

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

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

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GCC countries are power of stability: Kuwaiti diplomat  
GCC urged to revise employment policies to address jobless plight  
GCC's employment policies not effective: Study shows  
Include Iran, Iraq in GCC for a bigger say: S Korea leader  
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GCC engaged in dialogues with world's major players  
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GCC, Chinese Vice President vow closer ties  
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German firms eye partners in GCC**

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Yemen LNG says in line with production**

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## **Economy Front**

**Abu Dhabi to finance Bahrain's electric grid project**

**Causeway work on schedule: Bahrain**

**Bahrain in new push to bolster US trade**

## **QATAR**

### **International Front**

**Vietnam keen on boosting ties with Qatar**

**Qatar calls for disaster relief force**

**UN okays Qatar rights report**

**France, Qatar hold round of talks on 'strategic dialogue'**

**JEM skips Darfur talks in Doha**

**Qatar mediating Eritrea-Djibouti border dispute**

**Qatar, UK PMs hold talks**

**Qatar tries to build niche as a peace negotiator**

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### **Economy Front**

**US trade with Qatar up by 387pc in five years**

**US extending its support to Qatar's SME initiative**

**QTA road shows to tap growing Asian markets**

## **SUMMARY**

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries individually and through international institutions are credited with continued collaboration with developed countries and extending development assistance, Kuwait's ambassador to the EU and Belgium, Nabeela Al-Mulla said here Wednesday. "Prospects for investments in GCC countries is wide and varied. The countries continue to diversify and privatise their economies," she told a luncheon meeting organized by the Arab-Belgium-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce (ABLCC) this afternoon. She cited the example of Kuwait which recently approved USD 121 billion five years development plan aimed at boosting private sector participation in over 1,000 projects. Addressing the large audience of Arab and European diplomats, businessmen, bankers, academics and journalists on the topic of the current Kuwait Presidency of the 6-member GCC, she said that "the GCC as an idea was born in Kuwait 29 years ago upon the initiative of the late Amir, HH Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah, out of conviction of the importance of regional cohesion." "We have come a long way in terms of consolidating this cohesion. The GCC enjoys political stability in a region fraught with problems and crises. GCC countries are a power of stability, in a global sense," stressed al-Mulla. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has begun a new policy of launching dialogues with major international players, Kuwaiti Deputy Premier and

Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah said yesterday, highlighting the just-inaugurated GCC-China strategic dialogue in Beijing and his current Asian trip as a whole. We have a new policy to have dialogues with the world's top economic and political powers, such as Japan, where I visited yesterday, and also the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)," Sheikh Dr. Mohammad, whose country holds the current rotating GCC presidency, told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA). The six-member GCC plans to initiate a similar dialogue with Russia by the end of this year, he said, adding that the bloc is also engaged with Europe and the US. The GCC groups Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain and Oman. UAE's Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior Sheikh Lieutenant General Saif bin Zayed Al-Nahayan held official talks in Jeddah Sunday with Saudi Second Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior Prince Naif bin Abdulaziz on bilateral security cooperation. Prince Naif said the meeting was serving best interest of the Saudi and UAE people to ultimately boost march of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), state-run news agency (SPA) reported. The talks dealt with bilateral security cooperation and other issues of mutual interest, it added. The meeting was attended by senior officials from both sides. Foreign Minister Shaikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan reiterated the UAE's condemnation of the Israeli attack on a humanitarian convoy. Shaikh Abdullah also renewed the UAE's call on the international community to shoulder its responsibility in the face of the barbaric Israeli aggression. He further called on the United Nations Secretary-General to launch an impartial investigation into this aggression and prepare a full report. In a speech before the Third Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in Istanbul, Shaikh Abdullah expressed heartfelt condolences to Turkey and all the bereaved families of the martyrs who lost their lives in the attack. Kuwaiti parliamentarians called on the Arab Parliament yesterday to hold dialogues with the European Parliament (EP) and other regional parliaments to further explain the Palestinian cause and impacts of the Israeli siege on Gaza in particular. "The Arab Parliament should contact the EP and parliaments around the Arab region to explain the dimensions of the Palestinian cause," Arab Parliament member Marzouq Al-Ghanem said on sidelines of the Arab Parliament special session to discuss the Israeli bloody attack on freedom flotilla and siege on Gaza. The EP is very important because most of its members are from the ruling parties in the European Union (EU) countries thus close to the decision-making circle, he said, "therefore there will be an understanding about the Palestinian cause in general and the siege on Gaza in specific. Al-Ghanem said the Arab parliamentarians were weak during the dialogues with other parties. "In all meeting with the EP's foreign affairs committee we find the focus on the Iranian nuclear reactor and other issues away from the Palestinian cause." There is a proposal, during the Arab Parliament's urgent session, to send a delegation to Gaza in yet another attempt to break the four-year-old siege on the Strip, he added. Oman and Iran, in a joint communiqué, have condemned the Israeli attack on the Freedom Flotilla as a "crime against humanity". They also called for lifting the siege imposed on Gaza by Israel without conditions or limitations. The communiqué, issued at the end of an official visit to Iran by Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Isaee, Chairman of the Majlis Ash'shura, demanded a halt to illegal settlements in Palestinian territory and Israeli withdrawal from all occupied lands, including Al Quds Al Sharif, Gaza Strip, West Bank, Golan Heights and Shabaa Farms. It said Tel Aviv must release all Palestinian prisoners

from Israeli prisons. The statement was signed by Shaikh Ahmed and Ali Larjani, Speaker of the Iranian parliament. Qatar has put itself solidly behind fellow Arab states that have decided to take Israel to the International Court of Justice for killing nine activists in a raid on Gaza-bound aid ships on Monday, and said it would meet all the expenses to be incurred on the legal proceedings. Qatar has also said it would fund a worldwide media campaign to expose Israel, its blockade of the Gaza Strip and the aggression it has been perpetrating in the territory. The Secretary-General of the Arab League, Amr Moussa, told local Arabic dailies that Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, H E Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabor Al Thani, has assured the League of the country's moral and financial support on the above issues. It was at Qatar's behest that foreign ministers of Arab League member countries met in Cairo on Wednesday and Thursday to discuss the Israeli raid and its Gaza blockade.

The Council of Ministers commended the progress achieved by the Kingdom over the past five years in a weekly meeting of the council at Al-Salam Palace in Jeddah on Monday. The meeting was presided by Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah, who completes his fifth lunar year as monarch on Wednesday. He assumed power on Aug. 1, 2005. "The council stressed the achievements of the Kingdom over the past five years under the leadership of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah, making people's life more prosperous and dignified," Minister of Culture and Information Abdul Aziz Khoja said in a statement to the Saudi Press Agency following the weekly Cabinet meeting. "The Kingdom also played a notable role in the international scene, reflecting the king's prudent policies that seeks the well being of the citizens and others. The council also noted his initiatives in supporting Arab and Islamic causes on international stages apart from his efforts to solve humanitarian issues and to achieve safety and stability in the world." The Abu Dhabi Education Council unveiled its Higher Education Strategic Plan to achieve the aims of the emirate's plan of economic diversification and establishing a knowledge-based economy. The plan aims to raise Abu Dhabi's higher education system to international standards and develop an innovation-based, knowledge-producing society. Among the higher education strategy priorities are raising the quality of Abu Dhabi's higher education standards to the international level, aligning higher education with the labour requirements, building and maintaining a research eco-system and providing affordable access to higher education. The plan comes as a result of a landmark decision by government leaders to make education the highest priority as part of plans to improve the economic diversity and sustainability of Abu Dhabi. The Kuwaiti government's recently approved amendment to the recently passed private sector labor law which will allow women in a number of professions to work nightshifts has been widely welcomed. The new amendment will cover women working in a number of professions and environments, with beneficiaries including female bank, pharmacy and restaurant staff, as well as media workers. Prior to the introduction of the new amendment, female employees were only allowed to work until 10pm, with the change to the law seen as a valuable step forward by many female Kuwaiti professionals, who explained that they wish to demonstrate their dedication to their professions and to prove their ability and responsibility in regard without being restricted by legislation limiting their working hours. Hematologist Dr. Rana Abdulrazzaq said that if women demand equality and justice in treatment and rights within society, they must prove that

they are fulfilling their obligations towards society in return. Shaikh Abdullah bin Nasir al Bakri, Manpower Minister, and Mohammed bin Abdullah al Riyami, Chairman of the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), yesterday discussed co-operation between the ministry and NCHR on manpower rights in the private sector. They also reviewed the ministry's role in protecting human rights by enforcing the labour law and issuance of legislations and regulations that ensure labour rights in the private sector. The meeting also touched on promulgation of the Sultanate's General Trade Union and 72 trade unions representing employees in the private sector and the issuance of safety and occupational health regulations for the protection of employees at the job site against injuries and disease. It also dealt with drafting new regulations for foreign manpower recruiting agencies, procedures pursued by the ministry for regulation of labour market and allowing the overstaying expatriates to finally leave the Sultanate by end of September without paying any fees or penalties. His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and Economic Development Board (EDB) Chairman, has asserted that reforming education and upgrading its output are going on according to a clear vision aiming at developing its systems and providing necessary training programmes needed to refine practical skills. This came as he received Bahrain Polytechnic (BP) chief executive officer John Scott who presented him with the BP's yearly report. The Crown Prince praised the BP officials' patriotic initiative aimed at creating developed systems that will upgrade the competence of its graduates and facilitate their integration into the labour market and meet its requirements, hailing on-going positive co-operation between this educational institution and its private sector counterparts in this regard.

