

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

**MADIHA KAUKAB
Weekly Report. # 129
17th July- 23rd July 2010**

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

SUMMARY

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Wednesday said the GCC needed an exit strategy from massive fiscal stimulus, and urged Gulf Arab countries to shut down unworkable companies and boost transparency as they emerge from the global economic crisis. The Washington-based fund said massive government spending by GCC countries helped to contain the impact of the global downturn on their respective economies, but they should “start preparing an exit strategy” from the current high spending levels and should implement it once the time is right. “As the region pulls out of the downturn, it needs to boost transparency and improve corporate oversight,” the International Monetary Fund, or IMF, said in an updated report on the GCC. The IMF believes that while economic growth in the GCC is strengthening, the region faces a risk to its outlook if oil prices remain low for a protracted period. The report released on Wednesday revised up IMF’s growth forecast for non-oil growth for GCC states to 4.3 per cent, higher than the four per cent it forecast in May in a regional outlook. The fund warned that the challenges faced by the financial sectors of GCC nations would restrain growth in that region for the short-term, but is not expected to have long-term implications. British Foreign Office minister Alistair Burt chaired a meeting of Ministers from across government Wednesday to discuss the importance of the Gulf region and to ensure that the UK's relationship with countries in the region becomes stronger still, it was officially announced. This reflects the Government's commitment to elevating relations with its partners in the Gulf, and follows British Prime Minister David Cameron's visit to the region last month, the Foreign Office said in a statement. "The Government has ambitious plans to expand existing co-operation across the board: in culture, education, defence and security, trade and investment, and foreign policy co-operation, and will build on already close and historic ties with the region". Following the meeting, Burt, who is responsible for the Middle East, said: "I welcome this opportunity to work closely with my Ministerial colleagues across government to promote closer and stronger relations with the Gulf region. "My colleagues and I are committed to developing these ties, and we look forward to working with our partners in the Gulf in order to support our mutual security, prosperity, and cultural understanding". The UAE on Tuesday called for establishing an international independent body representing peoples of the world to act as a parliamentary arm of the United Nations (UN) and hold any country — big or small — accountable democratically if it flouts its international responsibilities as per the principles of the international law and legitimacy. The UAE proposal was floated by Speaker of the Federal National Council (FNC) Abdul Aziz Al

Ghurair in an address before the third World Conference of Speakers of Parliament — a global summit focusing on democracy, the role of legislative institutions and their relationship with the UN. Being held by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) till today at the UN Office (Palais des Nations) here, the broad theme for the 2010 Conference is ‘Parliaments in a world of crisis: securing global democratic accountability for the common good’. “I believe the new international accountability organisation should represent all peoples of the world and serve as a voice for principles of international justice. It’s necessary for the UN to mull deeply, creating such a parliamentary arm,” Al Ghurair said. Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Jassem Al-Kharafi said on Saturday that the World Conference of Speakers of Parliament is set to discuss a number of crucial issues at this intricate period in time. Al-Kharafi, in his first statement since arriving in Geneva to attend the event, said that Gulf Cooperation Council states are to meet on Sunday to coordinate a unified position - notably on the Palestinian issue - to a gathering of 150 parliament speakers from around the world. The leading Kuwaiti parliamentarian is also set to attend a meeting of the Inter-Arab Parliamentary Union on Sunday. Al-Kharafi expressed his gratitude and thanks to the Swiss government for their hosting of the event, after attending delegations of the last two sessions in New York found it hard to obtain visa entries into the United States. Receiving the National Assembly speaker was the Kuwaiti permanent envoy to the UN, Ambassador Dhirar Rezougi and the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Switzerland Suhail Shehaiber, among other Kuwaiti diplomats in Geneva. The World Conference of Speakers of Parliament is set to kick off early Monday, with the attendance of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. The conference aims to discuss issues related to global crises and means to solve them, along with the relation between parliaments and the UN, namely on security, peace, comprehensive development challenges and the dialogue of nations and cultures. The conference will also discuss a number of reports related to current international affairs and reforms presented by the UN. Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Secretary-General of the Foreign Ministry, and William Jefferson Hague, British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, said in a joint press statement issued here yesterday prior to Hague’s departure that the British minister’s audience with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos at Bait al Baraka on Saturday was a good opportunity which opened wider scope for more constructive ties. Sayyid Badr and Hague valued the history of partnership between the Sultanate and the United Kingdom, saying that it derived strength from a Treaty of Friendship signed by the two countries in 1800, and subsequent agreements. Hague expressed the British Government's keenness on enhancing ties with the Gulf region in general and the Sultanate in particular. The two sides agreed that they should continue building bilateral relations for the future, as well as expanding the existing co-operation in various areas, including culture, education, defence and security, trade and investment and foreign policy. They decided to establish a joint Steering Committee to take this forward. They agreed on boosting trade links that would bring great benefit to the two countries’ economies.

