

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

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**8<sup>th</sup> May- 14<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

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

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## SUMMARY

Top leaders of member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council started their scheduled 12th consultative summit meeting here on Tuesday under chairmanship of King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. At start of the meeting, attended by His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Saudi monarch welcomed the attending leaders "in their second home the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," and wished them success in their deliberations, held annually without a previously prepared agenda. The 12th GCC consultative summit in Riyadh Wednesday, led by King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, will look at political, economic and security issues, with Palestinian-Israeli talks, Iraq's elections and Iran's nuclear plans prominent among them. King Abdullah received the Secretary General of the GCC, Abdul Rahman Al-Attiyah, Sunday ahead of the gathering, which although it has no set agenda will seek to achieve greater cohesion and cooperation between GCC states in a variety of areas. A Gulf official said that particular focus would be given to the Mideast peace process following the renewal of indirect negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis and the efforts of the US administration to push the process forward. Saudi Arabia renewed its call on Thursday to free the Middle East from all weapons of mass destruction. "I reiterate the Arab stand to make the entire Middle East, including the Gulf region, free from all kinds of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) without exception," said Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal, who is leading a Saudi delegation at the two-day China-Arab Cooperation Forum in Tianjin, China. Prince Saud reaffirmed the support of Saudi Arabia in solving the Iranian nuclear issue peacefully and guaranteeing the rights of all countries in the region to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The prince also called on Iran to make its nuclear programs transparent. "The Arab countries and China have a shared vision with regard to the role of the UN in achieving a balanced and fair representation for the countries of the south," the prince added. The secretaries-general of GCC Shura, National Representatives and Umma Councils on Friday decided at the end of their 14th meeting here to hold their 15th meeting in the UAE. The UAE Federal National Council (FNC) Secretary-General, Mohammed Salim Al Mazrouie, who headed the UAE delegation at the meeting, invited the GCC secretaries-general to hold their upcoming meeting in the UAE. The secretaries-general agreed in their meeting which was held at the Saudi Shura Council in Makkah that the coming theme of the meeting would be "Sessions Affairs and their Roles in Supporting the Council's Procedures". His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, said on Wednesday the Gulf Cooperation Council was one of the few regional blocs that could bring together countries with strong bonds of geography, history, language, faith and tradition. He was speaking at an informal meeting with the Press at the Arab Media Forum 2010, which opened in his presence at the Palm Atlantis in Dubai. Shaikh Mohammed said the GCC consultative summit which he attended yesterday was 'necessary' for the member countries to discuss the latest developments. He described the global financial crisis as an upheaval that led to recession in many economies. "In the UAE, the crisis is more of a challenge that requires us to take pause to rearrange our priorities as we move on," he said. "The UAE and rest of the GCC countries enjoy very strong infrastructure, which makes a solid platform for new and creative economic

thinking.” Kuwait reiterated Tuesday evening the right of all countries party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to possess and develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, with no distinctions. Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Isa’ee, Chairman of the Majlis Ash’shura, in a speech before an OIC extra-ordinary meeting which concluded here recently, said that Israel’s intransigence and its attempts to ‘liquidate’ the Palestinian issue, coupled with its violation of all related international charters, Israel’s continuous blockade of Gaza, confiscation of Palestinian territories and aggression against Islamic and Christian holy places – all make it necessary to react with firmness and prompts the Islamic states and peoples to confront the irresponsible Israeli practices. Al Isa’ee added that the Israeli intransigence also risks aborting the whole peace process. Arab and Islamic countries have to stand against the Israeli practices and work with the international community to compel Israel to abide by international charters. Kuwait reiterated its call for Israel to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to subject its nuclear facilities to inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This came in an interjection by member of the Kuwaiti delegation participating in the 2010 Review Conference of Parties to the NPT Review Conference, First Secretary Falah Al-Hajraf. The discussion was in the second committee, dealing with regional affairs including the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. The Kuwaiti diplomat called on the international community to apply pressure on Israel to comply with UK and IAEA resolutions and to make the Middle East a region free of nuclear weapons. Al-Hajraf also called on nations not to provide nuclear know-how and technology to Israel, nor cooperate with it in this field. "Kuwait believes that the possession of nuclear arms does not achieve security for any of the states. In fact, nuclear proliferation raises tension and conflict among people," he said, adding that it would spark a "terrifying" nuclear arms race, especially in the Middle East which still faced challenges threatening its security and stability. Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed al Khalifa, Bahrain’s Minister of Culture and Information, received a written message from His Highness Sayyid Haitham bin Tareq al Said, Minister of Heritage and Culture and a similar message from Dr Rajha bint Abdulameer bin Ali, Minister of Tourism, dealing with fostering co-operation between the two brotherly countries. The messages were delivered by Abdulla bin Sulaiman al Mari, the Sultanate’s Ambassador accredited to the kingdom of Bahrain when received by Shaikha Mai here yesterday. The meeting touched on means and ways of developing bilateral relations as well as subjects of common interest. Qatar-based Islamic scholar Sheikh Yousuf al-Qaradawi yesterday urged those European countries which are considering outlawing the full veil (niqab) to review their plans, saying that a wider ban on niqab might prompt clerics to campaign for imposing a “modest dress code” on foreigners living in Muslim countries. In his Friday sermon, Sheikh Qaradawi said the recent outlawing of the face-covering veil in public by Belgium along with a French draft law to make it illegal would be a violation of both religious and personal freedoms. “I hope that France, Belgium and all of Europe will show respect to Islamic values and creed. Banning a Muslim woman from wearing the niqab would only place her in a dilemma about whether to comply with the law or obey what she believes is a religious order,” Sheikh Qaradawi told a congregation at the Omar bin Al-Khattab mosque at Khalifa South town.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia yesterday ordered that charges be pressed against officials over the deaths of 122 people in flash floods, which sparked a rare media outcry against alleged corruption. The floods, caused by torrential rain in the Red Sea port city of Jeddah last year, damaged thousands of houses built in dry river beds, and raised questions about the fate of public funds destined for sewage and drainage systems in the city. The royal order came after heavy rains killed three people last week in the capital Riyadh, exposing weaknesses in infrastructure and emboldening calls for greater transparency in public fund management in the world's top oil exporter. "Taking into account the gravity of this calamity and its repercussions ... we uphold finding the truth in all its details in order to severely punish all those proved to be involved," he said in a statement carried by the official SPA news agency. Dr Anwar Mohammed Gargash, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for the Federal National Council Affairs and Chairman of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, said on Monday that the UAE has been well ahead in the global anti-human trafficking campaign. He said the results in 2009 suggest that the country has made significant and rapid progress, reiterating that the UAE's commitment to improve the detection and prosecution of trafficking offences is stronger than ever. Dr Gargash was speaking at a press conference held at Shangrila Hotel on the launching of the UAE annual report on anti-human trafficking in the presence of Dr Saeed Mohammed Al Ghafli, executive director of the Federal National Council Affairs at the Ministry of the Federal National Council Affairs and Rapporteur of the committee. He said the committee issues annual reports of the UAE efforts to combat human trafficking in cooperation and coordination with the authorities concerned. Kuwait is keen on upholding human rights values and is an advocate of freedom, out of belief that this is fundamental for protecting human, social and national heritage, said Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Dr Mohammad Al-Afasi yesterday. Speaking at the Human Rights Council Eighth Universal Periodic Review, which kicked off here on May 3 and will continue through to May 14, the minister, who heads the country's delegation to the meeting, said that spreading the "culture" of human rights was not limited to media policies, but extended to basic education and college curricula, as well as military and security institutions. Al-Afasi noted that despite the damage incurred to the State's institutions during the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the country was able to overcome difficulties and reinstate economic, security, social, and psychological stability for all those residing in Kuwait, "and awareness grew over the need to develop mechanisms for the protection of human rights and boosting liberties. Bahrain yesterday advocated the peaceful use of nuclear energy to serve economic development. "There is great need to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes as it represents the nerve centre of life in the third millennium," the Premier and the Crown Prince said. His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Economic Development Board (EDB) chairman, voiced Bahrain's stance. They stressed the crucial importance of nuclear energy as an alternative source of energy, citing its benefits in generating electricity and desalinated water. The energy and industry sector yesterday held its Qatarisation Review Meeting marking 10 years of the energy industry's Strategic Qatarisation Plan. The meeting chaired by Deputy Premier and Minister of Energy and Industry, H E Abdullah bin Hamad Al Attiyah was attended by senior executives and representatives from all the

40 participating companies, along with dignitaries from Qatar's education community and special guests. Al Attiyah expressed his appreciation for the success of the plan and took immense pride in it. He said in his opening address that sound fiscal policies have turned the country into an investment magnet. "Qatar's multi-pronged economic strategy is designed to diversify its industrial platform and its overall economic structure to secure multiple and durable sources of national income," he said.