An increasing number of mid-cap German firms are eyeing joint ventures and alliances with Gulf Arab partners as a means to tap opportunities in the region and diversify their portfolios, the head of boutique investment bank FCF said. Sectors include those where the specialisation and expertise of German firms and high net Gulf investors can collaborate, Arno Fuchs, the chief executive of the German bank, said. Gulf states have stakes in several high profile German multinationals, predominantly through their burgeoning sovereign wealth funds. These include Qatar Holding's 10% stake in car maker Porsche, and Kuwait Investment Authority's 6.9% stake in auto giant Daimler. Strategic partnerships between companies with a market cap of between \$ 100mn and \$ 1bn in the industrial and high technology are a natural investment fit for Gulf institutional and high net worth investors, Fuchs said. "There is now a shift towards strategically oriented investors. The companies that investors are opting for do have a strategic interest," he said. Saudi Arabia, the world's top crude exporter, will supply full contracted volumes of crude oil in July to at least seven Asian term buyers, steady with June levels, industry sources said yesterday. Traders in the region had expected full volumes to be supplied for July. Saudi Arabia has restored full contracted volumes to most Asian buyers since January after curbs for most of 2009 that were put in place to toe the line on Opec's record output cuts. "It was no surprise," said one source at a term buyer who spoke on condition of anonymity, adding that there would be no major impact on the Asian spot crude market. French oil firm Total and Spain's Abengoa Solar will partner with Abu Dhabi's alternative energy company Masdar to build "the world's largest" concentrated solar power plant, Masdar announced on Wednesday. The state-

owned firm said it has selected a “consortium of Total and Abengoa Solar as a partner to own, build and operate Shams 1, the world’s largest concentrated solar power plant and the first of its kind in the Middle East.” “We are moving on the right path to make Abu Dhabi the main source and the international capital of renewable energy and sustainable development,” Masdar CEO Sultan al-Jaber told a news conference in the oil-rich emirate. The plant “will offset 170 thousand tons of carbon dioxide annually.” Oil reserves of Opec member Kuwait have fallen to below 100 billion barrels as daily withdrawals are not being compensated for by an increase in stocks, a newspaper reported yesterday. “The probability of boosting reserves through new finds is diminishing more and more, especially due to Kuwait’s limited area .which makes technological development the only practical means to raise Kuwaiti reserves,” daily newspaper Al Rai reported, citing oil sources. Kuwait, the world’s fourth-largest oil exporter, wants to boost its oil capacity to four million barrels per day from three million bpd in 2020 and sustain the higher capacity level for 10 years. Kuwait’s oil reserves have been the subject of controversial public debate. The 11th meetings of the Oman-Germany Joint Committee yesterday signed the minutes of the last session held here under the auspices of Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Dr Berend Faven Bach, German Deputy Minister of Economy and Technology. Sayyid Badr stressed the depth of Oman-Germany relations and expressed his satisfaction with the level of investment and trade exchange. He said that the volume of trade between the Sultanate and Germany rose to 946 million euro in 2008, but declined to 464 million euro in 2009 due to the global financial crisis. Sayyid Badr said that there is still great scope for further co-operation, noting that such economic meetings serve the goal of increasing mutual investment. A Bahraini delegation, led by Economic Development Board (EDB) chief executive Shaikh Mohammed bin Essa Al Khalifa, will arrive in the US today to hold key business talks and sign agreements. During the 15-day visit, the delegation will hold talks with leading US companies in New York, Atlanta in Georgia, Oklahoma City and Houston in Texas. Officials from the Bahraini Government, EDB and private sector will discuss the opportunities presented by the Bahrain-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that enables the Bahraini private sector to open up job opportunities for its citizens and woo investments, which are among the main goals of the EDB's economic reforms and initiatives. "His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and the EDB Chairman, stresses on achieving sustainable growth through sound and flexible economic policy," Shaikh Mohammed said. "HRH the Crown Prince also backs a highly-educated and skilled national workforce, diversified economy and tried and tested regulation. "In today's world, our strong track record provides the optimum environment for US companies and investors to do business both in and from," Shaikh Mohammed said."Our visit to the US aims to build on the long-standing and close relationship between the two nations and the strong economic and trade connections - including the success of the FTA," he added, saying that there is a growing number of US companies that recognise Bahrain as the best location from which they can have access to the trillion-dollar Gulf market and the wider Middle East.

## GCC

### **Intelligence sharing key to maritime security in GCC**

Solid exchange of intelligence and close cooperation are vital elements for thwarting terrorist threats to the maritime security of the UAE, a British security expert has said. Paul Burke, managing director, Middle East Security Limited, UK, said 85 per cent of the Middle East's oil passes through the Strait of Hormuz (approximately 17 million barrels per day). The maritime sector in the Arabian Gulf is vital to the economic security of the UAE, as it remains a stated target of terrorist attack, Burke said.

He was delivering a lecture on "The Terrorist Threat to the Maritime Security of the UAE" at the Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research in the capital on Tuesday evening. Al Qaeda has already threatened the US, Europe and Russia as well as the Middle East that it would target their oil reservoirs as the West depends on them. Only 'better maritime domain' (BMD) awareness and greater cooperation among GCC nations can prevent these threats, Burke suggested.

### **GCC countries are power of stability: Kuwaiti diplomat**

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries individually and through international institutions are credited with continued collaboration with developed countries and extending development assistance, Kuwait's ambassador to the EU and Belgium, Nabeela Al-Mulla said here Wednesday. "Prospects for investments in GCC countries is wide and varied. The countries continue to diversify and privatise their economies," she told a luncheon meeting organized by the Arab-Belgium-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce (ABLCC) this afternoon. She cited the example of Kuwait which recently approved USD 121 billion five years development plan aimed at boosting private sector participation in over 1,000 projects.

Addressing the large audience of Arab and European diplomats, businessmen, bankers, academics and journalists on the topic of the current Kuwait Presidency of the 6-member GCC, she said that "the GCC as an idea was born in Kuwait 29 years ago upon the initiative of the late Amir, HH Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah, out of conviction of the importance of regional cohesion." "We have come a long way in terms of consolidating this cohesion. The GCC enjoys political stability in a region fraught with problems and crises. GCC countries are a power of stability, in a global sense," stressed al-Mulla.

### **GCC urged to revise employment policies to address jobless plight**

Major policy changes must take place in the GCC's labor to tackle the growing dependence on the public sector as the main job creator, a study conducted by Booz & Company's Ideation center published on Sunday said.

"With unemployment levels of nationals reaching double digits in all GCC countries, despite rapid economic growth over the past decade, the region must effect wide-scale

changes in order to reverse the problems of unemployment,” the study said. Cultural and legal issues were among the factors that affect the employment policies in the GCC region, the study said. “An education system not well aligned with the needs of modern industry; citizens conditioned to expect that governments will always take care of them; and often-ineffective policies in areas such as immigration and retirement,” the study pointed out.

### **GCC's employment policies not effective: Study shows**

A recently carried-out study covering labor markets in the GCC region, concluded that major changes must take place in order to tackle the growing dependence on the public sector as the main job creator. The study conducted by Booz & Company's Ideation center was published in a press release on Sunday. "With unemployment levels of nationals reaching double digits in all GCC countries, despite rapid economic growth over the past decade, the region must effect wide-scale changes in order to reverse the problems of unemployment," the study reads.

Among the numerous challenges that faced employment policies in the GCC region, the study points out to cultural and legal causes for the phenomenon. "An education system not well aligned with the needs of modern industry; citizens conditioned to expect that governments will always take care of them; and often-ineffective policies in areas such as immigration and retirement," the study summarizes.