The Board of Senior Ulema (religious scholars) has set up a new committee to regulate the publication of religious fatwas (edicts) in a bid to prevent the haphazard issuing of edicts by unauthorised scholars. The move, decided at a recent meeting in Riyadh to introduce a new organisational structure for the Board, will see fatwa offices opened across the country and the appointment of certified muftis to assist the Permanent Committee for Scholarly Research and Ifta. Many enquiries concern Islamic issues related to divorce, and it is hoped that the new committee, to be chaired by Sheikh Saleh bin Muhammad Al Luhaidan, will take the strain off the Permanent Committee, which has only seven members and is chaired by the Grand Mufti,

Sheikh Abdul Aziz Aal Al Sheikh. It will also assist spouses seeking rulings on aspects of divorce for which a fatwa can only be issued after the appearance of the couple before the Permanent Committee. The Grand Mufti has stated previously that edicts should only be released by the official Permanent Committee which, he said, would stop any authorised or unqualified persons from issuing fatwas. Judges in capital murder cases must follow Sharia law without exception, the Federal Supreme Court has ruled – but experts say the decision could mean long delays in some trials. The requirements of Sharia state that the victim's relatives must accept or decline blood money in court. But in cases in which the victim's relatives cannot be easily found or cannot attend court, trials can be adjourned for months or even years. In extreme instances, where there are no relatives, the judge, acting in the name of the state, will become the victim's guardian and decide on blood money. The UAE legal system follows a dual track, with laws passed by the Government and Sharia law functioning side-by-side. Judges have discretion as to which laws take precedence. The Supreme Court ruling, handed down on June 8 and publicly disclosed in a document released this week, says judges have no discretion in cases of premeditated murder, which call for the death penalty. The case in the ruling originated in Sharjah and involved an illegal immigrant whose identity was never known. SSS, an Indian, was convicted of murder late last year by Sharjah Criminal Court and sentenced to death. But the court of appeal changed the sentence to life imprisonment. Neither court followed the Sharia requirement for the family of the victim to attend the sentencing. A Ministry of Justice report issued earlier this week indicated that the crime rate in Kuwait increased dramatically between 2008 and 2009, rising by 68 percent over that period. The report revealed that the number of cases tried in local courts last year reached 168,312. Commenting on the shocking new statistics, the deputy of the justice council Faisal Al-Mershid told the press that this increase is abnormal. "It indicates that our society is in dire need of a national unity project, an awareness project that would bring people closer and let them see past their differences," he asserted. The population must combat this defect in order to reduce the number of crimes, said Al-Mershid. He added that there are many issues and conflicts that can be resolved without the need to go to court, but many people choose to go to court regardless. "People no longer have tolerance towards others; the tolerance level of the Kuwaiti citizen has reached zero. This is a dangerous situation that must be salvaged immediately," Al-Mershid warned. He noted that a large number of plaintiffs go to court to seek revenge rather than solve a problem. "People set out to destroy their opponent, be it a business partner, a friend or even a family member. There are married and divorced people whose cases are in court for years, and they are determined to cause destruction rather than solve a dilemma," said the senior judicial official. Bahrain's main opposition group, the Shia Muslim Al Wefaq bloc, will field candidates for up to 24 out of 40 voting districts in upcoming elections and does not expect to win a majority, an official said on Monday. The tiny Gulf Arab country, with a majority Shia Muslim population but a Sunni ruling family, is expected to hold parliamentary elections in October or November. But observers forecast few changes, as diplomats say voting districts are expected to be carved out in such a way as to ensure Shi'ites do not get a majority. Jasim Husain, a member of parliament for Al Wefaq, told Reuters his party was focusing on districts where it had a chance of success, and would field 18 to 24 candidates. "We don't want to overstretch our resources," Husain said, adding that he expected to win around 18 seats. "In other districts we will endorse other candidates ... independents or nationalists, Sunnis who are not too anti-Shi'ite." Bahrain, a close ally of the United States and top oil exporter Saudi Arabia, is ruled by the Sunni al-Khalifa family and the majority Shi'ite population complains of discrimination in jobs and services, a claim the government denies.

The combined value of the 100 largest projects in the GCC region that are either completed or underway during the last two years totals over \$ 1.3 trillion, according to a study conducted by Meed, the Middle East's premier business intelligence provider, in conjunction with its Quality Awards for Projects 2010 a first-of-its-kind award in the Middle East based solely on the quality of entrants. The research also indicates that Saudi Arabia and the UAE account for a majority of the developments, with 31 and 35 ongoing projects respectively. Highlighting the real estate sector's dominance in the region despite the global financial crisis, the study has highlighted the approximate value of transport projects in the GCC as \$ 164 billion, while that for oil and gas is nearly \$ 131 billion. The findings of the survey, titled 'The GCC's Top 100 Projects', have been showcased by Meed in a 20-page supplement that was released on 16 July. Kuwait's crude oil exports to China skyrocketed 139.7 percent in June from a year earlier to a record high of 1.26 million tons, equivalent to around 308,000 barrels per day (bpd), becoming China's sixth-biggest crude supplier, the latest government data showed. The previous record was 264,000 bpd logged in April. Kuwait provided 5.6 percent of China's total crude oil imports, compared with 3.2 percent in the same month of last year and 3.3 percent in May, according to the General Administration of Customs. Kuwait's exports in the first half of 2010 reached 203,000 bpd, up 23.8 percent from the same period last year. China's overall imports of crude jumped 34.1 percent year-on-year to a record of 5.44 million bpd in June. Angola returned to China's top supplier with its shipments expanding 24.0 percent from a year earlier to 913,000 bpd, followed by Saudi Arabia with 897,000 bpd, up 25.0 percent. Iran became third, with imports from the country falling 6.7 percent to 423,000 bpd). China is the world's second-biggest oil consumer after the US. The Chinese government in May gave preliminary approval to state-run Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its partner Sinopec for a USD 9 billion oil refinery project in south China's Guangdong Province, to which Kuwait is expected to supply all the crude. As the project is included in the China's 11th Five Year Plan (2006-2010), preparatory work for final approval is currently in full swing. The Environmental Impact Assessment and the Project Application Report, submitted by the alliance late April to the Ministry of Environmental Protection, must be approved before Beijing's final nod. Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) Chairman HE Khalil Bin Abdullah Al Khonji said on Monday private sector can play a lead role in exploring and strengthening trade and business relations between the Sultanate and Indonesia. In a meeting with Dr Alawi Shihab, Special Envoy of the Indonesian President to the Middle East at the Republican Palace in Jakarta, Khonji said sectors like infrastructure and services especially held bright prospects for mutual cooperation. The meeting was also attended by Hussain Bin Ali Bin Tahir Meqaibel, Oman's Representative to Jakarta. The two sides discussed the future of economic and investment ties between the Sultanate and Indonesia, particularly in the private sector. The officials explored the possibility of holding joint exhibitions to develop trade and economic cooperation. Khonji also met his counterpart, Adi Putra Tahir, Chairman of the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, during which trade and economic exchange between the two countries were discussed. Khonji invited Tahir to visit the Sultanate along with a delegation of Indonesian businessmen to attend a joint trade and economic forum to get acquainted with the investment opportunities in the Sultanate and other GCC states. Bahrain, the smallest economy in the six-nation Gulf Arab economic bloc, is pushing for the creation of a regional stability fund to counter potential fiscal crises, its finance minister said in published remarks. The fund should also work on bridging economic disparities among the member states of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), Sheikh Ahmed bin

