Gulf Times September-24-2010

The West's so-called war on terror has cast a shadow over the last decade, deepening violent conflict and unfairly depicting Islam, HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani told the UN yesterday. "This first decade of the 21st century has been blindly attacked by what has come to be known as the war on terrorism," the Emir said in remarks at the annual UN General Assembly meeting. "What we have seen and suffered from in the first decade of this century ... plunged us into a kind of war with no limits, nor end, nor logic nor legal or moral conditions. Some of this is still happening," he said. The Emir blamed the campaigns of the last decade for the death, displacement and impoverishment of millions of people. "We disagree with the attribution of this so-called terrorism to the Islamic religion, because this - in addition to being incorrect - is a historical injustice that is refuted by evidence from recent history," he said. The Qatari leader noted the Obama administration, which has sought to repair relations with the Middle East and Muslim world, does not use the term but said "we are still looking for clearer and bolder initiatives." The phenomenon of terrorism should not be treated by waging wars, as this method has not achieved security, peace or prosperity, the Emir said.

“On the contrary, it (war on terrorism) has spread destruction everywhere, deprived millions of people from their livelihoods, spread fear, and caused the killing and displacement of millions as well as economic and financial crises that have shaken the stability of the world and undermined the efforts made in dialogue among cultures”, the Emir said addressing the opening session of the 65th UN General Assembly session. The session was attended by HH Sheikha Mozah Nasser al-Misnad, HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani, and several members of the official delegation accompanying the Emir. “The beginning of a new century has slipped into a predicament that encumbered it and caused distortions and damages, some if not all of which could have been avoided,” he said. “We recognise the existence of certain practices that certainly fall within the purview of terrorism, but in this regard we emphasise two issues,” the Emir said.

Clinton urges Qatar to give funds to Palestinians

Agence France-Presse September-22-2010

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Tuesday urged the Emir of Qatar to contribute more funds to the Palestinian Authority, her spokesman said. “She did encourage Qatar to make a contribution and to encourage others to do as well,” when she met with Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani in New York, Clinton’s spokesman Philip Crowley told reporters. When asked if Arab states should do more to aid the Palestinian Authority, Crowley pointed out the PA still needs support, even if it is less than before because it has made progress in building government institutions. “They still have significant needs. They require outside support,” he said without specifying where it should come from. “They are now able to provide for more than half of their own support but they definitely need international support. The secretary has been making that case as she is having her discussions this week and in prior conversations that she had.” Such support, he recalled, is needed to build the institutions for a future Palestinian state, which the Palestinians hope to achieve in negotiations with Israel. During her meetings on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, he said, Clinton discussed with Palestinian prime minister Salam Fayyad on Monday progress made in building those institutions.

Qatar Emir calls for new partnership to achieve Millennium goals

Gulf Times September-21-2010

HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani yesterday called for building a new partnership between developing and developed countries for the full realisation of the Millennium Development Goals. Addressing the Summit on the Millennium Development Goals, being held on the sidelines of the 65th session of the UN General Assembly, HH the Emir said Qatar had realised most of the Millennium objectives and was on its way to fulfilling all of them before the year 2015. The summit was attended by HH Sheikha Mozah Nasser al-Misnad as well as by HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani and members of the official delegation accompanying the Emir. The Emir noted that the world economic crisis had negatively impacted the international community’s efforts to realise the Millennium goals in poor countries. “Development assistance to poor countries dropped while direct foreign investments shrank, a matter that had negative ramifications on the development programmes and policies, especially in the fields of education, health and efforts to fight poverty

and hunger.” The Emir pointed out that the realisation of the Millennium objectives required both parties of the partnership to carry out their responsibilities.