### **Include Iran, Iraq in GCC for a bigger say: S Korea leader**

The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) should be expanded to include bigger countries like Iran and Iraq for having wider representation of the Gulf region and larger say in the international arena, according to South Korea's former foreign minister. Moreover, smaller countries like Qatar will have important supporting role in “positively” influencing the West Asian issues and ensuring external safety in the region, said Song Min-Soon, who was in Doha to address the Doha Forum, which concluded on Thursday. “The GCC all together is not a major player here. You need to include Iran and Iraq within its framework,” the former envoy told Gulf Times in an interview.

### **GCC's municipal conference targets improving towns, services**

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) municipal conference which kicked off Sunday aims at improving municipal services and towns in the Gulf, Head of the organizing committee Ali Al-Kamali said. The five-day conference which tackles developing GCC towns within global strategic competition will help improve communication between municipalities which work to meet public needs, Al-Kamali said.

Municipal work helps boost nations' political, economic, and security development as well as help with implementing strategies concerned, he said. He noted the developmental progress the countries of the GCC witnessed in various domains recently,

adding that this should be met by a municipal development process directed towards serving the public's new and current needs.

### **GCC engaged in dialogues with world's major players**

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has begun a new policy of launching dialogues with major international players, Kuwaiti Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah said yesterday, highlighting the just-inaugurated GCC-China strategic dialogue in Beijing and his current Asian trip as a whole.

We have a new policy to have dialogues with the world's top economic and political powers, such as Japan, where I visited yesterday, and also the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)," Sheikh Dr. Mohammad, whose country holds the current rotating GCC presidency, told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA). The six-member GCC plans to initiate a similar dialogue with Russia by the end of this year, he said, adding that the bloc is also engaged with Europe and the US. The GCC groups Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain and Oman.

### **GCC ask ILO to set out duties of domestic workers recruitment**

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states stressed here yesterday that the proposed international agreements on domestic workers should discuss the duties of recruitment agencies that brought the workers from abroad. This came in a speech by Director of the General Immigration Department of Kuwait's Interior Ministry, Major General Kamil Al-Awadhi, on behalf of the GCC states, at the 99th annual conference of the International Labor Organization (ILO).

He said that it was important that recruitment agencies brief the domestic workers about their rights and duties, as well as the culture of the societies that they would be working in. He stressed that domestic workers in the Gulf countries lived in the houses of citizens and were treated as members of the families at which they worked. They get proper accommodation and meals, he pointed out. The GCC states coordinate with each other and exchange information on policies regarding dealing with workers, he said.

### **GCC, Chinese Vice President vow closer ties**

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) representatives and Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping on Friday shared a view that the two sides should enhance strategic coordination. The GCC ministers reaffirmed their commitment to pursue closer cooperation with China in such areas as economy, trade energy and investment. The GCC groups Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain and Oman.

On his part, Xi welcomed the successful launch of the GCC-China strategic dialogue and underscored the important role played by the GCC, expressing China's readiness to work

with the six-member bloc through the strategic dialogue to strengthen strategic coordination, expand areas of cooperation and seek all-round and in-depth cooperation.

### **Renewable energy to ease power shortage**

Countries in the GCC, a region with a high concentration of hydrocarbons, need strong policy initiatives and closer involvement of the region's governments to promote the renewable energy sector, top-placed officials in the industry said. Renewable energy, especially solar power, could help an emirate such as Sharjah, which is experiencing power shortage, supplement its supplies, they suggested.

"Harvesting the energy of the sun is a great possibility for the [GCC] region. It could also be a good way to prevent electrical shortages, like in Sharjah. This emirate is going through drastic shortage at the moment," H  l  ne Pelosse, the Interim Director-General of Abu Dhabi-based International Renewable Energy Agency (Irena), told Emirates Business. "The challenges in the region [GCC] are pretty much the same as in a lot of countries: adequate policies are lacking. Here also, fossil oils are cheap; so there needs to be incentives to develop renewable energies," Pelosse said.

### **German firms eye partners in GCC**

An increasing number of mid-cap German firms are eyeing joint ventures and alliances with Gulf Arab partners as a means to tap opportunities in the region and diversify their portfolios, the head of boutique investment bank FCF said. Sectors include those where the specialisation and expertise of German firms and high net Gulf investors can collaborate, Arno Fuchs, the chief executive of the German bank, said.

Gulf states have stakes in several high profile German multinationals, predominantly through their burgeoning sovereign wealth funds. These include Qatar Holding's 10% stake in car maker Porsche, and Kuwait Investment Authority's 6.9% stake in auto giant Daimler. Strategic partnerships between companies with a market cap of between \$ 100mn and \$ 1bn in the industrial and high technology are a natural investment fit for Gulf institutional and high net worth investors, Fuchs said. "There is now a shift towards strategically oriented investors. The companies that investors are opting for do have a strategic interest," he said.

## **YEMEN**

### **Yemen, Turkey to launch political dialogue**

Yemen and Turkey is to launch on Friday a political dialogue in the Turkish capital, Ankara. A diplomatic source told the weekly 26 September that the Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Muthana will head the Yemeni delegation in the dialogue, which will focus on enhancing mutual cooperation and coordination at the bilateral, regional and international levels.

Moreover, he will take part in the Yemeni-Turkish Forum meeting to be held in Istanbul city on June 16 – 17 to discuss several issues concerning cultural, scientific and academic cooperation between Yemen and Turkey, according to the source. Muthana has participated in the Arab-Turkish Forum held on June 9 – 11 in Istanbul city. It discussed the cooperation relations between Arab countries and Turkey.

### **Yemen LNG says in line with production**

Yemen LNG said its first train was producing at 99 percent availability and its second train at 91 percent availability, the company's general manager said yesterday. In October, production started at the first train of the \$ 4.5bn project to produce LNG natural gas chilled to its liquid form for delivery to markets by ships. "Our production is now reaching the maximum and we look forward to achieving the objective of production in 2010 of the budget," Francois Rafin, general manager of Yemen LNG, said in a speech at the inauguration of its second train. The project had stayed within budget, he added.

It was the first LNG plant in Yemen, the Arab world's poorest state which just emerged from a violent civil war, and is its largest industrial project. The government hopes LNG exports will offset the impact of rapidly falling oil output on state revenues and boost economic growth.

## **SAUDI ARABIA**

### **International Front**

#### **Saudi, UAE Interior Ministers discuss security cooperation**

UAE's Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior Sheikh Lieutenant General Saif bin Zayed Al-Nahayan held official talks in Jeddah Sunday with Saudi Second Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior Prince Naif bin Abdulaziz on bilateral security cooperation. Prince Naif said the meeting was serving best interest of the Saudi and UAE people to ultimately boost march of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), state-run news agency (SPA) reported. The talks dealt with bilateral security cooperation and other issues of mutual interest, it added. The meeting was attended by senior officials from both sides.

#### **Prince Turki hopes to see a society of harmony**

Prince Turki Al-Faisal, the former head of Saudi Intelligence and ambassador to the United Kingdom and Ireland and to the United States, hopes to see his grandchildren live in a society of harmony and well-being and get an opportunity to reach their maximum capabilities.

In an exclusive interview for Saudi Gazette conducted at the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies in Riyadh, Prince Turki also talked about the vision of Late King Faisal, who wanted to see Saudi Arabia become "a wellspring of radiance to

mankind.” “I hope that the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies through its work has managed to be a tool that applies that vision to reality by reaching out and being of service to mankind. This is a universal beehive of research, academic and scholarly work. It’s a wonderful place to be for someone like me, who is in retirement,” Prince Turki said.

## **Social Front**

### **King Abdullah hailed for development work**

The past five years have brought a new era of security, stability, national unity and social cohesion combined with progress in all fields in the Kingdom, according to Speaker of the Shoura Council, Abdullah Al Ashaikh.

Commenting on the fifth anniversary of the Baiah (Pledge of Allegiance) to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah, which falls on Wednesday, Al Ashaikh said in a statement: “History will record that King Abdullah fulfilled his commitment to the citizens when they gave him the Pledge of Allegiance five years ago. His major concern since then has been the welfare of the people of the Kingdom. He visited all parts of the Kingdom to see them in person and learn their needs. He initiated huge projects worth billions for their welfare.” He said that the King had exerted his efforts for the development of religious institutions to improve their performance in addition to the establishment of new buildings and headquarters for important institutions.

### **Draft on terror sent to Saudi Cabinet committee**

The Ministry of Interior has referred a 65-article draft regulation on terrorism-related crime to the Cabinet’s Commission of Experts with a view to it proceeding to the Shoura Council followed by the King for approval.

An informed source said that the draft, which is the result of a lengthy study conducted by the Ministry of Interior, classifies crimes of terrorism as: establishment, organization, financing, instigation, participation, planning, and assistance. Each category has ceilings defined as minimum, medium and maximum. The source said the Ministry of Interior drafted the regulation with assistance from various specialists and drew on the experience of advanced countries. Representatives from four government authorities also contributed.