Mohamed al-Khalifah said in an interview published on the bloc's July news bulletin Almasera. The GCC aims to forge an economic and monetary union emulating the eurozone, some of whose members have recently run into serious fiscal problems. Debt problems at Dubai's flagship state conglomerate Dubai World have raised concern among officials in some GCC member states. "Bahrain put forward in December ... a proposal to set up a fund dedicated to support fiscal stability and economic growth in GCC countries. The proposal is currently under examination," Sheikh Ahmed said in the undated interview. "The proposal aims mainly at creating a mechanism that would provide necessary support to member states if needed, in a way that would ensure both a convergence of economic models within the GCC and similar standards of living for its citizens," he added.

GCC

- **Britain wants to expand relations with Gulf**
- **Thai PM calls for closer links with Gulf countries**
- **GCC needs exit plan: IMF**
- **GCC needs to introduce new taxes**
- **Top 100 GCC projects valued at \$ 1.3 trillion**

YEMEN

- **UAE attends meeting to voice support for Yemen**
- **North Yemen clashes threaten fragile peace**
- **Yemen could be next Iraq, Afghanistan: U.S. cleric**
- **Yemen's ruling party, oppn to start talks on govt formation**

SAUDI ARABIA

International Front

- **Saudi Shoura chairman condemns UN double standard**
- **Infiltration from Yemen still continuing: Officials**
- **King Abdullah holds talks with King Hamad**
- **First flight from Iraq in 20 years lands in Jeddah**
- **Islam advocates mercy, tolerance: Sheikh Al-Sudais**

Social Front

- **New by-law on alternative prison sentences soon in Saudi Arabia**
- **Saudi Shoura mulling action on 300 rights petitions**
- **Saudis warned against marrying foreign women**
- **Prisons should serve as rehab centers, says Saudi HRC**
- **New Saudi panel to regulate fatwa publication**

Economy Front

- Saudi Arabia, EU ink aviation accord
- Pakistan seeks to boost trade ties with Saudi Arabi
- Saudi investors to explore opportunities in Malaysia

UAE

International Front

- Emirati, Qatari women students make their mark in Scotland
- UAE calls for world body on democratic accountability
- UAE is committed to assisting Afghanistan: Abdullah
- Mohammed, Mitchell discuss Middle East peace efforts
- UAE aid to Seychelles for combating piracy, regulating fishing

Social Front

- Programme to detect colorectal cancer launched in Abu Dhabi
- UAE urged to let deportees appeal
- Schooling compulsory till age 18 for UAE nationals
- Murder trials must follow Sharia law, UAE Supreme Court rules

Economy Front

- Emirates to begin new service to Dakar from September
- UAE: Bank to appeal massive payout
- UAE and HK sign deal to avoid double taxation
- Prices of construction materials rise

KUWAIT

International Front

- Kuwait, Brazil ink five agreements
- UNSC OKs providing extra funds for coordinators for missing Kuwaitis
- Kuwaiti-Comorian relations strong, strategic: diplomat
- Al-Kharafi, Larijani agree on coordinating efforts over joint issues
- Kuwait's PM arrives in Guyana
- Kuwait nod for oil border post: Iraq
- World Conf. of Parliament Speakers to discuss crucial issues: Al-Kharafi
- Kuwaiti Premier holds official talks, signs agreements in Havana

Social Front

- **Kuwait speaker satisfied with int'l parliament conf. outcomes**
- **Kuwait in dire need of national unity project**

Economy Front

- **Kuwait, Bulgaria sign agreement on air transport**
- **Kuwait's crude oil exports to China hit new record**
- **Kuwait, top Arab investor in Kurdistan**

OMAN

International Front

- **Oman's Alawi in China, praises ties**
- **Oman a role model in region**
- **Alawi, Japanese official explore ways to boost bilateral ties**
- **Oman-UK panel to foster bilateral ties in key areas**
- **Sultan Qaboos, British minister review bilateral ties**