Strong crude prices will bolster the fiscal position in Gulf oil producers in 2010, but some of them could still record a manageable budget deficit because of counter-crisis high public spending, according to analysts. While the combined budgets of the six-nation Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) would likely record a surplus, as was the case in the previous nine years, some of them could suffer a relatively small shortfall despite an upsurge in their hydrocarbon earnings, they said. The experts believe four GCC members the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman would record surpluses while the budgets of Saudi Arabia, the largest Arab economy, and Bahrain would remain in a deficit. "I would say that the region should sustain high oil revenues and most witness a fiscal and current account surplus, given that oil averages in the \$ 70 range, and with oil in the \$ 80 range [this] should provide strong confidence about the region's revenue prospects," John Sfakianakis, Chief Economist at Banque Saudi Fransi (BSF), told Emirates Business. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao on Wednesday called for concerted efforts with Saudi Arabia to achieve more in bilateral economic and trade cooperation, official news agency Xinhua reported from Beijing. "China and Saudi Arabia enjoy great potential in economic and trade cooperation," Wen told Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud bin Al-Faisal, according to Xinhua. Saudi Arabia is now China's largest trading partner in West Asia and North Africa. "China has noted Saudi Arabia's influence in Middle East and Arab world," Wen said, adding China hopes to increase its strategic communication and coordination with the kingdom to safeguard regional and world peace and stability. For his part, Al-Faisal said the two nations enjoy many common ideas in international relations. "Saudi Arabia hopes to develop relations with China, and will work with China to maintain high level visits, expand cooperation in energy and investment, and increase coordination in international and regional affairs," he said. China, the world's second-biggest energy consumer, is now one of the top three markets for Saudi oil exports. Visiting UAE Foreign Minister H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan affirmed here yesterday that the UAE is keen to expand scope of its economic cooperation with China in order to satisfy aspirations of the two leaderships especially in areas of investment, culture and tourism. Sheikh Abdullah said that during talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi over ways of enhancing bilateral relations in the fields of energy and investment. Issues of mutual interest and mechanisms of encouraging investment and establishment of joint industrial ventures were also discussed. Sheikh Abdullah congratulated the Chinese Government for the success of the Expo 2010 Shanghai which has been seeing huge turn out of visitors since its opening in early May. Kuwaiti Finance Minister Mustafa Al-Shimali signed with Hong Kong's government a number of agreements on double taxation, economic and technical cooperation, and encouraging and protecting investments. Al-Shimali told KUNA Thursday that the agreements would boost economic, investment, and trade cooperation with Hong Kong and would increase government and private investments between the two sides. Kuwait

aims, through signing such agreements, to provide a base for investment in the region, he highlighted. Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Secretary-General at the foreign ministry, has said the Sultanate's participation in the 4th meeting of China-Arab Cooperation Forum reflects the significance and depth of the historic relations that bind the Sultanate with China. In an address he made at the start of the 4th meeting of the forum which convened here yesterday, Sayyid Badr said he was hoping for forging further bonds of co-operation through joint Arab action. That, he said would help foster economic co-operation and encourage joint ventures in different sectors including the ones that would strengthen exchange of knowledge and advanced technology, spread digital culture and enhance trade. The secretary general noted that relations between China and the Arabs are deep-rooted and based on mutual respect and siding with justice and the law. The most convincing evidence to this fact is the Arab countries' respect for one-China principle and China's support for Arab positions which seek to realise peace and stability in the Middle East, he said. Amendments to the US-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Protocol were yesterday approved by the Shura Council. Councillors urgently passed the government-drafted bill to avoid any setback to the progress of the FTA. The amendments, already approved by parliament, include a change in technical requirements in the barcodes of certain merchandise, especially garments, which now require the mention of the country of origin. It also calls for naming the head of the Bahraini delegation in the joint agreement committee, which the government is suggesting becomes the Industry and Commerce Minister or another minister the Cabinet deputises. Council financial and economic affairs committee chairman Khalid Al Maskati said that without the amendments both countries would face problems exporting their goods. The governments of Qatar and China yesterday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to strengthen co-operation in the energy and financial sectors. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and visiting Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani attended the signing ceremony after their meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. Hailing China-Qatar relations, the People's Daily Online quoted Wen as saying "the two nations in recent years have increased mutual political trust and common interests and enjoyed a solid foundation for expanding bilateral win-win co-operation."

## **GCC**

### **12th GCC consultative summit begins**

Top leaders of member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council started their scheduled 12th consultative summit meeting here on Tuesday under chairmanship of King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

At start of the meeting, attended by His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Saudi monarch welcomed the attending leaders "in their second home the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," and wished them success in their deliberations, held annually without a previously prepared agenda.

### **Mideast talks, security to dominate GCC summit**

The 12th GCC consultative summit in Riyadh Wednesday, led by King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, will look at political, economic and security issues, with Palestinian-Israeli talks, Iraq's elections and Iran's nuclear plans prominent among them.

King Abdullah received the Secretary General of the GCC, Abdul Rahman Al-Attiyah, Sunday ahead of the gathering, which although it has no set agenda will seek to achieve greater cohesion and cooperation between GCC states in a variety of areas.

A Gulf official said that particular focus would be given to the Mideast peace process following the renewal of indirect negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis and the efforts of the US administration to push the process forward.

### **GCC backs Mideast peace talks**

A consultative meeting of the heads of state of the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) pledged Tuesday to extend all support to Palestinian-Israeli peace talks and vowed to work in unison to boost regional security.

The GCC leaders, who held their 12th consultative meeting at Dirriyah Palace, also called on all neighboring states and international partners to help Iraq and further the process of development in that war-torn country. The GCC leaders supported the US-brokered peace negotiations that broke down a year before. US President Barack Obama's Mideast envoy, George Mitchell is shuttling between Jerusalem and Ramallah to play the role of mediator in the peace talks.

### **GCC backs UAE on islands' issue**

The Gulf Cooperation Council leaders on Tuesday reiterated their support for the UAE's right to its three islands of Abu Musa, Greater and Lesser Tunbs, occupied by Iran.

At the end of the 12th GCC consultative summit in Riyadh, the GCC leaders threw their weight behind all peaceful measures the UAE was taking to restore its full sovereignty over its three islands. They called on Iran to respond positively to the UAE's efforts aimed at settling the issue either through direct negotiations or recourse to the International Court of Justice.

### **GCC Interior Ministers hold 11th consultative meeting in Riyadh**

The Minister of State for Interior Affairs H E Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani headed the Qatari delegation at the 11th consultative meeting of Ministers of Interior of the GCC countries held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia recently.

The GCC Ministers of Interior discussed various subjects on the agenda of the meeting that enhance ways of joint security cooperation among the member countries and achieve security for the people of the Arabian Gulf.

### **GCC states facing gas shortage**

GCC states, with the exception of Qatar, are facing a shortage of gas supplies and are likely to becoming net importers. Although the global economic slump has reduced the need for gas in most regions, demand in the GCC for power generation from some industrial sectors has far outpaced the region's gas exploration and production, according to a report by Booz & Company. As a result, GCC countries are in the almost contradictory position of having to import gas, when they have exported gas for decades.

### **GCC urged to keep an eye on Greece-EU crisis**

Gulf oil producers seeking to establish an EU-style currency union need to keep an eye on Greece's fiscal woes and how its partners in the European Union will tackle the problem, a key Saudi bank said yesterday. Banque Saudi Fransi (BSF) said concerns are escalating over the spread of Greece's debt crisis into other EU nations and to what extent this could wreak havoc on the euro, "which is facing its biggest test since its inception".

"European financial markets will inevitably unfold across the world, hurting equities, commodities and currencies alike – and the Gulf is no exception. The GCC will also have to watch EU crisis management techniques, which could have implications for its own beleaguered monetary union plan," BSF said in a flash report sent to Emirates Business.

### **GCC's 2010 fiscal position strong on oil prices**

Strong crude prices will bolster the fiscal position in Gulf oil producers in 2010, but some of them could still record a manageable budget deficit because of counter-crisis high public spending, according to analysts.

While the combined budgets of the six-nation Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) would likely record a surplus, as was the case in the previous nine years, some of them could suffer a relatively small shortfall despite an upsurge in their hydrocarbon earnings, they said. The experts believe four GCC members the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman would record surpluses while the budgets of Saudi Arabia, the largest Arab economy, and Bahrain would remain in a deficit. "I would say that the region should sustain high oil revenues and most witness a fiscal and current account surplus, given that oil averages in the \$ 70 range, and with oil in the \$ 80 range [this] should provide strong confidence about the region's revenue prospects," John Sfakianakis, Chief Economist at Banque Saudi Fransi (BSF), told Emirates Business.