“Developing countries are required to adopt comprehensive national strategies and to promote good governance, fight corruption and encourage economic development and create an environment that attracts direct foreign investments,” he said. “These countries should work towards the involvement of civil society organisations and the private sector in such programmes. They are also required to muster their financial resources and create a clear, government accountability system and increase the awareness of the importance of realising the Millennium objectives,” he added. “In return, the developed countries should confront the world financial crisis and work towards realising the Millennium objectives through canvassing international resources and taking more comprehensive reforms to secure stability of the international financial system and reduce trade imbalances, protect the credibility of their pledges by increasing their official development assistance and committing to time tables of their commitments to developing countries.” Qatar, he said, had realised most of the Millennium objectives and was on its way to fulfilling all of them before the year 2015.

Darfur talks to resume in Doha on Sept 29

The Peninsula September-21-2010

The Sudanese government and Darfur’s rebel Liberty and Justice Movement have agreed to resume Qatari-brokered peace talks next week, Qatar and an international envoy said yesterday. “The government and the Liberty and Justice Movement have agreed on resuming negotiations on September 29,” read a joint statement by Qatar’s State Minister for Foreign Affairs H E Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud and the United Nations and African Union mediator Djibril Bassole.

Doha meet looks to raise Arab education standards

The Peninsula September-21-2010

Education ministers and delegates from 18 Arab states will attend a two-day Ministerial Colloquium on quality education beginning here today. The meeting will discuss steps to improve quality of education in the Arab region. The states taking part in the Ministerial Colloquium include Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Oman, the Palestinian National Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Yemen. Representatives of three specialist organisations – Unesco, the Islamic Scientific Educational and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO), and the League of Arab States will attend the event. The high-profile meeting would be addressed by leading educational experts from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank, as well as Poland and Mexico — two countries which have made strides in improving quality of education in recent years. “For several years, Qatar has been taking part in international assessment mechanisms. I look forward to the creation of such a framework for the Arab world. I hope this will be one of the outcomes of this meeting, and that we are at the start of a process of historic significance for our region,” said H E Saad bin Ibrahim Al Mahmoud, Minister of Education and Higher Education.

“Qatar Foundation is proud to be at the forefront of a pan-Arab effort to bring education across our region at par with the highest standards in the world. There is abundant evidence that educational attainment is the main differentiator in the prospects of both individuals and nations. We owe it to our children and grandchildren to ensure that their opportunities and quality of life meet international standards,” said Dr Abdulla bin Ali Al Thani, Vice-President, Qatar Foundation, who is also the Chairman of the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE). “There are few matters of greater urgency for us than equipping rising generations for the challenges of the future,” said Dr Mohammed Al Aziz Ibn Ashour, Director General of ALECSO. “Our region has a fast-growing population and the economic infrastructure is inadequate to absorb millions of young people who will enter the labour market. We must give our young people the skills they need to compete in the current era of technological revolution and globalisation. A sustained initiative to raise educational attainment levels will also help the Arab world make major contributions to world development and civilisation.”

Qatar, US discuss legal and judicial cooperation

Qatar News Agency September-20-2010

HE Qatar's Attorney General Dr. Ali bin Fetais Al-Merri met on Sunday US Assistant Secretary for Near East Affairs Jeffrey Feltman. The two sides discussed a number of issues of common interest and legal and judicial cooperation between Qatar and the US. HE the Attorney General explained efforts being made by Qatar within framework of chairing the Third UN Session of Convention against Corruption. Also exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues. Discussions also dealt with legislative development Qatar is passing through, where HE the Attorney General gave a briefing about the new legislations which approved in the state recently. The meeting was attended by the Charge" d" Affaires of Qatar Embassy in Washington Isa Mannai, and the delegation accompanying HE the Attorney-General.