Social Front

- **Omani citizens proud of glorious achievements**

Economy Front

- **Oman, Indonesia to boost trade relations**
- **Oman-Russia trade discussed**

BAHRAIN

International Front

- **Bahrain condemns Zahedan bombings**

Social Front

- **Bahrain govt warns against fraudulent CIO officials**
- **Appeal for new society in Bahrain rejected**
- **Bahrain Shias not expecting major gains in poll**
- **Bahraini woman minister named media personality**

Economy Front

- Bahrain economy likely to grow by 4%
- Bahrain plan will spur investment
- Bahrain pushes for Gulf stability fund

QATAR

International Front

- Emirati, Qatari women students make their mark in Scotland
- Qatar, Bosnia sign accords
- Qatar, Slovenia sign accords to expand ties
- UN commends Qatar for mediating between Eritrea, Djibouti
- Qatari Premier meets US peace envoy

Social Front

- Committee to look into child abuse cases in Qatar
- Heat hits construction works in Qatar

Economy Front

- \$ 12bn projects boost Qatar development plans: Meed
- Qatari crude up as refiners seek cheaper gasoil
- Qatar Airways places orders for two more Boeing 777-200 planes
- Industry experts expect Doha round deal in 2011

GCC

Britain wants to expand relations with Gulf

British Foreign Office minister Alistair Burt chaired a meeting of Ministers from across government Wednesday to discuss the importance of the Gulf region and to ensure that the UK's relationship with countries in the region becomes stronger still, it was officially announced. This reflects the Government's commitment to elevating relations with its partners in the Gulf, and follows British Prime Minister David Cameron's visit to the region last month, the Foreign Office said in a statement. "The Government has ambitious plans to expand existing co-operation across the board: in culture, education, defence and security, trade and investment, and foreign policy co-operation, and will build on already close and historic ties with the region".

Following the meeting, Burt, who is responsible for the Middle East, said: "I welcome this opportunity to work closely with my Ministerial colleagues across government to promote closer and stronger relations with the Gulf region. "My colleagues and I are committed to developing

these ties, and we look forward to working with our partners in the Gulf in order to support our mutual security, prosperity, and cultural understanding".

Thai PM calls for closer links with Gulf countries

Qatar, the Gulf and the rest of the Middle East all play an important role in Thailand's future, according to Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva who hopes to visit the region early next year, depending on the state of domestic affairs in his country. Speaking to Gulf Times and other members of the regional media recently, Abhisit conceded that with the recent violent protests in Bangkok he had had to focus his attention on resolving the domestic situation and had not been able to commit as much time as he would have liked to develop foreign ties. "I have been kept back by a lot of domestic issues over this year and a half, but I think as things stabilise I will certainly be looking for further opportunities to make visits to the region," he said.

"One of my advisers has just returned from Egypt and I think we have identified a number of areas where we can enhance our bilateral relationship, as well as Thailand's relationship with the rest of the Middle East and Africa. "Clearly there are still a number of economic opportunities so there can be expansion in trade and investment but there are also areas such as cultural and educational contacts which we think we can work on," he said, adding "for instance in the area of Islamic studies there is still room for expansion of co-operation, and I have asked my adviser to explore these avenues." Abhisit referred to the increasing amount of Thai citizens who are heading to the Gulf and Middle Eastern countries in search of employment. "We have a sizeable number of Thai workers in the region, and we are trying to facilitate the process of sending Thai workers abroad and making sure they are working under good conditions," he argued.

He also pointed out that Thai companies, especially in areas like the construction sector, were keen to work abroad. "We have a trade representative office which is identifying a number of opportunities for Thai construction companies, and I believe there will be plenty of opportunities in the region." He said Thailand recognised the potential of growth in the GCC countries and "we have been very supportive of the GCC-Asean relationship". "My expectation is that the GCC and Asean countries will move rather quickly to make this relationship at a high level as this is an area there is potential," he said, referring to the possibility of assisting Qatar and other countries with their food security issues.

GCC needs exit plan: IMF

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Wednesday said the GCC needed an exit strategy from massive fiscal stimulus, and urged Gulf Arab countries to shut down unworkable companies and boost transparency as they emerge from the global economic crisis. The Washington-based fund said massive government spending by GCC countries helped to contain the impact of the global downturn on their respective economies, but they should "start preparing an exit strategy" from the current high spending levels and should implement it once the time is right.

"As the region pulls out of the downturn, it needs to boost transparency and improve corporate oversight," the International Monetary Fund, or IMF, said in an updated report on the GCC. The

IMF believes that while economic growth in the GCC is strengthening, the region faces a risk to its outlook if oil prices remain low for a protracted period. The report released on Wednesday revised up IMF's growth forecast for non-oil growth for GCC states to 4.3 per cent, higher than the four per cent it forecast in May in a regional outlook. The fund warned that the challenges faced by the financial sectors of GCC nations would restrain growth in that region for the short-term, but is not expected to have long-term implications.

GCC needs to introduce new taxes

The current fiscal challenges faced by governments across the GCC region will result in fundamental and potentially far-reaching tax changes, such as the introduction of new taxes and an increase in existing tax rates. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), the leading international professional services organization, today launches its latest biannual Middle East Tax Update highlighting the large number of tax regime changes in the region, many of which have gone largely unnoticed by businesses. This latest edition continues to highlight the extent of ongoing changes to tax regimes in the region, as well as the impact that these changes will have on businesses.