## **GCC-EU free trade deal likely to be inked in June**

The long-awaited Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the European Union (EU) is likely to be signed at the joint ministerial meeting to be held at Luxembourg on June 14, according to Gonzalo de Benito, Ambassador of Spain to the UAE.

Spain currently holds the temporary Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and the Ambassador disclosed this on the sidelines of a lecture programme organised here on Sunday evening to coincide with the Europe Day at the Zayed University. “We are keen to get the GCC-EU FTA during the presidency of Spain at the EU. Our presidency of EU will be till the end of June,” the Ambassador told Khaleej Times here.

## **GCC scraps cement and steel tariffs**

GCC finance ministers have agreed to abolish customs tariffs on steel and cement, GCC Secretary-General Abdul Rahman Al-Attiyah said Saturday, adding that their proposal would be presented to GCC leaders when they meet here Tuesday.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting of finance ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Al-Attiyah said the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait and the UAE would take up all topics of economic integration during their half-yearly consultative summit in Riyadh. He indicated that the GCC leaders would discuss important issues such as the Gulf Common Market and the Customs Union as well as all other matters related to removing obstacles facing economic integration and improving performance.

## **YEMEN**

### **Yemeni deputy PM survives killing attempt**

Yemen’s deputy prime minister for internal affairs Sadiq Ameen Abu Ras escaped an assassination attempt on Thursday, after a gun fire exchange between his guards and armed militants in the south. Witnesses said militants opened fire on the official’s convoy in the southern Shabwa province, where he attended celebrations marking the 20th anniversary of Yemen’s unity. An exchange of fire took place, after which the militants escaped, and no injuries were reported. The attempt highlights concerns over the escalating tension in the south of Yemen, where a separatist movement is growing and where violence has swelled in recent months, leading to the killing of several soldiers, separatist gunmen and bystanders.

### **Yemen, Jordan discuss anti-terror fight**

Leaders of Jordan and Yemen yesterday discussed ways of boosting co-operation between the two countries in combating terrorism, according to a royal court statement.

Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh arrived in Amman earlier yesterday and held separate talks with King Abdullah II and Prime Minister Samir Rifai. Saleh told the official Petra news agency upon his arrival that his talks in Amman would cover among other things the “co-ordination of efforts in dealing with acts of terrorism which represent a common concern and endanger the security and safety of all parties.”

### **Yemeni president, Jordanian king hold talks on ties, regional issues**

Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh who arrived in the kingdom on Monday starting a two-day visit held talks with King Abdullah II dealing with prospects of taking unified stances by the Arab states in face of "common challenges." The two leaders, during the meeting, affirmed their joint keenness on enhancing their mutual cooperation in various spheres, namely in investments, health and agriculture, according to an official statement. They affirmed the need for Arab solidarity for service of Arab causes, combating terrorism and crimes. The discussions between the visiting president and the monarch dealt with the efforts to establish peace in the Middle East and an independent Palestinian state on Palestinian territories, on the basis of the Arab peace initiative.

### **Sultanate's support for regional stability and peace exemplary**

His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, received here yesterday Abdulrahman Khamis Obaid, Ambassador of Yemen to the Sultanate, who delivered to him a written message from Dr Ali Mohammed Magoor, Yemeni Prime Minister, dealing with co-operation between the Sultanate and Yemen. Conversation during the meeting touched on ways of enhancing bilateral relations, as well as regional and international developments. The ambassador expressed the Yemeni government's appreciation for the fruitful efforts being made by the Omani leadership to support stability in the region while at the same time achieving comprehensive development in the domestic front thanks to the wise vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.

HH Sayyid Fahd also received Mehmet Khairi Erol, Ambassador of Turkey to the Sultanate. HH Sayyid Fahd and the ambassador reviewed bilateral relations, which have witnessed steady growth. They also discussed ways to utilise the outcomes of talks between His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and President Gul, among other issues of common concern.

### **Opposition in alliance with 'outlaw' groups: Yemen PM**

Yemeni Prime Minister Ali Mohammad Mujawar yesterday accused opposition parties of forging “destructive alliances” with northern rebels and southern separatists, the official Saba news agency reported.

“There is no explanation for these alliances except the desire of these (opposition) parties to achieve their political objectives by destructive alliances outside the political and democratic process and... the constitution and the law,” Mujawar said in a speech,

according to Saba. He accused the opposition of allying with northern rebels, or Huthis, and the Southern Movement, thus providing “political and media cover for Huthi gangs and... the separatist movement.”

### **Kuwaiti ambassador, Yemeni FM discuss relations**

Kuwait Ambassador to Yemen Salem Ghassab Al-Zamanan on Saturday discussed bilateral relations and means to develop them, as well as latest regional and international events with Yemeni Foreign Minister Abu Bakr Al-Qirbi. The meeting is part of Al-Qirbi's series of meetings with ambassadors of countries of (Yemen's Friends) group, the official news agency (SABA) reported.

During the meeting, Al-Qirbi underlined significance of cooperation and coordination with members of the group and speed up mission of work teams in order to determine a dateline for a ministerial meeting in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

### **SAUDI ARABIA**

#### **International Front**

##### **Free Middle East of WMDs: Saud**

Saudi Arabia renewed its call on Thursday to free the Middle East from all weapons of mass destruction. “I reiterate the Arab stand to make the entire Middle East, including the Gulf region, free from all kinds of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) without exception,” said Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal, who is leading a Saudi delegation at the two-day China-Arab Cooperation Forum in Tianjin, China.

Prince Saud reaffirmed the support of Saudi Arabia in solving the Iranian nuclear issue peacefully and guaranteeing the rights of all countries in the region to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The prince also called on Iran to make its nuclear programs transparent. “The Arab countries and China have a shared vision with regard to the role of the UN in achieving a balanced and fair representation for the countries of the south,” the prince added.

##### **'Inseparable relations' lauded in Doha**

Attendees at a symposium on the History of Saudi-Qatari Relations, part of the activities of the Saudi Cultural Week being held in the 2010 Capital of Arab Culture, Doha, have described the two countries as “inseparable geographically, historically and socially”.

The symposium, held on Wednesday, gathered prominent cultural figures from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, who were united in their assessment of the “development of political, cultural and economic relations between the two countries”. “What unites Saudi Arabia and Qatar goes beyond the customary in nations’ relations, beginning with the facts of history and geography and their unity of origin, and including their Arab and Islamic

identities from which they cannot be separated in terms of land, people and history,” said symposium speaker Ali Bahkali.

## **Social Front**

### **Dialogue initiative 'reflects Abdullah's strategic vision'**

Crown Prince Sultan, deputy premier and minister of defense and aviation, has commended Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah’s efforts to promote dialogue between Saudis as well as the followers of different faiths.

Prince Sultan made this comment in the foreword of a book titled “Dialogue in the Thought of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud” authored by Saeed bin Nasser Abumilha. He said King Abdullah’s dialogue initiative reflects his strategic vision to realize global peace.

“King Abdullah has given the Kingdom what is required to take it to the level of advanced countries and societies while preserving its Islamic principles and values and cultural identity,” the crown prince said, underscoring the king’s important role in establishing channels of dialogue within and outside the Kingdom.

### **Saudi health minister outlines plan to improve services**

Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeah, Minister of Health, has announced a number of measures aimed at improving health services and productivity at the country’s public hospitals.

The measures include setting up an executive council in the ministry and in all the Kingdom’s regions. Five committees are going to be established for projects and maintenance, budgets, comprehensive quality, medical supplies and patient relations. These committees will also be set up in the country’s regions.

These decisions are in line with the directives of King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and are meant to boost development and progress in all the service sectors. Dr. Al-Rabeah said these measures will ensure the Kingdom’s health care ranks with those of advanced countries.

### **Saudi King wants officials charged over Jeddah floods**

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia yesterday ordered that charges be pressed against officials over the deaths of 122 people in flash floods, which sparked a rare media outcry against alleged corruption.

The floods, caused by torrential rain in the Red Sea port city of Jeddah last year, damaged thousands of houses built in dry river beds, and raised questions about the fate of public funds destined for sewage and drainage systems in the city. The royal order came after heavy rains killed three people last week in the capital Riyadh, exposing weaknesses in

infrastructure and emboldening calls for greater transparency in public fund management in the world's top oil exporter.

“Taking into account the gravity of this calamity and its repercussions ... we uphold finding the truth in all its details in order to severely punish all those proved to be involved,” he said in a statement carried by the official SPA news agency.