Social Front

Qatar launching arid nations food security league

Reuters September-24-2010

Qatar is launching an initiative at the United Nations on Friday to build an alliance designed to strengthen food security in arid nations, a senior Qatari official said on Thursday. “These countries are dry and we all share the same problems pretty much: lack of water, solutions for dry land agriculture, technology and science between all these nations. This is basically to facilitate partnerships,” said Fahad al-Attiya, chairman of the Qatar National Food Security Programme. The Gulf emirate, where massive energy wealth is balanced against scarce swatches of arable land, hopes the new alliance will help develop models and share expertise among countries seeking to maximize arable land and secure food supplies. Food and water have developed into top national security issues as the volatile swings in food prices over the past three years has exposed risks in the supply chain for nations unable to feed themselves from domestic sources. The newly formed Global Dry Land Alliance is to constitute about 45 to 60 nations with arid or semi-arid environments, Attiya said in an interview.

Education is key to achieve MDGs: Sheikha Mozah

The Peninsula September-23-2010

H H Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned speaking at the opening of the MDG Advocacy Group meeting yesterday said that education is the key to unlock the potential to achieve all goals of the MDG. Following is the full text of Sheikha Mozah's speech: "Excellencies, fellow advocates, ladies and gentlemen. I'm honoured to accept the challenge of being an MDG Advocate. We all know our challenge is significant. All indicators suggest that if we fail to act, we will not reach the critical targets for 2015. Mr Secretary General, I agree that progress has been made but I hope you also agree with me maintaining progress is not enough. For example, If current trends continue, the MDG of universal primary education will not be met until 2040. As an Advocate for MDG 2 in particular, this assessment concerns me greatly. My passion is education for all, regardless of gender, location or circumstance. I had started to be publicly involved in educational issues when I realised that without major reform in Qatar we would never be able to achieve political and social changes and ensure economic sustainability for our country. Our reforms in Qatar opened my eyes to the global need to focus on the role that education plays in equitable development. Through my work at Unesco and the UN Alliance of Civilisations, I have focused on education as the key element of development strategies, particularly in countries affected by war.

New school year to see many changes

The Peninsula September-18-2010

Qatar is all set to welcome the new academic year, with all the Independent schools run by the Supreme Education Council (SEC) and most of the private schools in the country scheduled to reopen tomorrow. Thousands of Qatari and expatriate students will return to their classes next week after a prolonged summer vacation that started in the second week of July. The holy month of Ramadan and the Eid Al Fitr holidays this year had fallen during the summer, making the school break longer than usual. This coincidence, which will be repeated in the next few years, delayed the beginning the new academic session, which normally starts in early September. The start of the academic session was delayed last year as well but for a different reason. An H1N1 influenza scare was prevailing in the country at that time and it was feared the disease would spread among the students when the schools reopened. The pandemic didn't strike on the expected scale and the threat has now almost disappeared. Schools are reopening this year in a much more safe and a stress-free atmosphere. Seven years have passed since Qatar launched its historic education reforms process in 2003 with the establishment of the Supreme Education Council and the launch of the first batch of independent schools.

The 2010-11 academic year has special significance as it will witness the transformation of all government schools — officially named semi-Independent schools — to Independent Schools. The seventh and perhaps the last batch of 72 semi-Independent schools will join the ranks of Independent Schools in the new academic year, taking the total number of Independent Schools to 209. The SEC describes an Independent School as "a government-funded school that is granted autonomy to carry out its educational mission and objectives while being held accountable to terms agreed to in an operating contract." "The Independent Schools were created to turn Qatar's vision of developing a world-class education system into a reality. These schools

foster the kind of creativity and critical thinking the 21st century demands by offering new models for curriculum design, teaching methods, and collaboration,” says the SEC website. The transformation would mean a lot to the hundreds of teachers and students in the remaining semi-Independent Schools who are eager to experience the new schooling system. The Independent Schools have been widely acclaimed by several international education experts and agencies for their internationally benchmarked curriculum standards and high-quality infrastructure.

The reform process had faced some setbacks in the initial stages, but the latest assessment reports by the SEC show that it has started paying off. For instance, the Qatar Comprehensive Educational Assessment that covered about 36,000 students revealed that their performance levels had improved significantly over the years. The results show many positive indicators. For instance, there is an improvement in mathematics and science, with a high percentage of students in the third level of the “Below Standards” category as compared to last year, when a high percentage of students were in the second and first levels of “Below Standards”. “This gives a clear indication of the possibility of further improvement in the coming years and a rise in the number of students who will approach standards, especially in light of the efforts undertaken by the Evaluation Institute in collaboration with schools to stress the importance of national testing for students and motivate them to perform their best in dealing with it”, the report said.