These changes will present major challenges for businesses based in the region as the need to monitor and comply with new tax laws, or changes to existing tax laws, will create increased risks due to the penalties for non-compliance. "Many organizations are not aware of the taxes present in the region and tax penalties can be high when laws are not respected and the correct tax payments are not made on time," said Dean Rolfe, Middle East tax leader at PwC. "With such sweeping reforms taking place across the region businesses need to monitor changes to tax laws and where necessary respond to those changes by modifying their business practices. "Debt levels will continue to be front of mind for governments around the world and tax laws will continue to evolve in order to help balance the books. The Middle East region is no exception and businesses need keep a close eye on any proposed changes and the impact those changes could have on their business," added Rolfe.

Top 100 GCC projects valued at \$ 1.3 trillion

The combined value of the 100 largest projects in the GCC region that are either completed or underway during the last two years totals over \$ 1.3 trillion, according to a study conducted by Meed, the Middle East's premier business intelligence provider, in conjunction with its Quality Awards for Projects 2010 a first-of-its-kind award in the Middle East based solely on the quality of entrants. The research also indicates that Saudi Arabia and the UAE account for a majority of the developments, with 31 and 35 ongoing projects respectively. Highlighting the real estate sector's dominance in the region despite the global financial crisis, the study has highlighted the approximate value of transport projects in the GCC as \$ 164 billion, while that for oil and gas is nearly \$ 131 billion. The findings of the survey, titled 'The GCC's Top 100 Projects', have been showcased by Meed in a 20-page supplement that was released on 16 July.

YEMEN

UAE attends meeting to voice support for Yemen

UAE participated in the second meeting of the Working Group on “Reform, Justice and the Rule of Law” within the Friends of Yemen Block held on Thursday in the Jordanian capital of Amman. The meeting held under the auspices of Jordan and the Netherlands was participated by more than 21 countries, alongside the European Union and the United Nations Development Programme. Yemen’s Minister of Justice Dr Ghazi Al-Aghbari was present at the meeting.

The UAE delegation was headed by Dr Abdullah Nasser Sultan Al Amiri, UAE Ambassador to Jordan. The “Group of the Friends of Yemen” was created to assist Yemen to meet the growing challenges, which threaten the stability of Yemen and the region if there was no co-operation and international co-ordination to achieve unity of Yemen and respect its sovereignty and independence. The UAE is the Co-Chairman of the “Group of Friends of Yemen”. Earlier in March this year, UAE and Germany co-chaired a meeting of the Group in Abu Dhabi under the slogan “Economy and Good Governance” to identify priority areas for action for the Yemeni government and chalk out ways to implement these areas. The Abu Dhabi meeting had emanated from the London Conference on Yemen.

North Yemen clashes threaten fragile peace

Fighting in mountainous north Yemen between Shia rebels and army-backed tribes over the past four days have left at least 49 people dead, threatening a fragile truce, tribal and rebel sources said yesterday. The major confrontations were taking place in Al-Amsheyah, in the northern Amran province, where the tribe of MP Sheikh Sagheer Aziz is allegedly besieged by the Huthi rebels. “The confrontations between the Huthi (rebels) and the supporters of the tribal chief Sheikh Sagheer Aziz have resulted in the death of 20 tribesmen and 10 Huthis,” a tribal source told AFP, requesting anonymity. “Rebels are still besieging the tribe” of Bin Aziz, the source added. But the rebels’ spokesman, Mohamed Abdul Salam, told AFP that 20 rebels were killed in the confrontations, claiming that the clashes were with the army and not with the tribe. “We are confronting military positions. These are not tribal areas,” he said by telephone. Aziz is a member of the parliamentary bloc of the ruling General People’s Congress party. Six MPs have started a sit-in on Tuesday at the parliament in support of Aziz, demanding government action to end the alleged siege. Meanwhile, 62 MPs have signed a petition demanding the government “to assume responsibility in ending the violations committed by the Huthis”, and threatened to suspend their parliamentary membership if the authorities fail to help Aziz. The Amran region and the neighbouring Saada province have been the scene of sporadic clashes between the rebels and government-backed tribes.

Yemen could be next Iraq, Afghanistan: U.S. cleric

A U.S.-born Muslim cleric linked to al Qaeda and wanted dead or alive by Washington warned U.S. President Barack Obama that he risked getting the United States bogged down in Yemen as it was in Iraq or Afghanistan. The warning by Anwar al-Awlaki was posted on an Islamist website late on Monday, days after the U.S. Treasury blacklisted him as a “specially designated

global terrorist”, a move that freezes any assets he may have under U.S. jurisdiction. The remarks appeared to be a repackaged fuller version of an audio clip initially aired on CNN in March, reissued with Arabic and Russian subtitles, rather than a fresh appearance of Awlaki, who is thought to be in hiding in the south of Yemen. The U.S. government has stepped up its assistance to Yemen in a recent crackdown on a resurgent Yemen-based al Qaeda wing, and in April authorised operations to capture or kill Awlaki. “If George W. Bush is remembered as being the president who got America stuck in Afghanistan and Iraq, it’s looking like Obama wants to be remembered as the president who got America stuck in Yemen,” Awlaki said in his message.