### **Saudi Shoura backs fatwa on funding terror**

The Shoura Council endorsed on Sunday the recent fatwa given by the Council of Senior Islamic Scholars headed by Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al-Asheikh on terror financing last month. Describing terror financing as evil, Shoura Council Chairman Abdullah Al-Asheikh said on Sunday the Council will frame a set of regulations to combat terror financing.

He said the proposed recommendation would be sent to the Council of Ministers and would include regulations to prohibit financing terror activities and it would incorporate stringent punishments for violations since such funding could be a threat to the peace and security of the country. Last month, the 20-member Council of Senior Islamic Scholars said terror financing was a crime as big as terrorism itself because it empowers and enables sabotage, insecurity, murder and destruction of property. Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah echoed this sentiment in a statement on Friday, making no distinction between funding terrorism and acts of terrorism. “Terror financing amounts to helping acts of terrorism and supporting the existence and spread of terror,” said the fatwa.

### **65% of Saudi women are unemployed**

Only 35 percent of qualified Saudi women are employed, said Mufrej Al-Haqabani, deputy labor minister for planning and development. “This is a low rate and does not augur well,” he said. Presenting a working paper at a forum on human resources here, he said expatriates accounted for 53 percent of the workforce in the private sector in 2009 while Saudis represented 47 percent. Al-Haqabani emphasized that fighting unemployment among Saudis is a joint responsibility, adding that it does not fall on his ministry alone. He said the Council of Ministers approved the Kingdom's employment strategy last year and gave 25 years to fulfill its objectives.

Noura Al-Fayez, deputy education minister for girls affairs, also spoke at the forum. She referred to her ministry's efforts in human resource development. “The King Abdullah General Education Development Project aims at developing educational curricula, providing orientation courses to teachers and education leaders, improving education atmosphere and developing students' skills,” she said.

## **King Abdullah orders : Streamline judicial procedures**

King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, has ordered the formation of a committee comprising senior Islamic scholars and judges to streamline procedures governing Shariah verdicts and corporal penalties.

This was stated by Abdul Mohsin Bin Nasser Al-Obeikan, Adviser at the Royal Court, on Friday. He said the committee is aimed at ending the ongoing controversy over the codification of judicial verdicts and to help overcome discrepancies in verdicts issued by different judges in cases of similar nature. He said that the body would also ensure a fixed ceiling for corporal penalties to be observed by courts all across the Kingdom.

## **Economy Front**

### **'Saudi Arabia keen to learn Malaysia's economic growth success'**

Impressed with Malaysia's development and economic growth, the Saudis regard the country as the most developed Islamic country in the world, Bernama news agency reported on Thursday. Malaysia's ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary, and permanent representative to Saudi Arabia, Associate Professor Datuk Syed Omar Al Saggaf said the Saudis were keen to learn Malaysia's success story. "So they are looking forward to learn from the Malaysian experience, particularly in terms of technology know-how, including in the agriculture sector, among others," he told Bernama. "They are aware that Malaysia has conducted research and development in many areas and they also try to learn from the country how it managed to develop and survive from the global economic crisis within a short span of time," he said. Syed Omar also cited an example of Malaysia managing to attract tourists in its effort to promote health tourism.

### **Saudi Arabia, China agree to further cooperation**

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao on Wednesday called for concerted efforts with Saudi Arabia to achieve more in bilateral economic and trade cooperation, official news agency Xinhua reported from Beijing. "China and Saudi Arabia enjoy great potential in economic and trade cooperation," Wen told Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud bin Al-Faisal, according to Xinhua.

Saudi Arabia is now China's largest trading partner in West Asia and North Africa. "China has noted Saudi Arabia's influence in Middle East and Arab world," Wen said, adding China hopes to increase its strategic communication and coordination with the kingdom to safeguard regional and world peace and stability.

For his part, Al-Faisal said the two nations enjoy many common ideas in international relations. "Saudi Arabia hopes to develop relations with China, and will work with China to maintain high level visits, expand cooperation in energy and investment, and increase coordination in international and regional affairs," he said. China, the world's second-biggest energy consumer, is now one of the top three markets for Saudi oil exports.

## **UAE**

### **International Front**

#### **Shaikh Mohammed expresses faith in the GCC spirit**

His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, said on Wednesday the Gulf Cooperation Council was one of the few regional blocs that could bring together countries with strong bonds of geography, history, language, faith and tradition.

He was speaking at an informal meeting with the Press at the Arab Media Forum 2010, which opened in his presence at the Palm Atlantis in Dubai. Shaikh Mohammed said the GCC consultative summit which he attended yesterday was 'necessary' for the member countries to discuss the latest developments. He described the global financial crisis as an upheaval that led to recession in many economies.

"In the UAE, the crisis is more of a challenge that requires us to take pause to rearrange our priorities as we move on," he said. "The UAE and rest of the GCC countries enjoy very strong infrastructure, which makes a solid platform for new and creative economic thinking."

#### **UAE and Samoa set up diplomatic relations**

The United Arab Emirates and the Independent State of Samoa last night signed a Joint Communique on the establishment of diplomatic relations at ambassadorial level.

H.E. Ahmed Al-Jarman, Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations and H.E. Ali'ioaiga Feturi Elisaia, Permanent Representative of the Independent State of Samoa to the United Nations signed communique at the headquarters of the Permanent Mission of the State to the United Nations in New York.

The Joint Communique which was filed at the United Nations in Arabic, English and Samoan highlighted the willingness of the two countries to promote mutual understanding, strengthen, friendship and cooperation between the two countries in the political, economic, social, humanitarian, cultural and scientific areas based upon the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and the norms of international law in addition to respecting the principles of equality among States, national sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States.

## **UAE backs any effort for halting Israel's practices in Jerusalem: Ghurair**

Abdul Aziz Abdullah Al Ghurair, Speaker of UAE Federal National Council (FNC) and Chairman of the 13th session of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC), met today with Turkish Grand National Assembly Speaker Mehmet Ali Sahin during a working breakfast.

They discussed possible ways of rendering an extraordinary meeting of the PUIC's executive committee on Israeli settlements in Jerusalem which will be held later today a success. The meeting is scheduled to discuss the issue under the theme "Warning to Israel .... New Settlements in Jerusalem will harm International Peace".

## **UAE discusses bilateral relations with Sudanese, Kenyan officials**

UAE Foreign Minister HH Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan received here yesterday at the Presidential Court Sudanese State Minister for Foreign Affairs, who is country visiting the country. Sheikh Abdullah discussed with the Sudanese minister bilateral relations and ways to boost them in different fields. The UAE Foreign minister also received Kenyan Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta. They discussed ways to bolster ties, especially in the areas of trade, investment, tourism and others.

## **Assistant Foreign Minister of China hails UAE's peaceful efforts**

H.E. Zhai Jun, Assistant Foreign Minister of China has expressed his country's appreciation for the peaceful efforts of the United Arab Emirates to resolve the issue of the three islands of Greater and Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa occupied by Iran, pointing out that UAE's position in this respect deserves support and appreciation.

In an interview with the Emirates News Agency "WAM" at the headquarters of the Chinese Foreign Ministry in Beijing on Thursday, he said that his country confirmed the necessity of peaceful resolution of disputes without resorting the military force. Jun stressed his country's keenness to boost the friendly and cooperation relations with the United Arab Emirates in political, economic, commercial, cultural and energy fields.

## **UAE active player in alliance of good forces, says Hamdan**

The UAE has occupied a leading place in the alliance of forces of good and become an active player in international efforts to address humanitarian challenges, Shaikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler's Representative in the Western Region and Chairman of the UAE Red Crescent Authority (RCA), said on Friday.

The UAE is committed, as an aid donor, to stay its humanitarian course of promoting and deepening values and initiatives that alleviate human suffering and support human development in developing communities, he said. In a statement on the occasion of the World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day today, Shaikh Hamdan appealed to the

international humanitarian organisations to maximise their efforts for development of the most vulnerable communities and join forces to fend off eminent risks facing millions of peoples around the world as a result of climate change, the international financial crisis, shortage of food and medicines, water scarcity, acute poverty and spread of diseases and epidemics.

### **UAE to host 15th meeting of GCC parliaments**

The secretaries-general of GCC Shura, National Representatives and Umma Councils on Friday decided at the end of their 14th meeting here to hold their 15th meeting in the UAE.

The UAE Federal National Council (FNC) Secretary-General, Mohammed Salim Al Mazrouie, who headed the UAE delegation at the meeting, invited the GCC secretaries-general to hold their upcoming meeting in the UAE. The secretaries-general agreed in their meeting which was held at the Saudi Shura Council in Makkah that the coming theme of the meeting would be “Sessions Affairs and their Roles in Supporting the Council’s Procedures”.

### **Social Front**

#### **Emirati students are wealth of the nation, says Mohammed**

General Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces said the UAE, under the leadership of the President His Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, pins great hope on the citizens, who are armed with knowledge and science in building the nation.