Economic Front

Qatar plans first sale of dollar sukuk

Gulf Today September-24-2010

Qatar Islamic Bank SAQ plans to sell its first dollar sukuk and will start meeting investors in the Middle East, Asia and Europe from tomorrow, according to a statement from the Gulf state’s biggest Shariah-compliant lender. “The sukuk is expected to be launched, subject to market conditions” and Credit Suisse Group AG, HSBC Holdings Plc and Qatari investment bank QInvest have been hired to manage the issuance, said the statement posted on the Qatar Exchange website today. Chief Executive Officer Salah Mohammed Jaidah said on May 19 the company may issue up to \$ 750 million of the notes that comply with the religion’s ban on interest.

Qatar Melamine plant will be the region's largest

Gulf Times September-24-2010

will put Qatar in the club of major global melamine producers, even as the 60,000-tonnes-per-year Mesaieed plant is set for opening next month. Qatar Melamine, a 60:40 joint venture between Qafco and Qatar Intermediate Industries Holding Company, will be the region’s largest. It will also be the world’s second largest melamine production line. The state-of-the-art plant has been set up at the Qafco complex within the Mesaieed Industrial City. Qafco’s high quality urea will form the feedstock for the melamine plant. Melamine, which is used in the synthesis of melamine formaldehyde and melamine urea formaldehyde, has widespread industrial and commercial applications. It finds applications in laminates, wood adhesives, surface coatings and textile treating and moulding compounds. These products are used by construction, wood processing, furniture, paper, textile, automotive and dinnerware industries. The melamine plant

would target both the local and export markets. It may also lead to the establishment of more ancillary units. A few months ago, Qafco signed a deal with Germany-based Helm AG for the export of 18,000 tonnes of melamine to Europe. The deal will help Qafco expand its market reach for melamine in Europe.

Qatar-Iran pact minutes signed

The minutes of instruments of ratification of the agreement, signed between the governments of Qatar and Iran on the avoidance of double taxation with respect to taxes on income and capital, was signed at the Foreign Ministry headquarters in Doha yesterday.

OMAN

International Front

Oman for peaceful use of nuclear energy

Oman Daily Observer September-23-2010

The Sultanate affirmed its commitment to co-operation with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and sisterly and friendly countries to use the nuclear power and technologies that have proven their efficiency and preference over other technologies in finding solutions for the issues and challenges of the sustainable development. The Sultanate, while merging gradually at the IAEA and shouldering its responsibility as an active member, hoped to benefit from the services and potentialities provided by IAEA to member countries. It called for intensifying co-operation with the IAEA and dealing constructively with it in all issues related to nuclear energy and its safe and peaceful uses. This was cited in the Sultanate's speech which was delivered by Ahmed bin Yousef al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, before the 54th General Conference of the IAEA in Vienna.

He pointed out that the four technological projects submitted by Oman to the Secretariat of the Agency, which were approved by the Governors' Council in November 2009, proves the Sultanate's serious interest in all peaceful uses of nuclear energy which serve the growth of its economy, develop its society and meet the energy and water needs. He affirmed that the Sultanate is determined to benefit from the technological co-operation with the Agency in the field of human health, agriculture, food, management of water resources and environmental protection. He added that "while the Sultanate is calling for intensifying co-operation with the Agency and dealing with it constructively on all the issues related to nuclear energy and its safe and peaceful uses, we will carry out our financial responsibilities by paying our contributions to the regular budget or the technological co-operation fund."