“Obama has already started his war on Yemen by the aerial bombings of Abyan and Shabwa,” Awlaki said, referring to two provinces in south Yemen where airstrikes have been carried out against al Qaeda members. Yemen, next to top oil exporter Saudi Arabia, leapt to the forefront of Western security concerns after a Yemen-based regional al Qaeda wing claimed responsibility for a failed attempt to bomb a U.S.-bound plane in December. The U.S. Treasury said New Mexico-born Awlaki had helped direct the failed bomb attack and had also facilitated training camps for militants in Yemen. U.S. officials say Washington plays a supporting role in Yemen by helping its forces track and pinpoint targets, while Washington has downplayed any direct role in strikes, wary of stoking anti-American sentiment and widening al Qaeda’s appeal.

Yemen's ruling party, oppn to start talks on govt formation

Yemen’s ruling General People’s Congress and opposition parties yesterday signed the minutes of an agreement to push for national dialogue in a move hailed by President Ali Abdullah Saleh. “This is a positive step towards political detente... and to start a new phase,” Saleh told reporters after the signing, and renewed a call he made in May to the opposition to form a national unity government. The memorandum was signed with the opposition Common Forum which groups Al-Islah (Reform) Party, the main Islamist opposition, and the Yemeni Socialist Party, as well as other smaller factions. There were no other details.

“We are all in the same boat and we must sail together,” Saleh said. “There must be one leadership for this ship from all political parties and I said in my speech in May that we welcome a partnership with all the political parties in Yemen,” Saleh said. In May, Saleh invited all political groups inside and outside the country to a “responsible national dialogue, within the framework of the constitutional institutions.” “According to this dialogue, it is possible to form a government of all the influential political parties represented in the parliament,” he had said on the eve of the 20th anniversary of Yemen’s unification. Saleh said in May that the Yemeni Socialist Party which is agitating to re-establish south Yemen as an independent state, would be a principal partner in the political dialogue. Other major opposition parties in parliament include the Islamist Al-Islah party, popular among tribesmen who form the backbone of Yemen’s traditional society. Yesterday, the president also insisted that parliamentary elections should take place on time in April 2011 in line with an agreement struck in February 2009.

SAUDI ARABIA

International Front

Saudi Shoura chairman condemns UN double standard

The Kingdom has called on the United Nations to intervene and stop ongoing Israeli settlement building in Palestinian territories. Shoura Council Chairman Abdullah Al-Asheikh said the UN needed to stop Palestinian rights being violated. He was addressing delegates at the third World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, which concluded in Geneva on Wednesday. The conference is a global summit convened by The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which focuses on democracy, the role of legislative institutions and their relationship with the United Nations.

The IPU is composed of members from 140 parliaments around the globe. “The Middle East region is still witnessing continuous Israeli occupation and its daily violations of the rights of the Palestinian people, who live under oppression, destruction and genocide,” said Al-Asheikh. “We see that those who speak the language of law and call for the application of the principles of human rights, justice and equality, ignores all of that when it comes to Israel. This double standard policy is shown in its ugliest form, and thus we see that the Palestinian individual is deprived of his least rights,” he said.

Infiltration from Yemen still continuing: Officials

Immigration authorities in Jazan said on Wednesday that 2,454 Yemeni infiltrators, illegal residents and beggars were caught in the past one month. “Infiltration of Yemenis into Saudi Arabia from the southern border is still continuing despite the heavy presence of border guards,” said a written statement from the local Passport Department, pointing out that border officials have increased their vigilance since the conflict with Yemeni rebels earlier this year. “Border guards have cut new passages in (mountainous) areas that were not accessible in the past in order to be able to patrol the area and prevent infiltration and smuggling,” said the statement. Saudi Arabia’s long and porous border with Yemen is one of highest concern for the authorities. Last year, officials responded to more than 130,000 smuggling attempts, including weapons and humans, compared with about 140,000 such incidents in the rest of the Kingdom.

King Abdullah holds talks with King Hamad

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah held talks here Tuesday with King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain on major regional and international issues. The Saudi Press Agency said the two leaders also explored ways of strengthening bilateral relations. Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal and Intelligence Chief Prince Muqrin attended the talks.

First flight from Iraq in 20 years lands in Jeddah

A Saudi airliner touched down Monday at Jeddah’s King AbdulAziz International Airport, completing a round-trip voyage from Baghdad – the first flights between the neighboring countries since Iraq’s 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The Al-Wafeer Boeing 747-400, which flew for

two hours and 15 minutes and arrived at the Haj Terminal at 9.30 P.M., carried 450 Iraqis intending to make Umrah and visit the Prophet's Mosque in Madina. Sheikh Kazem, an old Iraqi man who came from Al-Najaf province, said he was really happy to be in Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah and thanked the Saudi government for all its help and services for Iraqi passengers. "Once the plane landed at Baghdad for the first time after 20 years, I felt that I have got a new baby", he said. Fourteen flight attendants served the Iraqi passengers, along with Saudi captain Ghassan Al-Hakeem, who led the flights to and from Baghdad. "I have been in Baghdad 25 years ago and it is a very nice feeling to renew the airline's relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iraq," said Al-Hakeem, who added that there were no security or safety obstacles during the flights. Saudi youths marked the occasion of flight WFR1419's arrival by receiving the Iraqi passengers and giving them flowers and prayer carpets.