### **Saudi to help abandoned families**

A total of 1,500 widows and children have been abandoned in 19 countries across the world by Saudi husbands and fathers because of unlicensed marriages, many conducted in secrecy, according to Tawfiq Al Suwailam, head of Awasir, the Society for the Welfare of Saudi Families Abroad. The countries where they are found stretch from the Philippines in the east to the United States in the west, and approximately 90 per cent of

them are in brotherly nations such as Yemen, Syria, Egypt, Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, and the Lebanon, he said.

Al Suwailam said that the society was setting up a database of information on families left in dire straits by Saudis, and that a precise survey ordered by Prince Nayef, Second Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior, revealed data on 575 Saudi families comprising 1,552 widows and children left fatherless in 19 countries, they are eligible for help from Awasir. He said Prince Nayef, as honorary president of Awasir ordered the study, and also that families be returned to the Kingdom as soon as possible.

### **Progress on women's rights in Saudi Arabia, says ambassador**

Progress has been made on women's rights in the Kingdom under the reign of King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. This is according to Ambassador Dr. Abdul Wahab Attar, representative of the Kingdom to the United Nations in Geneva.

Delivering a speech Monday on behalf of the Kingdom to the Human Rights Council on Women's Rights, Attar highlighted plans to improve the skills of women. "Islamic law focuses on basic human rights and gives women their rights in all affairs of life," he said. He added that Islamic law prohibits any violations and oppression of women. He pointed out that Saudi Arabia's signing of the convention against various forms of discrimination against women is evidence of the Kingdom's efforts to provide jobs for women and improve their role in society.

### **Prosperity, reforms and vision hallmark of Abdullah's reign**

The Council of Ministers commended the progress achieved by the Kingdom over the past five years in a weekly meeting of the council at Al-Salam Palace in Jeddah on Monday. The meeting was presided by Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah, who completes his fifth lunar year as monarch on Wednesday. He assumed power on Aug. 1, 2005.

"The council stressed the achievements of the Kingdom over the past five years under the leadership of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah, making people's life more prosperous and dignified," Minister of Culture and Information Abdul Aziz Khoja said in a statement to the Saudi Press Agency following the weekly Cabinet meeting. "The Kingdom also played a notable role in the international scene, reflecting the king's prudent policies that seeks the well being of the citizens and others. The council also noted his initiatives in supporting Arab and Islamic causes on international stages apart from his efforts to solve humanitarian issues and to achieve safety and stability in the world."

### **King Abdullah tells Ummah to counter anti-Islam campaign**

King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, Saturday called upon the Islamic Ummah to hold fast to the Holy Qur'an, abide by its moderation and flexibility and keep

away from fundamentalist thoughts and beliefs. This came in the King's speech, read out by Prince Khaled Al-Faisal, Emir of Makkah, during the inauguration of the First International Conference on Teaching of the Holy Qur'an here, Saturday.

King Abdullah's speech urged scholars to correctly interpret the verses of the Holy Qur'an in order to refute the allegations of the enemies of Islam who "accuse our religion and the Holy Qur'an as preaching extremism, terrorism and rigidity although our religion is distinguished for advocating tolerance, mercy and compassion."

### **Economic Front**

#### **Saudi to supply full crude volume in July**

Saudi Arabia, the world's top crude exporter, will supply full contracted volumes of crude oil in July to at least seven Asian term buyers, steady with June levels, industry sources said yesterday. Traders in the region had expected full volumes to be supplied for July.

Saudi Arabia has restored full contracted volumes to most Asian buyers since January after curbs for most of 2009 that were put in place to toe the line on Opec's record output cuts. "It was no surprise," said one source at a term buyer who spoke on condition of anonymity, adding that there would be no major impact on the Asian spot crude market.

#### **Accord signed for development of downtown Jeddah**

Makkah Gov. Prince Khaled Al-Faisal attended the signing of the final agreement for the development of the downtown area of Jeddah. The agreement was signed between the Jeddah Development and Urban Recreation Company (JDURC) and the Downtown Development Co. on Wednesday.

The agreement was signed by Jeddah Mayor Adel Fakieh, chairman of the JDURC, and Ghassan Al-Sulaiman, chairman of the Downtown Development Co. The development project will cover the historic district, the beachfront and the Arbaeen Lake. "The agreement aims to strengthen the partnership between the Jeddah Municipality represented by JDURC and the private sector represented by the Downtown Co., which is a coalition of domestic and Gulf investors," Fakieh said after the signing ceremony.

#### **US firms eye Saudi Arabia's health care, water sectors**

US Commerce Undersecretary for International Trade Francisco J. Sanchez visited Saudi Arabia this week with a delegation of 11 American specialized companies in health care and water and waste management to explore possible investment opportunities as Saudi Arabia is increasing its focus on these sectors. Sanchez, on the first mission abroad after his appointment by President Barack Obama in March this year, said: "Saudi Arabia and the US have a long history of strong friends and allies on many fronts including commerce."

Sanchez said the Riyadh visit exceeded his expectations as the delegation met with the minister of health and officials of water management, other government and private sector officials to explore investment opportunities. Sanchez said National Water Co. impressed him, as it was seeking best technologies to solve problems across Saudi Arabia. "Increasing population and rapid urbanization are creating a strong demand for health care and water management sectors in Saudi Arabia," Sanchez said.

## **UAE**

### **International Front**

#### **UAE endorses call for global investigation**

Foreign Minister Shaikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan reiterated the UAE's condemnation of the Israeli attack on a humanitarian convoy. Shaikh Abdullah also renewed the UAE's call on the international community to shoulder its responsibility in the face of the barbaric Israeli aggression. He further called on the United Nations Secretary-General to launch an impartial investigation into this aggression and prepare a full report.

In a speech before the Third Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in Istanbul, Shaikh Abdullah expressed heartfelt condolences to Turkey and all the bereaved families of the martyrs who lost their lives in the attack.

#### **US Under Secretary highlights strong US-UAE security relationship**

Ellen Tauscher, US Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security has praised US-UAE's deep security relationship during an event hosted by the US-UAE Business Council in Washington. Under Secretary Tauscher highlighted the two countries' Peaceful Nuclear Energy Agreement, military-to-military cooperation, and collaboration on regional security matters. She also commended UAE's efforts to enforce export control laws and prevent the shipment of dangerous goods.

#### **UAE FM meets Palestinian president in Istanbul**

UAE Foreign Minister Shaikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan met here today Chairman of Palestinian National Authority. Sheikh Abdullah assured the Palestinian president of the UAE's firm support for the Palestinian people and its leadership. President Abbas briefed Sheikh Abdullah on the topics he will raise with US officials during his upcoming visit to Washington. The meeting took place on the sideline of the "Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA)" conference that began in Istanbul today.

## **UAE key partner, says new British defence minister**

British Defence Minister, Dr Liam Fox, on Monday completed a two-day UAE visit intended to signal British friendship and support for the UAE, a key partner in the region.

The visit is one of the Defence Minister's first overseas engagements since the new UK government took office. He was appointed Britain's Secretary of State for Defence on May 12 and has since visited the UK's Armed Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. "Our relationship with the UAE is a hugely important one, which is why I have made it a priority to visit early in the new UK government. "The UK and the UAE work very closely together on a range of regional and bilateral issues. I have been very impressed with the bravery and professionalism displayed by both our militaries. I hope to develop even closer links during my visit," Dr Fox said in a statement issued by the British Embassy in Abu Dhabi.

## **Saudi, UAE Interior Ministers discuss security cooperation**

UAE's Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior Sheikh Lieutenant General Saif bin Zayed Al-Nahayan held official talks in Jeddah Sunday with Saudi Second Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior Prince Naif bin Abdulaziz on bilateral security cooperation. Prince Naif said the meeting was serving best interest of the Saudi and UAE people to ultimately boost march of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), state-run news agency (SPA) reported. The talks dealt with bilateral security cooperation and other issues of mutual interest, it added. The meeting was attended by senior officials from both sides.

## **Social Front**

### **Abu Dhabi unveils higher education strategic plan**

The Abu Dhabi Education Council unveiled its Higher Education Strategic Plan to achieve the aims of the emirate's plan of economic diversification and establishing a knowledge-based economy. The plan aims to raise Abu Dhabi's higher education system to international standards and develop an innovation-based, knowledge-producing society.

Among the higher education strategy priorities are raising the quality of Abu Dhabi's higher education standards to the international level, aligning higher education with the labour requirements, building and maintaining a research eco-system and providing affordable access to higher education. The plan comes as a result of a landmark decision by government leaders to make education the highest priority as part of plans to improve the economic diversity and sustainability of Abu Dhabi.