Oman succeeds in implementing millennium development goals

Oman Daily Observer September-22-2010

The Millennium Summit held in 2000 is the cornerstone of international co-operation when heads of states and governments adopted the Millennium Declaration in which they identified eight development goals, that, if implemented, will lead to a world with less poverty, hunger and

disease, and a world with greater access to healthcare and education. In his speech to the UN General Assembly's 65th session in respect to following up the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Secretary-General of the Foreign Ministry, pointed out that successes in some areas have put many regions on track.

Progress continues to be made in poverty reduction, putting more children in schools, controlling malaria and HIV and the provision of safe water in rural areas. However, there is a danger that many of the targets are likely to be missed in most regions. "In this time of economic crisis, combating global poverty, disease and inequality is no easy task. The negative impact of natural disasters, epidemics and civil unrest serves to make debt-ridden developing countries yet poorer still," he added. Sayyid Badr stressed the importance of this meeting in his speech to review the progress in achieving the development goals and the challenges faced by the international community during the last decade, as it is necessary to develop a plan for the coming years to ensure that these targets will not become empty idealism. He also pointed out that the Sultanate continues in achieving progress in implementing all of the Millennium Development Goals. He added that the mortality rate among children under age five fell 29 per cent since 1990, and women took over many leadership positions with the continued support and the Royal care of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.

Oman, Italy review issues of common concern

Oman Daily Observer September-22-2010

Maj Gen Salim bin Mussalam bin Ali Qatan, Assistant Inspector General of Police and Customs, received here yesterday Admiral Bruno Branciforte, Chief of Naval Staff Italy. They reviewed issues of common concern. The meeting was attended by Rear Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman, senior ROP officers, the delegation accompanying the guest and the military attaché at the Italian Embassy in Muscat.

Sultanate, Comoros review co-operation in higher education

Oman Daily Observer September-20-2010

A session of talks was held between the Ministry of Higher Education and a delegation from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Comoros Islands yesterday. The Omani side was chaired by Dr Rawya bint Saud al Busaidiya, Minister of Higher Education, while the Comoros' side was chaired by Dr Fouad Mohadji, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research. Dr Rawya highlighted the cultural, social and economic frameworks that support the constructive co-operation between the Sultanate and Comoros Islands, which affirm the integration and contact of cultural and educational relations between the two sides. She also pointed to the wide and rich potentials that can promote such co-operation between the two countries whether in the scientific research or organising scientific events, such as, conferences and seminars, as well as, activating the academic exchange between them.

On the other hand, Dr Fouad reviewed higher education in the Comoros Islands. He pointed out that there is only one governmental university established in 2003 that can serve 1,000 students every year. He also added that there is a project to enable all residents across the islands to speak Arabic within the coming five-year period and the possibility for the Sultanate to contribute in

this project. He appreciated the Sultanate's support in activating the academic co-operation between the academic institutions and academicians in the two countries. He also pointed to the possibility of enrolling a number of students in the higher education and medical programmes.

Oman, Japan review bilateral relations

Oman Daily Observer September-19-2010

Sayyid Al Mutassim al Busaidy, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, received here yesterday Rear Admiral Shinichi Tokumaru, Commander of the Training Squadron of the Japanese Naval Forces who is currently visiting the Sultanate. During the meeting, cordial conversations were exchanged and issues of common concern between the two friendly countries were discussed. The meeting also discussed means of enhancing the existing relations between the Sultanate and Japan in all fields. Sayyid Al Mutassim pointed out the role of the Governorate of Muscat in serving the society. The Japanese guest hailed the impressive development in the Sultanate, commending the role pursued by the government in the progress of the country. Rear Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) also received the visiting Japanese official. The meeting exchanged views and reviewed a number of issues of common concern that may serve the naval forces in the two friendly countries.