Islam advocates mercy, tolerance: Sheikh Al-Sudais

Dr. Abdul-Rahman Al-Sudais, the Imam of the Grand Mosque in Makkah, led prayers at Al-Tawheed Mosque in this large industrial town in Lancashire, England, on Friday. The mosque was opened by Dr. Al-Sudais and Lord Adam Bataille at a solemn ceremony earlier in the day. Dr. Al-Sudais is Addressing the large gathering at the mosque, Dr. Al-Sudais said Islam advocates mercy and tolerance as well as respect for human rights and human dignity. He urged Muslims to be advocates of virtues, peace, safety and respect of law and order as well as to behave as constructive members of society and to refrain from any act that undermines stability. Dr. Al-Sudais urged Muslims to cooperate with each other and to maintain good relations with non-Muslims. "We want to tell the world: Don't fear Islam and Muslims and don't get worried about the presence of mosques because they advocate peace and tolerance even with non-Muslims," he said. "My advice to Muslims residing in the West is to remain good models and good ambassadors of their religion, nation and values," he added. Dr. Al-Sudais reiterated that Islam advocates co-existence and establishing contacts with other civilizations and said Islam does not tolerate isolation, but it urges Muslims to become influential persons in society. Lord Bataille said the opening of Al-Tawheed Mosque is an important event and will be remembered forever. He noted that the building of the mosque took about six years, adding that the construction of the mosque was aimed at teaching children the principles of Islam and graduating scholars who spread the message of Islam all over the world.

Social Front

New by-law on alternative prison sentences soon in Saudi Arabia

The Director General of Prisons has said that a new by-law governing alternative sentences to prison will be announced "soon", once it has received royal approval. Prisons chief Ali Al-Harithy said the move would introduce conditions for alternative sentences that are "to the benefit of society", stipulating how they are to be applied, the authority responsible for carrying them out, and the body responsible for supervising their execution. "The law focuses on alternative sentences that are most suitable to our society, and makes it easy for the relevant authority to carry them out as soon as they are handed down by the courts," Al-Harithy said. "The body supervising the execution of sentences may be the police or prison authorities." The prisons chief recognized that some sections of the public may not welcome the idea of alternative

sentences, and urged the media to “give a true picture of them so that society can gradually learn to accept them”. “We have been working with relevant authorities to help the public develop an understanding and acceptance of the idea,” he said. “Prisons will have their role when sentences are reduced by half, or a quarter, or a matter of months, after persons have memorized parts of the Qur’an or shown good behavior or other factors.”

Saudi Shoura mulling action on 300 rights petitions

The Shoura Council is studying more than 300 petitions on human rights, a senior member of the consultative body told Arab News on Tuesday. “We are in the process of studying these submissions, which include complaints and suggestions on various problems related to human rights,” said Dr. Ibrahim Al-Sheddi, chairman of the Committee on Human Rights. He added that members of the public are welcome to send their grievances and ideas on issues related to human rights. “They will be useful for our study and we can make use of them for future policy planning and implementation,” he added.

On the instructions of Abdullah Al-Asheikh, chairman of the Shoura Council, an 11-member committee headed by Al-Sheddi was formed early this year to look into human rights abuses in the Kingdom. Thanking Al-Asheikh for the initiative taken with regard to the formation of the special committee on human rights, Al-Sheddi said members of his committee are carefully scrutinizing all petitions received from the public. “To clarify matters mentioned in the petitions, we always consult government and nongovernmental agencies outside the Shoura Council to get the needed explanations,” he said, adding that the council also takes advice and assistance from visiting foreign delegations. He said the council was able to achieve a great deal in attending to the petitions. “We are also looking for a permanent mechanism to provide an effective platform for citizens to deal with human rights issues,” Al-Sheddi said without elaborating.

Saudis warned against marrying foreign women

Sociologists and rights activists have warned young Saudi men of negative social and economic consequences of their marriages to foreign women. They also warned that the practice increases the number of unmarried women in the Kingdom. To avoid problems, those who seek foreign wives are advised to first obtain official permission. Nizar Al-Saleh, assistant secretary-general of the National Center for Research on Youth at King Saud University, said some Saudis travel to foreign countries with the intention of entering into temporary marriages. At the end of their vacation, they divorce their wives. "This practice shows their disrespect for family values. They do this for temporary personal enjoyment but they don't think about its negative consequences. It will definitely affect their family life," Al-Saleh said. According to Al-Saleh, marriage to foreign women is not advisable for those who are seeking a stable family life. "Persons involved in such marriages often leave their wives and children abroad without taking care of them. They lose their children and the trust of their wives." Many families have been suffering complex problems as a result of such marriages.

Prisons should serve as rehab centers, says Saudi HRC

The Human Rights Commission (HRC) has demanded that officials in charge of the Kingdom's prisons address what an HRC inquiry commission called shortcomings in the jail system. The demand was aired during a meeting recently with Maj. Gen. Ali Al-Harithy, director of prisons. While commending efforts of prison officials, HRC President Bandar Al-Aiban said the Saudi human rights watchdog seeks to ensure the prisoners are enjoying all their rights. The HRC delegation conducted a tour of various prisons in the Kingdom recently. The delegation has also called for expediting judicial procedures to resolve cases where suspects are being held for long periods without trial. Al-Iban said his organization's view is that prisons are rehabilitation centers and not just cells for holding criminals. Al-Harithy expressed his appreciation for the recommendations presented by the HRC. He assured the HRC delegation that he would exert all efforts to ensure that all prisoners and detainees receive their rights according to prison regulations.