During a visit on Tuesday to the Shaikh Zayed Private Academy in Abu Dhabi, Gen. Shaikh Mohammed also said that all the strategies and policies of the country aim at creating an excellent, comprehensive and integrated educational environment that will contribute to the preparation of Emirati students, who are the real wealth of the nation.

#### **'UAE well ahead in global anti-human trafficking drive'**

Dr Anwar Mohammed Gargash, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for the Federal National Council Affairs and Chairman of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, said on Monday that the UAE has been well ahead in the global anti-human trafficking campaign. He said the results in 2009 suggest that the country has made significant and rapid progress, reiterating that the UAE’s commitment to improve the detection and prosecution of trafficking offences is stronger than ever.

Dr Gargash was speaking at a press conference held at Shangrila Hotel on the launching of the UAE annual report on anti-human trafficking in the presence of Dr Saeed Mohammed Al Ghafli, executive director of the Federal National Council Affairs at the Ministry of the Federal National Council Affairs and Rapporteur of the committee. He

said the committee issues annual reports of the UAE efforts to combat human trafficking in cooperation and coordination with the authorities concerned.

### **Mohammed Bin Rashid chairs cabinet meeting**

Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE and Ruler of Dubai His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum chaired yesterday a cabinet meeting held at the Presidential Palace in Abu Dhabi. H.H Lt. General Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior and H.H Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs were present.

The cabinet discussed a number of topics on its agenda that included the report on the performance indicators for ministries and government institutions during the year 2009. The indicator was developed as ordered by the Vice President and Prime Minister to measure the performance of ministries and other federal authorities in the implementation of the federal strategy of governance

### **Mohammed orders media strategy**

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, yesterday visited the Government of Dubai Media Office at the DWTC.

Sheikh Mohammed was escorted on a tour of various divisions of the Media Office by Ahmad Abdullah Al Shaikh, Director-General of the Media Office. Sheikh Mohammed directed that an organisational strategy be prepared and adopted at the Media Office. He also underlined his continued support to their mission to convey Dubai's message with transparency and objectivity.

## **Economy Front**

### **South Korea a long-term partner for UAE: Mansouri**

Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansouri, UAE Minister of Economy, who is heading the UAE's delegation to South Korea, today inaugurated the 2nd Joint Committee Meeting between the two countries in Seoul, in the presence of His Excellency Youn Jin Han, Minister of Strategy and Finance, South Korea. The meeting was attended by senior executives from various government sectors in UAE, and discussed strategic areas of cooperation between both countries in the fields of innovation, investments, small and medium businesses, civil aviation, health care, technology and education.

Al Mansouri said: "South Korea is a strong and reliable partner in our efforts to position the UAE as a diversified and knowledge-based economy. Our countries have the right resources to lead innovations in technology, creativity, research and development, small and medium businesses and intellectual property rights. Both the government and private

sector in the UAE look forward to an era of increased co-operation and stronger economic partnerships with South Korea, especially during the next five years.”

### **UAE is keen to boost its economic cooperation with China: Abdullah bin Zayed**

Visiting UAE Foreign Minister H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan affirmed here yesterday that the UAE is keen to expand scope of its economic cooperation with China in order to satisfy aspirations of the two leaderships especially in areas of investment, culture and tourism. Sheikh Abdullah said that during talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi over ways of enhancing bilateral relations in the fields of energy and investment. Issues of mutual interest and mechanisms of encouraging investment and establishment of joint industrial ventures were also discussed. Sheikh Abdullah congratulated the Chinese Government for the success of the Expo 2010 Shanghai which has been seeing huge turn out of visitors since its opening in early May.

### **UAE won't be affected by Greek crisis: Al Suwaidi**

The UAE Central Bank Governor Sultan bin Nasser Al Suwaidi has said that the debt crisis in Greece will have no impact on the country’s financial system. “There will be no impact, because Greece is in a different region,” he told reporters on the sidelines of the Public Debt Management Conference organised by the Ministry of Finance in Abu Dhabi.

The conference was also attended by Minister of State for Financial Affairs Obaid Humaid Al Tayer, government officials and top bankers, wherein they discussed issues related to the development of a bond market in the country, to raise capital to finance budgetary as well as developmental needs.

### **UAE adopts open trade policy: Minister**

The UAE Ministry of Foreign Trade (MoFT) is adopting a trade policy that is based on openness and achieving a balance in an international market, said Shiekha Lubna Al Qasimi, Minister of Foreign Trade.

Her remarks came during an induction meeting for the accredited Ambassadors and Commercial Attaches of Arab and Foreign Embassies and Business Councils in the UAE. The meeting was organised here by the MoFT on Monday in Abu Dhabi.

The meeting's aim was to familiarise the participants with the strategic, commercial and investment developments in the State, and to share with them the MoFT's plans to strengthen the UAE's commercial status within the framework of the ministry's keenness to continuously communicate with foreign commercial attaches and business centres to improve the commercial and investment partnership and cooperation relationship between the UAE and the World.

## **UAE signs deals to fight money laundering**

The UAE has signed new anti-money laundering agreements with five Arab countries as part of its plan to conclude deals with at least 90 nations on co-operation to fight dirty money, the Central Bank said yesterday.

Mohamed Al Awadi, Executive Director and Head of Anti-Money Laundering and Suspicious Cases Unit at the Central Bank, signed the memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and Sudan. Awadi inked the deals on the sidelines of the 11th Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force's plenary meeting and its working groups' meetings held in Tunisia this week. "The agreements demonstrate the commitment of the UAE to enhance co-operation with its global and regional partners to co-ordinate the efforts against money laundering, terrorist financing and related crimes," the Central Bank said in a statement.

## **Switzerland lauds UAE's renewable energy projects**

Swiss Minister of Economy Jean-Claude Mermoud completed his first-ever three-day visit to the UAE, with the aim of establishing broader contacts with companies and obtain first-hand insight into ongoing projects here.

His high-ranking 33-member delegation showed interest for investments in sustainable and renewable energy projects of Masdar following their visit there. The delegation included CEOs of companies and deputies of the Swiss Parliament. During the three-day visit, Mermoud particularly visited Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Ras Al Khaimah, and interacted with different government and private sector companies for possible collaboration and business opportunities. In an exclusive interview with Khaleej Times, Mermoud revealed that he is looking for further opportunities in the renewable energy sector and investments in various industries.

## **KUWAIT**

### **International Front**

#### **Kuwait reiterates right to possess n-technology**

Kuwait reiterated Tuesday evening the right of all countries party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to possess and develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, with no distinctions.

This came in an interjection made by member of the Kuwaiti delegation participating in the third session of the 2010 Review Conference of Parties to the NPT Review Conference, First Secretary Talal Al-Fassam. The Kuwaiti diplomat reiterated "the fundamental rights of all parties to the NPT in possessing and developing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, with no distinctions.

He noted that since Kuwait became a member of the NPT in 1989, "we have been constantly working with the (NPT) members" to realize the goals of the treaty, adding that nuclear energy was an important source of energy in today's world.

### **Kuwait reiterates call on Israel to join NPT**

Kuwait reiterated its call for Israel to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to subject its nuclear facilities to inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This came in an interjection by member of the Kuwaiti delegation participating in the 2010 Review Conference of Parties to the NPT Review Conference, First Secretary Falah Al-Hajraf. The discussion was in the second committee, dealing with regional affairs including the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East.

The Kuwaiti diplomat called on the international community to apply pressure on Israel to comply with UK and IAEA resolutions and to make the Middle East a region free of nuclear weapons. Al-Hajraf also called on nations not to provide nuclear know-how and technology to Israel, nor cooperate with it in this field. "Kuwait believes that the possession of nuclear arms does not achieve security for any of the states. In fact, nuclear proliferation raises tension and conflict among people," he said, adding that it would spark a "terrifying" nuclear arms race, especially in the Middle East which still faced challenges threatening its security and stability.

### **Kuwait-Egypt relations 'role model' for Arabs**

His Highness the Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has underscored the strong relations between his country and Egypt, which he said was "a model for brotherly ties in times of good and bad." In an interview published in 'Al-Ahram' newspaper yesterday, he said that brotherly relations between His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and President Hosni Mubarak were "a good and distinctive model" for the state of relations between Arab leaders, while expressing hope for even greater cooperation between the two countries in all fields. On the Palestinian crisis, he said that it was the number one Arab issue and that "it is entering a dark tunnel once again, because of the continuing disputes between leaders (of Palestinian factions), as well as Israel's obstinacy and faltering of peace sponsors.