## **UAE Policy is based on tolerance: UAE Official**

The UAE adopts tolerance policy and is open to all world peoples without segregation, said Director of the Human Rights Department at the Ministry of Interior Brig. Ahmed Nakhaira. He added while receiving the US varsities that the economic and technological development in the UAE did not make it to ignore the social and humanitarian aspects in the development process, being the pillars in any economic and technological development.

Nakhaira noted that since its foundation the UAE has been updating education, judiciary and police to keep pace with progress in a way that serves public interest and human rights. He briefed the visiting delegation about the efforts of the ministry to observe human rights and its role on combating crime.

## **Economy Front**

### **Abu Dhabi to finance Bahrain's electric grid project**

The Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, or ADFD, a government fund involved in the economic development of developing nations, has advanced a loan amounting to Dh184 million to the Kingdom of Bahrain that will be used to erect two electric transmission lines of 220KV and 66KV each to meet the continuing increase in demand for electric power. In addition, the project involves the construction of a 31-conversion plant, an expansion of one of the Kingdom's ten stations. Ground cables to connect each of the stations' new conversions will also be laid out, which will be added to the transfer stations in the existing national electricity network.

The agreement was signed in Manama by ADFD Acting Director-General Mohammed Saif Al Suwaidi and Bahrain's Minister of Works Fahmi bin Ali Al Jowder, during a ceremony attended by a number of high-level officials from both sides. "This agreement interprets the policy and priorities of the emirate of Abu Dhabi leadership in supporting and strengthening the links between the GCC countries by harnessing the potential energies in order to achieve the joint cooperation," said Al Suwaidi.

### **UAE and Libya ink initial double taxation agreement**

The second round of negotiations between UAE and Libya concerning double taxation avoidance on income concluded with an initial agreement here on Thursday. As part of the Ministry of Finance's efforts to enhance UAE's international financial relationships, the initial agreement was signed by Khalid Ali Al Bustani, Executive Director of International Financial Relations Sector at UAE Ministry of Finance and Al Mahdi Hassan Al Warshfany, Deputy Director General of Libyan Tax Authority.

Younis Haji Al Khoori, Director General of MoF praised the effort made by the Ministry's team to conclude the negotiations. He confirmed that the agreement aims to strengthen cooperation and partnership between UAE and Libya and avoid double

taxation — not imposing tax more than once on the same profits for individuals and business. It also facilitates capital and investment transfer between the two countries.

### **Abu Dhabi to build world's largest solar plant**

French oil firm Total and Spain's Abengoa Solar will partner with Abu Dhabi's alternative energy company Masdar to build "the world's largest" concentrated solar power plant, Masdar announced on Wednesday.

The state-owned firm said it has selected a "consortium of Total and Abengoa Solar as a partner to own, build and operate Shams 1, the world's largest concentrated solar power plant and the first of its kind in the Middle East." "We are moving on the right path to make Abu Dhabi the main source and the international capital of renewable energy and sustainable development," Masdar CEO Sultan al-Jaber told a news conference in the oil-rich emirate. The plant "will offset 170 thousand tons of carbon dioxide annually."

### **UAE, Venezuela treaty to avoid double taxation**

The Ministry of Finance announced yesterday that it has signed an agreement of double taxation avoidance and tax evasion prevention on income and capital with Venezuela. This agreement is in line with the UAE's efforts to strengthen financial relations with various foreign countries and supporting investment promotion and economic development.

## **KUWAIT**

### **International Front**

#### **Kuwait among peaceful countries, Iraq at the bottom of the list**

Kuwait is listed among the peaceful countries in the world, the US among the fairly peaceful ones and Iraq at the bottom of the list, according to the Global Peace Index (GPI) ratings issued Thursday by the Institute for Economics and Peace. The list contains the 2010 GPI rankings for 149 countries.

Kuwait is listed 39 among the 149 countries, but ranks as number four among the Middle East and North African countries after Qatar, Oman and Tunisia. Among the 149 countries, New Zealand is listed number 1, Qatar 15, Switzerland 18, Oman 23, UK 31, France 32, Botswana 33, United Arab Emirates 44, Egypt 49, Libya 56, Jordan 68, Bahrain 70, China 80, US 85, Iran 104, Saudi Arabia 107, Syria 115, Turkey 126, Lebanon 134, Russia 143, Israel 144 and Iraq 149, at the bottom of the list. The GPI is the first study ever to rank the nations of the world by their peacefulness.

It noted that over the last four years, the world has become slightly less peaceful, although the regions of the Middle East and North Africa, as well as the Sub-Saharan

Africa, have led the world by showing slight improvements in their peacefulness, mainly because of their decreased military spending.

### **Kuwait keen on peace, stability in Asia - Abulhassan**

His Highness the Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's participation in the 3rd Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) reflects Kuwait's keenness to interact with regional issues, a Kuwaiti official said Tuesday. Mohammad Abulhassan, advisor at the Diwan of the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Saba, who is represented by Sheikh Nawaf to CICA, told KUNA and Kuwait TV the Crown Prince's participation reflected Kuwait's desire to contribute to stability and peace of the Asian continent and the whole world.

"Kuwait is constantly working on coordination and consultation with countries that are interested in the stability of the Asian continent ... either in international or regional meetings ...," he said. Kuwait and countries participating in CICA have identical views over Arab, Islamic and international affairs, said Abulhassan. "The State of Kuwait, out of keenness on backing international peace and stability, always takes part in regional and international meetings ...," said the advisor.

### **Watchdog urges Kuwait to stop prosecuting blogger**

New York-based rights watchdog Human Rights Watch called on Kuwait on Monday to stop prosecuting a blogger on trial for insulting its head of state, and lift a court ban on news coverage of the case. Blogger and journalist Mohammad Abdul-Kader al-Jassem, who faces up to 18 years in prison if convicted, according to his lawyers, was detained on May 11 after a complaint against him was issued by the office of Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah.

"Kuwait, once relatively tolerant of free speech, is increasingly punishing individuals for their political views, Joe Stork, Middle East deputy director at HRW, said in a statement. "The Kuwaiti authorities should stop persecuting Mohammad al-Jassem just for criticising Kuwait's rulers."

### **Kuwait keen on Arab consensus on peace initiative: Al-Busairi**

Kuwait government spokesman Dr. Mohammad Al-Busairi reaffirmed on Monday the government's commitment to maintaining the Arab consensus on the initiative for peace in the Middle East, reaffirmed at several Arab summits.

"Kuwait government will not adopt a unilateral approach to dealing with the initiative launched by Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Saudi King Abdullah Bin-Abdulaziz at the Beirut summit of 2002," said Al-Busairi who doubles as Minister of Communications and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs. He made the remarks in response to recent press reports that the government mulls backing away from the initiative after the Israeli fatal attack on the Gaza-bound aid flotilla last Monday.

### **Kuwait keen on combating human trafficking - official**

Kuwait was keen on signing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and related protocols, said a Kuwaiti official here. Speaking to KUNA, head of the Kuwaiti Interior Ministry's department for following up National Assembly Affairs Lieutenant Colonel Bandar Al-Mutairi, who is representing his country at the first Interpol International Conference on Combating Human Trafficking, said that Kuwait realized the national, regional, and international danger of human trafficking.

Therefore, it prepared a national law on combating human trafficking and the smuggling of immigrants, he pointed out. Procedures are being taken so that the law is approved by the National Assembly and by His Highness the Amir, he said.

### **Kuwaiti MP urges Arab Parliament to explain Palestine cause to EP**

Kuwaiti parliamentarians called on the Arab Parliament yesterday to hold dialogues with the European Parliament (EP) and other regional parliaments to further explain the Palestinian cause and impacts of the Israeli siege on Gaza in particular. "The Arab Parliament should contact the EP and parliaments around the Arab region to explain the dimensions of the Palestinian cause," Arab Parliament member Marzouq Al-Ghanem said on sidelines of the Arab Parliament special session to discuss the Israeli bloody attack on freedom flotilla and siege on Gaza. The EP is very important because most of its members are from the ruling parties in the European Union (EU) countries thus close to the decision-making circle, he said, "therefore there will be an understanding about the Palestinian cause in general and the siege on Gaza in specific.

Al-Ghanem said the Arab parliamentarians were weak during the dialogues with other parties. "In all meeting with the EP's foreign affairs committee we find the focus on the Iranian nuclear reactor and other issues away from the Palestinian cause." There is a proposal, during the Arab Parliament's urgent session, to send a delegation to Gaza in yet another attempt to break the four-year-old siege on the Strip, he added.

### **Mohammed Al-Sabah, Iraqi Ambassador discuss relations**

Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received here yesterday Iraqi Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammed Hussein Mohammed Bahr Al-Ulum. During the meeting, they discussed relations between the two countries in addition to regional and international issues of common interest.