Economic Front

Oman's Sur industrial area spurs growth

Oman Daily Observer September-24-2010

Investors assured the importance of Sur industrial area in advancing the national economy of the Sultanate through the volume of industrial investments in the region and the implementation of investment, industrial and services projects. These projects contribute in providing various products and services required by the wilayat in particular, and Al Sharqiyah region in general as well as finding jobs for the national cadres. Investors praised the boom witnessed by some of the projects in Sur through the availability of industrial gas projects that provide investment opportunities in gas-related industries where they use the surplus production of big factories or supply of materials within the production. They all agreed that the industrial area in Sur has many privileges that contribute to the development of projects, including the symbolic rent for the investment of land and decades of long-term investment, noting that these privileges need to be promoted effectively by competent authorities in addition to the diversity of products that can be made through the area. They stressed the need to provide many important services in an integrated way.

An investor, Dr Fahd bin Ali al Fanah, owner of Al Fanah Engineering and Vice-Chairman of the Industry Committee in the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sur branch, says: "Sur industrial area has many privileges, most notably the symbolic rent in investment lands, dealing with the government on the issue of rental and the existence of contracts for long-term investment duration of more than 20 years. This is what gives the projects in the region a semblance of stability and helps it achieve success and expansion." The site of the area has helped the industrial zone to attract export-oriented gas industries, which contributed to boosting the national economy and provided job opportunities for Omani youth, in addition to activating

the economic activity through the promotion of local companies that provide services in those factories. Gas projects in the region also provide investment opportunities in light gas industries associated with the natural gas projects like using the surplus production of big factories or supply of materials within the production processes. A factory has been set up to fill liquefied carbon dioxide surplus from the production of urea and ammonia factory. This project is a good example of the opportunities for investment in complementary industries as it is necessary to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and thus protect the environment and providing necessary materials involved in a number of manufactures like soda and fire extinguishers and other products. Sur industrial area like any other economic zones in Oman is seeking to achieve a package of national targets as it seeks to contribute to attracting foreign investment in the Sultanate and resettlement of the national capital.

Oman and Brazil discuss food imports

Oman Daily Observer September-19-2010

An official session of talks was held between the Sultanate and Brazil at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry yesterday. The session covered developing co-operation between the two friendly countries. The Omani side at the session was chaired by Maqbool bin Ali Sultan, Minister of Commerce and Industry, and the Brazilian side was chaired by Miguel George, Minister of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade in Brazil. In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), Maqbool said during the session the two sides discussed the importance of developing trade relations between the two countries, especially in the field of foodstuff. He pointed out that the major imports by the Sultanate from Brazil are basic items produced by Brazil, such as wheat, coffee and rice. Maqbool added that the session also covered food processing issue and benefiting from the Brazilian experience in the field of agriculture, manufacture and canning, as Brazil enjoys a prestigious position in the field of food manufacturing.

He pointed out that the two sides discussed the huge investments of Vale Steel Company in the Wilayat of Sohar (estimated at \$ 1.5 billion) and how to encourage the Brazilian major and medium enterprises to invest in the Sultanate and set up joint ventures in the field of food. Maqbool said that the members of the delegation accompanying the chief guest, who represent many contracting companies, were briefed on the role of the contractors' working in the Sultanate in implementing major projects besides co-operation in the field of ports and airports.

He added that during the session, the two sides stressed the importance of training and co-operation in the field of SMEs, training youth and helping them in starting their commercial and industrial projects. He also pointed out that the Brazilian delegation invited Omani companies to visit the major exhibition which will be organised by the Brazilian companies in Riyadh in November in a bid to review and explore the possibilities of setting up joint industrial projects. He affirmed that while the Omani imports from Brazil achieved 1.5 per cent growth in 2009 to hit RO 55.4 million, the Omani exports to Brazil witnessed a remarkable growth and stood at RO 12 million.

YEMEN

'Friends of Yemen' meeting today

Gulf Times September-24-2010

The UK will co-chair the second Friends of Yemen Ministerial meeting today in New York together with the governments of Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The meeting will assess progress in Yemen towards reform and stability since the meeting in London in January. The Friends of Yemen process was set up in recognition that co-ordinated engagement and support is needed in order to work with the government of Yemen to effectively tackle the challenges faced by Yemen. "The UK is committed to a united Yemen, with a stable and prosperous future. We continue to support the Government of Yemen and to encourage the focussed attention of the international community," according to a British Embassy release yesterday.