### **AFNDA lauds Kuwait's anti-drug efforts**

Kuwait is keen on actively contributing to the efforts of the Arab Federation of NGOs for Prevention of Substance Abuse (AFNDA), especially raising awareness among youth of the dangers of drug use, AFNDA Secretary General Dr. Khaled Al-Saleh said yesterday.

Al-Saleh, who heads Kuwait Society for Combating Smoking, successfully maintained his post as director general of AFNDA in the board of directors' elections at the federation's headquarters in Cairo, Thursday night.

AFNDA has been accredited as a monitor at the World Health Organization (WHO), given its great role in spreading awareness over the dangers of drug abuse," he explained.

### **Kuwaiti ambassador, Yemeni FM discuss relations**

Kuwait Ambassador to Yemen Salem Ghassab Al-Zamanan on Saturday discussed bilateral relations and means to develop them, as well as latest regional and international events with Yemeni Foreign Minister Abu Bakr Al-Qirbi.

The meeting is part of Al-Qirbi's series of meetings with ambassadors of countries of (Yemen's Friends) group, the official news agency (SABA) reported. During the meeting, Al-Qirbi underlined significance of cooperation and coordination with members of the group and speed up mission of work teams in order to determine a dateline for a ministerial meeting in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

### **Kuwait parliament speaker praises Turkey's role**

National Assembly Speaker Jassem Mohammad Al-Kharafi praised on Saturday Turkey's role in serving Islamic and Arabic causes, noting that such role helped contribute tremendously to the support of such causes among Muslims and Arabs.

Al-Kharafi made the press remarks prior to his departure to the city of Istanbul to partake in the second open meeting for the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) union council executive committee next Monday.

"Everyone knows the vital role played by Turkey's government, parliament, and people toward Islamic and Arab causes, particularly when it comes to Jerusalem and Islamic holy sites amid Israeli constant violations," Al-Kharafi added.

### **Kuwait welcomes the Turkish efforts to support the rights of children**

Kuwait recommended Turkey on Tuesday to continue the promoting of children's rights and improving their conditions and the importance of continued development of the juvenile justice system and child labor.

Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the Third Secretary in the Permanent delegation of the State of Kuwait to the UN in Geneva praised in his a speech for the Human Rights Council to "the methodology adopted by Turkey in preparing its national report, which based on the principles of transparency and objectivity and the participation of all concerned with human rights issues."

### **Palestine issue tops agenda of Kuwait Amir's talks in Egypt**

The visit of His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Egypt is of great significance and is understandably in the limelight

and focus of media here, the Kuwaiti Ambassador said yesterday. His Highness is on a tour that also takes him to Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon.

In remarks to Al-Akhbar newspaper, Ambassador Dr Rasheed Al-Hamad pointed out the visit is of added significance in view of recent state of affairs in the Arab region. He stressed Kuwaiti and Egyptian officials see eye-to-eye on all issues. On the Palestinians' cause, he said there is constant coordination between the two sides and the issue would be a main item in the talks of Sheikh Sabah with President Hosni Mubarak. The start of the indirect talks amid keen US action is to be a point of focus.

### **Kuwaiti minister leaves for Geneva human rights mission today**

Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Dr. Mohammad Al-Afasi leaves today for Geneva heading the Kuwaiti delegation to respond to the observations of the Human Rights Council. The Human Rights Council is to convene a session on May 12 to discuss the Kuwaiti human rights issue.

In coordination with the Office of the Kuwaiti Mission in Geneva, the delegation will hold three preparatory meetings for the drafting of the Kuwaiti paper and clarify its position on human rights. The minister will be accompanied by his office manager Humoud Al-Hamad.

### **Social Front**

#### **Kuwait mulling minimum wage law for maids**

Lucy Cometa, a Filipina maid in Kuwait, hasn't had a single day off work as a domestic helper for four years but considers herself lucky because she is paid regularly and gets to take breaks during her workday. Kuwait introduced a minimum monthly wage of 60 dinars (\$ 209) in April in a move that affects hundreds of thousands of Asian laborers. But the new minimum wage, a first for Kuwait, has come under fire because it excludes roughly 560,000 domestic workers, prompting lawmakers to consider a separate law to set a minimum salary for maids and impose rules protecting them from abuse. "This is the first step. It is a most welcome legislation because it protects our household workers," said Vivo Vidal, the labour attache at the Philippines Embassy, adding he wanted the bill to guarantee wage payment.

#### **Kuwait upholds human rights values: Al-Afasi**

Kuwait is keen on upholding human rights values and is an advocate of freedom, out of belief that this is fundamental for protecting human, social and national heritage, said Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Dr Mohammad Al-Afasi yesterday. Speaking at the Human Rights Council Eighth Universal Periodic Review, which kicked off here on May 3 and will continue through to May 14, the minister, who heads the country's delegation to the meeting, said that spreading the "culture" of human rights was not limited to media policies, but extended to basic education and college curricula, as

well as military and security institutions. Al-Afasi noted that despite the damage incurred to the State's institutions during the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the country was able to overcome difficulties and reinstate economic, security, social, and psychological stability for all those residing in Kuwait, "and awareness grew over the need to develop mechanisms for the protection of human rights and boosting liberties.

### **Economy Front**

#### **'Kuwaiti govt is examining options to support small businesses'**

The government is examining a number of options to support small businesses, Deputy Premier for Economic Affairs Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah said Thursday.

A number of portfolios are already footed to support ideas by small-business owners, Sheikh Ahmad, also doubles as Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Minister of State for Development Affairs, told reporters after inaugurating the Kuwait exhibition for small-business owners.

He pointed out that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah launched the initiative to support small businesses during the 2009 Arab Economic Summit in Kuwait, with the aim to help achieve ambitions of young Kuwaiti and Arab business owners.

#### **Kuwait parliament Okays privatization act**

Kuwait's National Assembly (parliament) on Wednesday turned the privatization bill over to the government after approving its second reading. The bill was approved by 33 MPs against 28 in the ordinary plenary session of the parliament. Though the MPs agreed that the national economy was suffering from numerous problems and needed diversification of resources through tapping out into the resources of the private sector, they held variable viewpoints regarding the privatization act.

Proponents of the legislation argued that the Kuwaiti economy was a 80 percent socialist one where the government controls almost all sectors, which, they said, is incorrect. "The bill entailed guarantees for the national workforce unrivalled in any of the world economies," they agreed.

#### **Kuwait, Hong Kong sign economic agreements**

Kuwaiti Finance Minister Mustafa Al-Shimali signed with Hong Kong's government a number of agreements on double taxation, economic and technical cooperation, and encouraging and protecting investments.

Al-Shimali told KUNA Thursday that the agreements would boost economic, investment, and trade cooperation with Hong Kong and would increase government and private

investments between the two sides. Kuwait aims, through signing such agreements, to provide a base for investment in the region, he highlighted.

## **OMAN**

### **International Front**

#### **Oman, China relations are significant and historic**

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Secretary-General at the foreign ministry, has said the Sultanate's participation in the 4th meeting of China-Arab Cooperation Forum reflects the significance and depth of the historic relations that bind the Sultanate with China.

In an address he made at the start of the 4th meeting of the forum which convened here yesterday, Sayyid Badr said he was hoping for forging further bonds of co-operation through joint Arab action. That, he said would help foster economic co-operation and encourage joint ventures in different sectors including the ones that would strengthen exchange of knowledge and advanced technology, spread digital culture and enhance trade.

#### **Two Omani ministries win UN's public service award**

Two Omani ministries have won the prestigious United Nations Public Services Award (UNPSA) this year. The Ministry of Health was a first-place winner with the 'Al Shifa Healthcare Information Management System' in the category of 'Advancing Knowledge Management in Government', while the Ministry of Manpower finished in second place in the category of 'Improving the Delivery of Public Services' with its 'Manpower Registration System'. They will be honoured at the UNPSA Awards Ceremony in Barcelona, Spain, next month.

#### **Oman calls for global action against Israel**

Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Isa'ee, Chairman of the Majlis Ash'shura, in a speech before an OIC extra-ordinary meeting which concluded here recently, said that Israel's intransigence and its attempts to 'liquidate' the Palestinian issue, coupled with its violation of all related international charters, Israel's continuous blockade of Gaza, confiscation of Palestinian territories and aggression against Islamic and Christian holy places – all make it necessary to react with firmness and prompts the Islamic states and peoples to confront the irresponsible Israeli practices.

Al Isa'ee added that the Israeli intransigence also risks aborting the whole peace process. Arab and Islamic countries have to stand against the Israeli practices and work with the international community to compel Israel to abide by international charters.

## **Oman, Poland explore ways to enhance co-operation**

Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, received in his office here yesterday Prof Barbara Kudrycka, Minister of Science and Higher Education in Poland, who is on a visit to the Sultanate. They discussed co-operation between the two friendly countries in various fields and means of enhancing them, especially in education, besides exchanging views on regional and international issues of common concern.