## **Social Front**

### **Kuwaiti MPs stage walkout to protest secret session**

Kuwaiti opposition MPs stormed out of parliament on Tuesday to protest a decision to grill the prime minister behind closed doors over alleged inaction on pollution. Four opposition MPs — including Khaled al-Tahus who had called for a public debate — walked out after 39 lawmakers voted to hold a secret session to quiz the premier, speaker Jassem al-Khorafi said. Khorafi said he decided to cancel the session altogether as a result.

Tahus last month demanded to question Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Mohammad al-Ahmad al-Sabah, a nephew of the ruler, over allegations that he failed to apply the law to check pollution in a residential area. MP Mussallam al-Barrak told reporters that the deputies withdrew from the session because of the decision to hide important information from the Kuwaiti people. “Our demand is to have an open discussion in the parliament chamber” to allow the Kuwaiti people to hear the truth, Barrak said. “All we want is for the residents in that area to breathe clean air.”

### **Women nightshift work amendment welcomed**

The Kuwaiti government's recently approved an amendment to the recently passed private sector labor law which will allow women in a number of professions to work nightshifts has been widely welcomed. The new amendment will cover women working in a number of professions and environments, with beneficiaries including female bank, pharmacy and restaurant staff, as well as media workers. Prior to the introduction of the new amendment, female employees were only allowed to work until 10pm, with the change to the law seen as a valuable step forward by many female Kuwaiti professionals, who explained that they wish to demonstrate their dedication to their professions and to prove their ability and responsibility in regard without being restricted by legislation limiting their working hours. Hematologist Dr. Rana Abdulrazzaq said that if women demand equality and justice in treatment and rights within society, they must prove that they are fulfilling their obligations towards society in return.

### **Grilling threatens to disrupt women's law in Kuwait**

The upcoming discussion on the grilling filed by MP Khalid Al-Tahous against HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Muhammad Al-Sabah threatens to disrupt the upcoming women's law, reported Al-Qabas. The interpellation falls on the same day previously allocated for discussing the women's law. "The grilling is expected to be discussed on the June 22 session, the same session allocated for the women's law after the women's committee finishes their report on June 17," said MP Dr Roula Dashti .

Moreover, Dashti explained that the parliament has so far approved 8 reports regarding the draft law. She added that allocating monthly salaries for stay-at-home housewives

was not among the reports approved. Dashti added that the door is only open now for amendments to be proposed.

## **Economy Front**

### **New energies offer promising investment opportunities: Kuwaiti banker**

CEO of Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Mohammed Sulaiman Al-Omar said Tuesday the low cost of production of alternative energy in relation to fossil energy made alternative energy a highly promising investment sector. "Alternative energy draws increasing global attention as it shows great promise of solving the world's economic problems," Al-Omar told reporters here. "The world economy which faces mounting challenges relating to energy and environment has to turn to low-cost renewable energies and invest heavily in the construction of clean energy stations.

"The State of Kuwait has to step up efforts to launch such major projects in order to meet the rising demand for energy on the local and regional levels, " he said. "This could open new horizons of investment and tap out into the huge potentials of the country, thus contributing to the government's pursuit of turning the country into a regional financial hub. The world's total investment in clean energy in 2010 is projected at more than USD200 billion," Al-Omar pointed out. "Based on the vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, KFH started exploring the investment opportunities in this sector out of KFH's leading role in the national economy," he revealed.

### **Kuwait oil reserves fall below 100bn barrels**

Oil reserves of Opec member Kuwait have fallen to below 100 billion barrels as daily withdrawals are not being compensated for by an increase in stocks, a newspaper reported yesterday. "The probability of boosting reserves through new finds is diminishing more and more, especially due to Kuwait's limited area .which makes technological development the only practical means to raise Kuwaiti reserves," daily newspaper Al Rai reported, citing oil sources. Kuwait, the world's fourth-largest oil exporter, wants to boost its oil capacity to four million barrels per day from three million bpd in 2020 and sustain the higher capacity level for 10 years. Kuwait's oil reserves have been the subject of controversial public debate.

## **OMAN**

### **International Front**

#### **Oman-Tunisia Friendship Society to be formed**

Mohammed Ghannouchi, Tunisian Prime Minister, has praised His Majesty Sultan Qaboos's wise policies and the progress the Sultanate has achieved in all sectors. Ghannouchi made these remarks when he received here yesterday Yahya bin Saud al

Sulaimi, Minister of Education, and head of the Omani side on the Oman-Tunisia Joint Committee.

The prime minister said the Tunisian leadership highly appreciates the wise domestic and foreign policies followed by His Majesty and commended the development of joint ties in economic, political and social fields. The premier said he is fully satisfied with the level of care and attention received by members of the Tunisian community in the Sultanate. He welcomed the convening of the 13th session of the joint committee in Tunisia and called for more co-operation, increased trade exchanges and providing opportunities for private investments in the two countries.

### **Oman, Iran condemn Israeli raid on flotilla**

Oman and Iran, in a joint communiqué, have condemned the Israeli attack on the Freedom Flotilla as a “crime against humanity”. They also called for lifting the siege imposed on Gaza by Israel without conditions or limitations.

The communiqué, issued at the end of an official visit to Iran by Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Isaee, Chairman of the Majlis Ash’shura, demanded a halt to illegal settlements in Palestinian territory and Israeli withdrawal from all occupied lands, including Al Quds Al Sharif, Gaza Strip, West Bank, Golan Heights and Shabaa Farms.

It said Tel Aviv must release all Palestinian prisoners from Israeli prisons. The statement was signed by Shaikh Ahmed and Ali Larjani, Speaker of the Iranian parliament.

### **Oman-Iran parliamentary ties excellent**

Mohammed Riza Rahimi, First Vice-President of Iran, received here yesterday Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Isa’ee, Chairman of the Majlis Ash’shura, and his delegation currently visiting Iran. During the meeting, Al Isa’ee conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos along with his best wishes of good health and happiness to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran and the friendly people of Iran further progress and prosperity. Meanwhile, Oman and Iran yesterday signed a joint communiqué at the end of the visit of Al Isa’ee.

The joint communiqué was signed by the Al Isa’ee on behalf of the Sultanate and Ali Larjani, Chairman of Majlis Ash’shura in the Islamic Republic of Iran, signed on his country’s behalf. The joint communiqué stressed the importance of enhancing bilateral relations through the exchanged visits between the two countries, preparing proper ground for such visits, raising the level of parliamentary co-operation by organising regular specialised meetings and co-operation in research fields.

## **Social Front**

### **Focus on protecting rights of manpower in private sector: Oman**

Shaikh Abdullah bin Nasir al Bakri, Manpower Minister, and Mohammed bin Abdullah al Riyami, Chairman of the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), yesterday discussed co-operation between the ministry and NCHR on manpower rights in the private sector. They also reviewed the ministry's role in protecting human rights by enforcing the labour law and issuance of legislations and regulations that ensure labour rights in the private sector.

The meeting also touched on promulgation of the Sultanate's General Trade Union and 72 trade unions representing employees in the private sector and the issuance of safety and occupational health regulations for the protection of employees at the job site against injuries and disease. It also dealt with drafting new regulations for foreign manpower recruiting agencies, procedures pursued by the ministry for regulation of labour market and allowing the overstaying expatriates to finally leave the Sultanate by end of September without paying any fees or penalties.

### **Cyclone Phet kills 15 in Oman**

The toll from Cyclone Phet, which battered Oman on Friday before barrelling towards Pakistan on Saturday, has risen to 15, with 13 more deaths reported in the sultanate, a civil defence force official said. In Pakistan, some 60,000 people have been evacuated from the south coast to safer areas. Among those dead in Oman was a civil defence official who died while on a rescue operation.

Royal Oman Police (ROP) sources said the official, who has not been identified yet, drowned while he was trying to save a family trapped in flash flood waters in Rustaq area in Batinah region. Thirteen of those killed in Oman were nationals and two expats — a Bangladeshi and a Pakistani. "There are still four people missing. Rescue teams from the Royal Air Force of Oman and police are searching for them," First Lieutenant Abdullah Al Harthy from ROP told Khaleej Times.

### **Oman ready for e-education**

A seminar on e-education systems management and solutions was recently organised by the Swiss company, Comartis in cooperation with a number of government institutions and the private sector. "The Oman market currently has huge opportunities available," said Omar Lahiani, CEO of Comartis. Amir Hanafi, head of sales and marketing, Comartis in Middle East said, "The seminar aims at introducing people on how to conduct electronic tests through Internet as well as how to manage competencies and skills". "This is our first field visit to the GCC countries. In fact, our company focuses on human resources and training. By being in the Sultanate, we aim to introduce people on the services of Comartis," he added.