"In particular, we support Yemen in its reform attempts, and offer advice and financial assistance in a number of fields, including judicial sector reform, human rights training for the police, addressing conflict issues, and empowering women." The UK is one of the largest bilateral donors to Yemen. "We focus our assistance where there is greatest need, and work closely with the government of Yemen and non-governmental organisations to ensure that our programmes are sustainable and will achieve real results for the Yemeni people." The UK's Department for International Development signed a 10-year development partnership arrangement with Yemen government in August 2007.

Yemen denies US drone attacks against Al-Qaeda

Kuwait News Agency September-23-2010

A Yemeni official on Wednesday strongly denied media reports of US drone attacks against Al-Qaeda elements in the eastern Shabwa governorate. "These reports by some foreign media are false. Security operations are executed by local troops and counterterrorism units, along with the armed forces," Shabwa Governor Ali Al-Ahmadi said in a statement posted online a government internet site. Al-Ahmadi confirmed that security forces earlier today managed to arrest 28 armed men in Al-Houta area. The clashes resulted in killing four Al-Qaeda suspects and the injury of others. Since last Saturday, security forces have been clamping down on Al-Qaeda insurgents

Yemen sacks national chess team for Israel game

Reuters September-22-2010

Yemen's sports minister has dismissed the Yemeni national chess team for playing against Israel in an international tournament, a government website said late on Tuesday. The team was participating in the World Chess Olympics in Belarus when it played their Israeli opponents, the official September 26 Net website said. Yemen is a member of the World Chess Federation, ranking 89th in a list of 154 countries. Israel is ranked 5th. Some Arab sports teams have cancelled participation in international championships in the past because of Israel's participation.

Obama stresses support for 'unified' Yemen

The Peninsula September-21-2010

US President Barack Obama's top counter-terrorism advisor John Brennan visited Yemen Monday and discussed cooperation in the fight against Al Qaeda, the White House said. Brennan met President Ali Abdullah Saleh and delivered a letter from Obama expressing US support for a "unified, stable, democratic and prosperous Yemen," National Security Council spokesman Mike Hammer said in a statement. "President Saleh and Mr Brennan discussed cooperation against the continuing threat of Al Qaeda, and Mr Brennan conveyed the United States' condolences to the Yemeni people for the loss of Yemeni security officers and citizens killed in recent Al Qaeda attacks," Hammer said. The United States has become increasingly concerned about the threat posed by extremism in Yemen, the ancestral homeland of Osama bin Laden, including the activities of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

Late last year, the group was suspected of training and arming a young Nigerian man who allegedly tried to blow up an airliner on Christmas Day as it came in to land in Detroit. In his letter, Obama told Saleh that Washington was committed to helping Yemen achieve a future that builds on the "extraordinary talents" of its people and the "richness of its history." "Yemen possesses a deeply rooted culture, and is widely admired around the world for its ancient traditions, beautiful countryside, and hospitable people," Obama wrote. Hammer said Brennan also discussed US economic and humanitarian support for Yemen, which increased to over \$ 110m in the last year. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has claimed a series of recent attacks on security forces in Yemen, a US-based group that monitors Islamist websites reported.

Economic Front**Yemen expects WTO accession deal this year**

Reuters September-22-2010

Yemen hopes to conclude its 11-year-old bid to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) this year, enabling the Arab state to accede in 2011, a senior Yemeni trade official said on Tuesday. Membership of the body that umpires world trade would boost its economy and provide access to technical assistance from the WTO and its 153 members, said Farouk Kassem, director-general for marketing and trade in the ministry of agriculture. "For Yemen there was big progress," he told Reuters after a meeting of a working party on accession. Asked when the talks would be completed, he said: "By the end of the year, hopefully." As a least developed country (LDC), Yemen can potentially benefit from a fast-track accession process.