They discussed aspects of co-operation between the Social Development Ministry and the Polish Science and Higher Education Ministry, particularly in the field of training workers in the disabled sector or the programmes related to the social development and training the family members of social security category by helping them secure higher education diploma making use of grants.

## **Oman, Netherlands hold diplomatic talks**

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamoud al Busaidy, Secretary-General of the Foreign Ministry, held a round of diplomatic negotiations in the Hague within the framework of bilateral co-operation between the Sultanate and the Netherlands. During his two-day visit, Sayyid Badr met with the Dutch Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Ed Kronenburg and the Deputy Dutch Chief of Staff, with whom he discussed ways of upgrading co-operation in different diplomatic, scientific, economic and cultural fields and to exchange expertise in military and security fields. The two sides expressed their desires to see the economic investments grow and to exchange visits to study the issue further with a view to fulfilling the aspirations of both countries.

## **Social Front**

### **Women resolve to win seats in Oman' Shura Council**

Even as no woman was elected in the Shura elections held in May 2007, Omani women have resolved not to give up. After waiting in queue in front of the school premises in 2007 to enroll themselves in the elections, 84 seats were won by men candidates. However, this did not deter the women, instead, they firmed up their determination to dream big with a belief “sky is the limit”. As men, women too have the right to raise their voice in the Sultanate. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in one of his speeches in Majlis Oman 2009 had said, “We are continuing on this path, God willing as we are, that the country, in its blessed march, needs both men and women because no doubt it resembles the bird in relying on both of its wings to fly high on the horizons of the sky. How can this bird manage if one of its wings is broken? Will it be able to fly?” His Majesty called upon each and every woman to seize opportunities provided to her to prove her mettle.

## **Economy Front**

### **Oman, China relations are significant and historic**

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Secretary-General at the foreign ministry, has said the Sultanate's participation in the 4th meeting of China-Arab Cooperation Forum reflects the significance and depth of the historic relations that bind the Sultanate with China. In an address he made at the start of the 4th meeting of the forum which convened here yesterday, Sayyid Badr said he was hoping for forging further bonds of co-operation through joint Arab action. That, he said would help foster economic co-operation and encourage joint ventures in different sectors including the ones that would strengthen exchange of knowledge and advanced technology, spread digital culture and enhance trade. The secretary general noted that relations between China and the Arabs are deep-rooted and based on mutual respect and siding with justice and the law. The most convincing evidence to this fact is the Arab countries' respect for one-China principle and China's support for Arab positions which seek to realise peace and stability in the Middle East, he said.

### **World Bank ready to help Oman, GCC states identify CDM projects**

The World Bank is willing to assist Oman and the other Gulf states identify clean-energy initiatives under the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), according to a visiting expert from the international financial institution. Gael Gregoire, the Washington DC based body's Carbon Finance Specialist for Sustainable Development Management in the Middle East and North Africa Region, said the institution is ready to support the Gulf region exploit potential opportunities offered by the lucrative global carbon market. "We have looked at the potential for CDMs in seven Middle East and North African countries — mostly in the mid-income segment. But this has not happened yet in the GCC region. If the Gulf states are interesting in having The World Bank on board to help them identify and market CDM projects, we are very willing to offer the required assistance," Gregoire said. The official is currently visiting the Sultanate as part of The World Bank's delegation to the 1st Middle East & North Africa Forum on Flaring Reduction and Gas Utilization, which concluded at Al Bustan Palace InterContinental Hotel. Gregoire delivered a presentation on The World Bank's Carbon Partnership Facility, during the morning session yesterday.

## **BAHRAIN**

### **International Front**

#### **Bahrain, Oman discuss co-operation**

Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed al Khalifa, Bahrain's Minister of Culture and Information, received a written message from His Highness Sayyid Haitham bin Tareq al Said, Minister of Heritage and Culture and a similar message from Dr Rajha bint Abdulameer

bin Ali, Minister of Tourism, dealing with fostering co-operation between the two brotherly countries.

The messages were delivered by Abdulla bin Sulaiman al Mari, the Sultanate's Ambassador accredited to the kingdom of Bahrain when received by Shaikha Mai here yesterday. The meeting touched on means and ways of developing bilateral relations as well as subjects of common interest.

### **Bahrain to chair Arab Labour Organisation**

Bahrain was yesterday elected to chair the Arab Labour Organisation (ALO). Labour Minister Dr Majeed Al Alawi was elected chairman of the ALO at its 73rd general meeting held at the Ritz-Carlton Bahrain Hotel and Spa yesterday. Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) board member Othman Sharif was also elected to the ALO board. The ALO comprises 21 countries and there are eight seats on its board for a one-year term. Four seats are for governments, while the private sector and workers' representatives get two seats each. Dr Al Alawi pledged Bahrain's keenness to work with all countries on issues including unemployment, job opportunities for the youth, poverty, child labour and the relevant legislation.

### **Social Front**

#### **Bahrain warns poll candidates over use of mosques**

Authorities in Bahrain have warned election candidates against using mosques and other places of worship for their political campaigns in the forthcoming parliamentary and municipal elections. Punishment includes jail term of up to six months and a fine of BD500. The Sunni Endowment Directorate at the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs said in a statement on Wednesday that preachers, Imams and all others who work at places of worship should stick to rules and regulations and should not allow political activities, particularly promotion of election candidates. The ban also covers halls and meeting rooms linked to mosques.

#### **Education role hailed by Bahraini Prime Minister**

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa was yesterday praised for his role in promoting quality education in Bahrain. Education Minister Dr Majid Al Nuaimi underlined HRH the Crown Prince's support for the ministry and for reaching out to teachers, administrators and students. He was speaking during a visit by HRH the Crown Prince to the Imam Malik bin Anas Primary Boys' School, East Riffa, in the presence of Deputy Premier Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa.

HRH the Crown Prince stressed the need to instil the spirit of good citizenship. He also expressed great delight at the development he witnessed at the school, highlighting the students' discipline. He also paid tribute to teachers, pointing out to the hi-tech equipment available at the school.

## **Bahrain advocate peaceful use of nuclear energy**

Bahrain yesterday advocated the peaceful use of nuclear energy to serve economic development. "There is great need to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes as it represents the nerve centre of life in the third millennium," the Premier and the Crown Prince said.

His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Economic Development Board (EDB) chairman, voiced Bahrain's stance. They stressed the crucial importance of nuclear energy as an alternative source of energy, citing its benefits in generating electricity and desalinated water.

## **Bahrain to spearhead jobs task force plan**

A task force comprising Bahrain, the Arab Labour Organisation (ALO) and the Arab League will supervise implementation of a pan-Arab programme to promote employment. The jobs plan, which will be implemented in Jordan, Sudan, Syria, Palestine, Morocco and Yemen, was launched at the concluding session of the ALO's 73rd general meeting at the Ritz-Carlton Bahrain Hotel and Spa yesterday. Labour Minister Dr Majeed Al Alawi chaired the two-day meeting. The panel will be in charge of securing finances from Arab funds that back development and youth employment schemes. It will also ensure that the real needs of Arab markets are met and promote sustainable development.

## **Workers right to compensation reiterated: Bahraini govt**

The Bahrain government has made it clear that sacked expatriate workers have right to compensation under Bahrain's labour law. The compensation amount ranges from a minimum of BD150 to a maximum of BD500. Those who lost their jobs after their company wound up business because of financial reasons or if they were sacked without any reason are entitled to compensation. Legal Adviser at the Ministry of Labour, Dr Abdulbasat Abdulmohsen, told a forum on migrant workers held recently that expat workers could get compensation by adopting the same legal procedures which are used by locals.

## **Economy Front**

### **Bahrain Global Forum to play key future role**

The first International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) forum in Bahrain is a pilot and it will be developed over time. The Bahrain Global Forum will be a magnet for the world's top economists, business people and strategic thinkers to shape debate about the challenges to economic development, effective international financial regulation, free and fair trade, and regional and global economic governance, IISS director general Dr John

Chipman told delegates at the opening session last night. The forum runs until tomorrow at Ritz-Carlton Bahrain Hotel and Spa and has attracted leading economic experts from across the globe. "This, in particular, needs to be a forum that gives increasing voice to the economists and entrepreneurs from the so-called emerging markets," he said.

### **Respect deadlines says Bahraini Crown Prince**

Government departments were yesterday urged to provide basic infrastructure and services for housing projects under construction - and respect deadlines. His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Economic Development Board (EDB) chairman gave instructions to partner with the private sector in carrying out the schemes. Chairing the EDB meeting at Riffa Palace, he stressed the need to overcome obstacles which may hinder the execution of projects. He also highlighted the importance of meeting citizens' needs to ensure a decent housing environment, taking into account development standards set by His Majesty King Hamad. "Development projects have to serve citizens and meet their needs," he said, giving orders to set up a committee in charge of following up the issue.