## **Economy Front**

### **Oman, Germany to expand co-operation in key areas**

The 11th meetings of the Oman-Germany Joint Committee yesterday signed the minutes of the last session held here under the auspices of Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Dr Berend Faven Bach, German Deputy Minister of Economy and Technology.

Sayyid Badr stressed the depth of Oman-Germany relations and expressed his satisfaction with the level of investment and trade exchange. He said that the volume of trade between the Sultanate and Germany rose to 946 million euro in 2008, but declined to 464 million euro in 2009 due to the global financial crisis. Sayyid Badr said that there is still great scope for further co-operation, noting that such economic meetings serve the goal of increasing mutual investment.

### **Maqbool details Omani economy in Spain**

The 'New Economy Forum' in Madrid, hosted HE Maqbool Bin Ali Bin Sultan, Commerce and Industry Minister, who gave a lecture during which he touched upon the outlines of the Omani economy, its plans and the efforts being exerted to develop it.

During the lecture, which was delivered on Tuesday night, he reviewed the investment opportunities available in the Sultanate, the position it secured as one of the most important investment hubs in the region, the investment atmosphere which has been achieved in the light of security, stability and good reputation enjoyed by the Sultanate at the regional and international levels, the systematic planning, the institutional structure of the state, programmes and plans that aim to lead the national economy to specific ratio and developing it in a sustainable manner.

### **Bad weather halts oil and gas production in Oman**

Oman halted its oil and gas production due to bad weather as Cyclone Phet hit the small oil-producing country's coast, but no facilities were damaged, DPO and Oman LNG spokesmen said. "We won't load any oil because no ship is able to anchor at our facility due to rough seas," a spokesman for state-controlled Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), an affiliate of Royal Dutch Shell, said. "The last load to ships was yesterday" Said Al-Busaidy said. In the first quarter of 2010, crude oil and condensates exports stood at 731,000 barrels per day, according to official government data.

The latest storm path forecast shows Phet heading close to Sur, where Oman's three LNG production facilities, known as trains, are located. Oman LNG already shut down one LNG train on Thursday night, said Oman LNG spokesman Nasser Al-Kindy. "We are now in the process of shutting down the rest as a precaution. We do not expect to miss out on any cargo delivery," he said, adding that no LNG facilities have been damaged.

Qalhat LNG, which supplies Spain and Japan, would also be shutting down its trains, he said.

## **BAHRAIN**

### **International Front**

#### **Bahrain denies suspension of causeway work**

Bahrain has quashed news reports that suggested suspension of the long-planned \$ 3 billion bridge linking Bahrain and Qatar because of high costs. Arif Saleh Khamis, Undersecretary of the Finance Ministry and Deputy Board Chairman of the Bahrain Qatar Causeway Foundation, told Bahrain News Agency on Tuesday that the news — published in the local press and agencies — that work on the Bahrain Qatar Friendship Bridge had been suspended, was completely incorrect.

He further stressed that the work on the project was in “full swing” and was going as per the previously set timetable. He also stressed that the Board of Directors were meeting regularly to discuss the technical studies, designs of the bridge and the facilities located on its both sides. “The government of Bahrain attaches great importance to this vital project and is keen to take all necessary actions and measures to begin its actual implementation at the lowest construction cost as soon as possible, so as to achieve the outlined economic and social benefits from it,” he said.

#### **Al Khalifa asserts Bahrain's firm commitment to international human rights covenants**

Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa today asserted Bahrain's firm commitment to international human rights covenants. "Respecting human rights and basic liberties and ensuring their protection and consolidation rank high in Bahrain's top priorities", He said. He was speaking as he received Joe Stork, deputy director of Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa division. "These principles are all endorsed in the National Action Charter and the Constitution", he added, highlighting the government's drive to review laws regularly in a bid to anchor the values of human rights in line with international standards. Mr. Stork thanked the minister for updating him on Bahrain's strenuous efforts to promote human rights issues, stressing his firm desire to cooperate with Bahrain in this field. Shaikh Khalid accepted an invitation to visit New York-based Human Rights Watch.

#### **Bahrain call to break blockade**

Bahrain yesterday called for a global campaign to step up pressure on Israel and break the siege on Gaza. It urged countries of the world to dispatch humanitarian aid-carrying ships to the besieged Palestinians. A joint delegation comprising Shura Council members and MPs made the call as they were attending the urgent session of Transitional Arab Parliament in Cairo. The team includes parliament first deputy chairman Ghanim Al

Buainin, Shura second deputy president Alice Samaan, head of the foreign affairs, defence and national security committee Abdulrahman Jamsheer, and MP Abdulaziz Abul. The delegation urged a joint pan-Arab campaign in co-ordination with friendly countries to tear down the segregation wall in occupied West Bank.

## **Social Front**

### **Lower voting age: Bahraini society**

Keeping Bahrain's voting age at 20 will adversely affect the rights of the country's youth, it has been claimed. Bahrainis have legal responsibility aged 15, yet it takes them six years before they are able to join a political society, said Bahrain Democratic Youth Society treasurer Ghassan Sarhan. "To achieve a positive contribution from them we need to enable youth by modifying laws that conflict with each other," he said during the Youth and Elections Forum for Age Group 20 to 30. The two-day event, organised by the Information Centre for Women and Children, which ends today, aims to encourage youth to take part in the election process.

### **Bahrain may scrap amnesty scheme**

Bahrain is considering to cancel the partial amnesty it announced less than two weeks ago due to a poor turnout of applicants. The Easy Exit campaign, launched on May 25 allowing illegal residents to leave the country without paying their accumulated overstaying fines, has not generated a good response reportedly because it doesn't allow the beneficiaries to legalise their resident status and continue living in the country.

The CEO of the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA), Ali Radhi, told a meeting at the Indian Embassy here on Tuesday that the termination of the campaign would be considered by a panel set up to decide the length of the amnesty. Radhi revealed that only a handful of people had availed themselves of the amnesty so far. During the last amnesty in the kingdom that concluded in 2007, some 61,591 expat workers legalised their residential status and 13,000 left the country in the last six months of the scheme.

### **Bahrain urged to back key ILO rule**

International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention on domestic workers. The Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society (BHRWS) has sent a letter to Labour Minister Dr Majeed Al Alawi urging the government to support the convention, supplemented by a recommendation, at this year's and the 2011 International Labour Conferences. They call on the government to ensure the convention recognises the special conditions in which domestic work is carried out, set out clear rules to prevent abuse, and promotes equality for domestic workers under labour laws. In addition, governments should ensure the convention contains specific provisions to protect child and migrant domestic workers.

## **Education reforms vital for growth: Prince Salman**

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and Economic Development Board (EDB) Chairman, has asserted that reforming education and upgrading its output are going on according to a clear vision aiming at developing its systems and providing necessary training programmes needed to refine practical skills.

This came as he received Bahrain Polytechnic (BP) chief executive officer John Scott who presented him with the BP's yearly report. The Crown Prince praised the BP officials' patriotic initiative aimed at creating developed systems that will upgrade the competence of its graduates and facilitate their integration into the labour market and meet its requirements, hailing on-going positive co-operation between this educational institution and its private sector counterparts in this regard.

## **Economy Front**

### **Abu Dhabi to finance Bahrain's electric grid project**

The Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, or ADFD, a government fund involved in the economic development of developing nations, has advanced a loan amounting to Dh184 million to the Kingdom of Bahrain that will be used to erect two electric transmission lines of 220KV and 66KV each to meet the continuing increase in demand for electric power.

In addition, the project involves the construction of a 31-conversion plant, an expansion of one of the Kingdom's ten stations. Ground cables to connect each of the stations' new conversions will also be laid out, which will be added to the transfer stations in the existing national electricity network. In addition, it will provide advisory services and institutional support for the authority. The agreement was signed in Manama by ADFD Acting Director-General Mohammed Saif Al Suwaidi and Bahrain's Minister of Works Fahmi bin Ali Al Jowder, during a ceremony attended by a number of high-level officials from both sides.

### **Causeway work on schedule: Bahrain**

Bahrain has said work on a \$ 3bn bridge project linking the island to Qatar is on schedule, playing down a Reuters report, carried among others by The Peninsula yesterday, which said the project had been put on hold. Aref Saleh Khamis, assistant undersecretary for financial affairs at Bahrain's Ministry of Finance and chairman of Qatar-Bahrain Causeway Foundation, told the Bahrain News Agency the report was incorrect and that talks are ongoing with the construction group Vinci over its construction. "The project is very important to the government of Bahrain, which is ensuring all necessary procedures are being taken to start construction works at the soonest and with the lowest cost possible," he added.

## **Bahrain in new push to bolster US trade**

A Bahraini delegation, led by Economic Development Board (EDB) chief executive Shaikh Mohammed bin Essa Al Khalifa, will arrive in the US today to hold key business talks and sign agreements. During the 15-day visit, the delegation will hold talks with leading US companies in New York, Atlanta in Georgia, Oklahoma City and Houston in Texas. Officials from the Bahraini Government, EDB and private sector will discuss the opportunities presented by the Bahrain-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that enables the Bahraini private sector to open up job opportunities for its citizens and woo investments, which are among the main goals of the EDB's economic reforms and initiatives.

"His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and the EDB Chairman, stresses on achieving sustainable growth through sound and flexible economic policy," Shaikh Mohammed said. "HRH the Crown Prince also backs a highly-educated and skilled national workforce, diversified economy and tried and tested regulation. "In today's world, our strong track record provides the optimum environment for US companies and investors to do business both in and from," Shaikh Mohammed said. "Our visit to the US aims to build on the long-standing and close relationship between the two nations and the strong economic and trade connections - including the success of the FTA," he added, saying that there is a growing number of US companies that recognise Bahrain as the best location from which they can have access to the trillion-dollar Gulf market and the wider Middle East.

## **QATAR**

### **International Front**

#### **Vietnam keen on boosting ties with Qatar**

Vietnamese Vice-President Professor Nguyen Thi Doan has underlined her country's keenness to further develop relations with Qatar in various fields, describing Qatar as an important partner of Vietnam. Doan, who is currently visiting Qatar, told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that relations between the two countries "are distinctive and open", explaining that her current visit was aimed at enhancing bilateral relations and areas of co-operation, especially in the oil and gas, and human resources sectors. "Qatar has achieved progress in the energy sector and my country is interested in benefiting from Qatar's experience," Doan said. She said her visit to Qatar will provide an opportunity for enhancing co-operation between the two sides in various fields, especially the human resources sector.

#### **Qatar calls for disaster relief force**

Qatar yesterday proposed the establishment of a Humanitarian Operation Force also known as HOPEFOR. Such a force would draw on existing military and civil resources (material and human) to bring hope and emergency relief quickly and efficiently to the victims of natural disasters — staying long enough to close the so-called 'humanitarian

gap'. The Prime Minister and Foreign Minister H E Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabor Al Thani made the proposal in a lecture at the International Peace Institute in New York. Humanity suffers from natural disasters like droughts, earthquakes, floods, forest fires and tsunamis. Natural disasters like these have recently struck on all continents, leaving a trail of destruction in their wake, the Premier said, adding that no country can cope with these forces alone.

### **UN okays Qatar rights report**

Qatar said yesterday it had approved or implemented a majority of the recommendations made by the world community with regard to the human rights situation in the country. More time is, however, needed to implement the remaining suggestions regarding human rights situation since they needed to be 'deeply studied'. Qatar was taking part in the United Nations Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review Working Group meeting in Geneva yesterday, reports Qatar News Agency (QNA).

Qatar's report on the human rights situation in the country was endorsed by the group. Addressing the meet, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, H E Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud, assured that time was needed to 'consider seriously' all the recommendations that were made with regard to the human rights situation (in Qatar) in February this year. "Out of 112 recommendations submitted to us during the Universal Periodic Review (last time) 76 were immediately approved by us," the minister said.

### **France, Qatar hold round of talks on 'strategic dialogue'**

Senior French and Qatari officials met here Tuesday for a round of talks within the "strategic dialogue" process established between the two countries and the French side said this illustrates "the excellent relations" between the two nations. Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Pierre Sellal hosted the talks at the ministry here and the Qatari delegation was led by Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad Al-Rumaihi.

The talks here follow shortly on the heels of a visit to Paris last week by the Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem Al-Thani. That visit, diplomats said, was "private" but the Qatari Prime Minister is a close friend of France and could easily have met with high level officials while here. Foreign Ministry officials said Tuesday that the Franco-Qatari "strategic dialogue" is a regular occurrence and normally takes place once a year, although there are often more frequent, high-level contacts between the two governments. The dialogue allows "France and Qatar to examine themes of common interest," the Foreign Ministry said.

### **JEM skips Darfur talks in Doha**

A new round of Darfur peace talks started at Sheraton Doha yesterday in the absence of the officials of the key Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). According to a source, the Justice and Equality Movement has turned down invitations from the joint United Nations-African Union mediation for Darfur.

Addressing the inaugural session, HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Mahmoud said that Doha would be pleased to host all the parties and “we hope that others would join the peace process.” The minister thanked the delegations representing the government and the Liberation Movement for Justice who are “keen” to achieve peace in the war ravaged region of Sudan. He said this round of talks came following the elections in Sudan, in which president Omar al-Basher was declared the winner.

### **Qatar mediating Eritrea-Djibouti border dispute**

Qatar said on Monday that Eritrean troops have withdrawn from an area they controlled in Djibouti as a result of Doha’s mediation bid to end a territorial dispute between the two neighbours. Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem al-Thani was quoted by official QNA news as saying that Eritrea has already conducted “a withdrawal from disputed border areas,” a move verified by a Qatari observer force.

The Qatari mediation provides for the formation of a committee, headed by Sheikh Hamad, which is empowered to appoint an international firm to demarcate the border, with Eritrea and Djibouti’s consent, QNA said. The Qatari observation force is tasked with monitoring the border between the two countries “until the conclusion of a final agreement on settling the conflict,” QNA reported.

### **Qatar, UK PMs hold talks**

HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani with British Prime Minister David Cameron yesterday. Talks during their meeting at Chequers, the country residence of the British prime minister, dealt with bilateral relations and ways to enhance them. They reviewed a number of regional and international issues, including Gaza and efforts exerted by Qatar to achieve peace in Darfur.

### **Qatar tries to build niche as a peace negotiator**

Qatar is endeavouring to cut a unique profile as a diplomatic arbiter and peace broker in recent years, interceding in conflicts from Lebanon to Yemen and, most recently, Darfur. “Qatar is a good place for negotiation, because the climate here is good for it. They are not seeking to benefit from the negotiation, unlike Chad and other neighbouring countries,” said Hassan al-Sadig, a negotiator from Darfur’s main rebel group.

Qatar’s financial prowess -- most recently demonstrated by the purchase of London department store Harrods -- has enabled it to be a generous benefactor. Thanks to copious supplies of liquefied natural gas, Qatar with a population of 1.63mn, is now among the world’s wealthiest countries with the highest per capita income. Doha has paid for accommodation of hundreds of participants to the Darfur talks since January.

## **Qatar to pay for taking Israel to ICJ**

Qatar has put itself solidly behind fellow Arab states that have decided to take Israel to the International Court of Justice for killing nine activists in a raid on Gaza-bound aid ships on Monday, and said it would meet all the expenses to be incurred on the legal proceedings. Qatar has also said it would fund a worldwide media campaign to expose Israel, its blockade of the Gaza Strip and the aggression it has been perpetrating in the territory.

The Secretary-General of the Arab League, Amr Moussa, told local Arabic dailies that Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, H E Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabor Al Thani, has assured the League of the country's moral and financial support on the above issues. It was at Qatar's behest that foreign ministers of Arab League member countries met in Cairo on Wednesday and Thursday to discuss the Israeli raid and its Gaza blockade.

## **Economy Front**

### **US trade with Qatar up by 387pc in five years**

With trade volume with Qatar having already grown a staggering four-fold in the last five years, the US is set for an aggressive drive to strengthen further economic ties with Doha, one of its largest commercial partners in the Gulf. The total US trade with Qatar surged from \$ 841m in 2004 to \$ 3.2bn in 2009, showing a staggering 387 percent increase, while US exports to Qatar increased six folds over the same period, the Under Secretary for International Trade at the US Department of Commerce, Francisco J Sanchez told reporters here yesterday. "Qatar has the potential to become an even bigger trading partner and we view the opportunity to foster a commercial relation that is good for both countries as a priority for President Obama administration," Sanchez who is currently visiting Doha.

### **QTA road shows to tap growing Asian markets**

Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA) will organise a tourism road show in major Asian cities in October to tap the potential of the growing Asian markets, Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA) chairman Ahmed Al Nuaimi has said. This was disclosed on the sidelines the sixth meeting of executive committee of the Arab Tourism Ministers Council held in Alexandria recently. A delegation from the QTA attended the meeting which was a prelude to the 13th session of the Arab Tourism Ministers Council.

Besides Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Tunisia, Iraq, Oman Libya were also represented. At the meeting of the Arab Tourism Organisation in Alexandria two months ago, Qatar had raised the subject of tourism in the Arab States being adversely affected by international crises, and introduced the idea of changing strategic tourism development plans.