### **Bahraini Shura approves amendments to free trade accord**

Amendments to the US-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Protocol were yesterday approved by the Shura Council. Councillors urgently passed the government-drafted bill to avoid any setback to the progress of the FTA. The amendments, already approved by parliament, include a change in technical requirements in the barcodes of certain merchandise, especially garments, which now require the mention of the country of origin. It also calls for naming the head of the Bahraini delegation in the joint agreement committee, which the government is suggesting becomes the Industry and Commerce Minister or another minister the Cabinet deputises. Council financial and economic affairs committee chairman Khalid Al Maskati said that without the amendments both countries would face problems exporting their goods.

## **QATAR**

### **International Front**

#### **'Inseparable relations' lauded in Doha**

Attendees at a symposium on the History of Saudi-Qatari Relations, part of the activities of the Saudi Cultural Week being held in the 2010 Capital of Arab Culture, Doha, have described the two countries as "inseparable geographically, historically and socially".

The symposium, held on Wednesday, gathered prominent cultural figures from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, who were united in their assessment of the "development of political, cultural and economic relations between the two countries". "What unites Saudi Arabia and Qatar goes beyond the customary in nations' relations, beginning with the facts of history and geography and their unity of origin, and including their Arab and Islamic

identities from which they cannot be separated in terms of land, people and history,” said symposium speaker Ali Bahkali. Bahkali said that their relations were centered on the two countries’ similar political approach in spreading peace and harmony between themselves and other nations, “particularly Islamic, Arab and Gulf nations”.

### **Qatar, Italy sign defence agreement**

Qatar and Italy yesterday signed an agreement on defence co-operation. The agreement was signed in Doha by the Qatari Armed Forces Chief of Staff HE Maj Gen Hamad bin Ali al-Attiyah and Italian Minister of State for Defence Guido Crosetto. The signing ceremony was attended by Italian Ambassador to Qatar Andrea Ferrari, Italy’s defence attache and a number of senior Qatari Armed Forces officers.

The Qatari Armed Forces chief of staff later held a meeting with the Italian minister where they discussed co-operation between the two countries, particularly in the military field. The meeting was attended by the Italian ambassador, Italy’s defense attache and a number of senior Qatari Armed Forces officers.

### **Lula’s visit aimed at cementing ties**

The visit of Brazilian President Luis Inacio Lula da Silva to Qatar, which kicks off on Saturday, aims to cement existing friendly relations between Brazil and Qatar and push forward strategic partnership, said the Brazilian Ambassador to Qatar, Anuar Nahes yesterday.

He told a news conference that talks on deepening strategic partnership and substantial cooperation in all fields will be held with the Qatari side with several bilateral deals and memorandum of understanding to be signed during the Brazilian President’s second visit to Qatar.

Nahes said President Lula’s delegation include a number of business leader and that energy, infrastructure, tourism, agriculture and investment economy will top the agenda of a scheduled business seminar of Brazilian and Qatari business leaders.

### **Syria, Qatar back Turkish effort for Iran N-solution**

Syria and Qatar back Turkish efforts for a diplomatic solution to the row over Iran's nuclear programme, Turkey's foreign minister said after leaders of the three countries met on Sunday, a report said. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Syrian President Bashar Al Assad and Qatar's ruler, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, held three-way talks in Istanbul to discuss regional affairs. Ahmet Davutoglu said the Syrian and Qatari leaders both supported Ankara's efforts to mediate between Western powers and Iran, among them a proposal to host talks over Tehran's nuclear activities, Anatolia news agency reported. "The three countries condemned recent rhetoric and actions raising tensions in the region... They emphasised support for all efforts aimed at regional peace and stability," the minister was quoted as saying.

## **Qatar and Lesotho sign pact to boost relations**

a round of official talks at the Emiri Diwan between HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani and King Letsie III of Lesotho. The talks dealt with means of developing ties of co-operation between the two countries in various fields as well as issues of common concern. The session was attended by Lesotho's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations Mohlabi Kenneth Tsekoa, Minister of Finance and Development Planning Dr Timothy Thahane, Minister of Youth, Sport and King Letsie III of Lesotho introducing HH the Emir to the members of his delegation.

## **Sheikha Mozah to visit Yemen today**

H H Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned, Chair of the Silatech Board of Advisers, will pay a visit to Yemen today to meet with Silatech's partners and observe Silatech's progress in its programmes in the capital Sana'a. Silatech's programmes in Yemen cover two focus areas: employment and enterprise development.

Silatech is helping young Yemenis access job opportunities through training and qualifications. Silatech is also helping them start or develop their own businesses through first-time access to finance, entrepreneurship training and related business development services.

## **Qaradawi warns of backlash against Europe's niqab ban moves**

Qatar-based Islamic scholar Sheikh Yousuf al-Qaradawi yesterday urged those European countries which are considering outlawing the full veil (niqab) to review their plans, saying that a wider ban on niqab might prompt clerics to campaign for imposing a "modest dress code" on foreigners living in Muslim countries.

In his Friday sermon, Sheikh Qaradawi said the recent outlawing of the face-covering veil in public by Belgium along with a French draft law to make it illegal would be a violation of both religious and personal freedoms. "I hope that France, Belgium and all of Europe will show respect to Islamic values and creed. Banning a Muslim woman from wearing the niqab would only place her in a dilemma about whether to comply with the law or obey what she believes is a religious order," Sheikh Qaradawi told a congregation at the Omar bin Al-Khattab mosque at Khalifa South town.

## **Social Front**

### **More citizens in key jobs: Attiyah**

The energy and industry sector yesterday held its Qatarisation Review Meeting marking 10 years of the energy industry's Strategic Qatarisation Plan. The meeting chaired by Deputy Premier and Minister of Energy and Industry, H E Abdullah bin Hamad Al Attiyah was attended by senior executives and representatives from all the 40

participating companies, along with dignitaries from Qatar's education community and special guests.

Al Attiyah expressed his appreciation for the success of the plan and took immense pride in it. He said in his opening address that sound fiscal policies have turned the country into an investment magnet. "Qatar's multi-pronged economic strategy is designed to diversify its industrial platform and its overall economic structure to secure multiple and durable sources of national income," he said.

### **Qatar' Supreme Judiciary Council creates 2 panels at primary court**

The Supreme Judiciary Council (SJC) chaired by Chief of the Cassation Court and President of the Supreme Judicial Council H E Masood Mohammed Al Amri decided the setting up of two panels at the primary court competent in criminal offences related to checks.

By establishing these panels, the Council seeks to consolidate the principles of trustworthiness in dealing with checks, which plays vital and major role at the commercial transactions and the prompt delivery of justice.

### **Economy Front**

#### **Qatar and China to boost energy ties**

The governments of Qatar and China yesterday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to strengthen co-operation in the energy and financial sectors. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and visiting Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani attended the signing ceremony after their meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

Hailing China-Qatar relations, the People's Daily Online quoted Wen as saying "the two nations in recent years have increased mutual political trust and common interests and enjoyed a solid foundation for expanding bilateral win-win co-operation."

#### **Malaysia and Qatar to sign MoU worth \$ 5bn**

Malaysia and Qatar will sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) tomorrow to explore deals worth up to \$ 5bn in fields, including energy and Islamic finance, a source said yesterday. The government-to-government deal will be signed in Kuala Lumpur, said the source.

#### **Brazilian president's Qatar visit likely to boost trade, tourism**

The upcoming visit of Brazilian President, Luis Inacio Lula da Silva to Qatar is set to enhance tourism and trade between the countries. This will be further strengthened with Qatar Airways launching the Sao Paulo route this year. One of the highlights of the

presidential visit includes a presentation that will introduce Brazil and its main tourism destinations to local travel agents and tourism operators.

### **Qatar-Jordan joint panel meet begins**

The third meeting of the Qatari-Jordanian joint committee began yesterday at the Business And Trade Ministry Headquarters here under the co-chairmanship of HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Dr Khalid bin Mohamed al-Attiyah who is also acting Business and Trade Minister, and Jordanian Minister of Industry and Trade Amir al-Hadidi.

During the meeting, an agreement of co-operation in the field of standardisation activities between the governments of Qatar and Jordan, and the minutes of the committee's meetings were signed by Dr Khalid al-Attiyah and Amir al-Hadidi. Addressing a joint press conference, the two ministers underlined their keenness to convene the joint committee's meetings on a regular basis to discuss several issues in the economic, trade and technical areas that would enhance bilateral relations.