New Saudi panel to regulate fatwa publication

The Board of Senior Ulema (religious scholars) has set up a new committee to regulate the publication of religious fatwas (edicts) in a bid to prevent the haphazard issuing of edicts by unauthorised scholars. The move, decided at a recent meeting in Riyadh to introduce a new organisational structure for the Board, will see fatwa offices opened across the country and the appointment of certified muftis to assist the Permanent Committee for Scholarly Research and Ifta. Many enquiries concern Islamic issues related to divorce, and it is hoped that the new committee, to be chaired by Sheikh Saleh bin Muhammad Al Luhaidan, will take the strain off the Permanent Committee, which has only seven members and is chaired by the Grand Mufti, Sheikh Abdul Aziz Aal Al Sheikh. It will also assist spouses seeking rulings on aspects of divorce for which a fatwa can only be issued after the appearance of the couple before the Permanent Committee. The Grand Mufti has stated previously that edicts should only be released by the official Permanent Committee which, he said, would stop any authorised or unqualified persons from issuing fatwas.

Economy Front

Saudi Arabia, EU ink aviation accord

Saudi Arabia recently signed an initial draft horizontal agreement with the European Union aimed at strengthening the foundation and the prospect of cooperation between the Kingdom and the EU in the field of civil aviation. The agreement, which was signed during an official meeting in Brussels, aims to increase traffic between the EU and the Kingdom, with the added hope that it will lead to the establishment of a strategic partnership that reflects the Kingdom's economic and political power. According to Khaled Al-Khaibari, Director of Media and Public Relations at the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA), the agreement will also contribute to strengthening the marketing foundation and strategic alliances between European airlines and the Kingdom's national carriers in order to ensure appropriate investment in air transport.

"It can help remove all reciprocal restrictions imposed on market access," Al-Khaibari said. He

pointed out that the horizontal agreement will establish the legal groundwork for creating further bilateral agreements with the EU, which in itself will have a positive impact on the development of trade, tourism, the economy and investment growth. “The agreement can open doors for the further expansion of bilateral cooperation in order to complete a comprehensive agreement between the Kingdom and the European Union in conformity with the economic requirement policies of both the EU and the Kingdom,” Al-Khaibari added.

Pakistan seeks to boost trade ties with Saudi Arabi

The Pakistani consulate wants to enhance business relations with Saudi businessmen and further develop trade between the two countries, said Sarfraz Ahmed, commercial consul at the Pakistan consulate here. “We recently paid a courtesy call to Dr. Hani Abu Rass, the new secretary general of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI), and discussed a number of issues pertaining to economics, investment and trade as well as ways to enhance the business relationship between the two countries,” Ahmed said. “We also requested the reactivation of the Pakistan-Saudi Business Council and the holding of business forums in coming months,” he added .

Ahmed also told Saudi Gazette that Consul General Abdul Salik Khan requested the JCCI secretary general to help Pakistani businessmen in developing and enhancing Pakistan-Saudi business relations and invited a delegation of Saudi businessmen involved in agriculture to visit Pakistan. “After Ramadan, we are planning for a delegation from the Pakistan chamber of commerce to visit Saudi Arabia to take a new and different approach to business and investment for the development and enhancement of the relationship between our countries. The delegation will represent all sectors of business in Pakistan,” Ahmed explained.

Saudi investors to explore opportunities in Malaysia

Saudi businessmen should explore investment opportunities in the East Coast Economic Region (ECER) especially in the petrochemical, agriculture and tourism industries, Bernama news agency reported on Friday. “I am very happy to note that there are many business opportunities in ECER Malaysia that Saudi investors can participate in,” said Prince Abdulaziz Faisal Al-Saud, who is part of a delegation from Saudi Arabia which is on a five-day business visit to Malaysia beginning July 12. A statement from East Coast Economic Region said the delegation would identify key projects within the ECER that can be pursued by Saudi investors. The Prince and delegation members were briefed on potential investment opportunities in the Kertih Polymer Park, Palm Oil Industrial Cluster, Gambang Halal Park, livestock agriculture projects and the development of Cherating, Pantai Sepat and Teluk Bidara. The visit is reciprocal to the visit made by the ECER Development Council (ECERDC) investment delegation in May, led by the National Corridor Development Adviser, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. Meanwhile, ECERDC Chief Executive Officer Datuk Jebasingam Issace John was quoted as saying in the statement that firm investment commitments are expected to be made by several investors from Saudi Arabia by year-end. “We are confident their interest to invest in ECER will be realized soon, based on ongoing discussions with potential investors, and the call made by Prince Abdul Aziz,” he said. -

UAE

International Front

Emirati, Qatari women students make their mark in Scotland

Nearly 43 young women from the UAE and Qatar received an exclusive opportunity to attend a month-long summer course in Scotland to learn about the country's history, tradition and culture. Students of Zayed University, College of Islamic and Arabic Studies in Dubai, UAE University, American University of Sharjah, Higher Colleges of Technology, British University of Dubai, Abu Dhabi University and Qatar University were the lucky participants in the cultural-exchange programme that began on June 23. "Our experience here over the last 30 days has been remarkable. The once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that was given to us by Al Maktoum Institute has benefited us greatly," said Hiba Eissa Al Redha, a student of International Relations at the Zayed University. "We have come from cultural and social backgrounds in the Gulf region to live in a different cultural atmosphere in this beautiful and fascinating city — Edinburgh. This programme is just the beginning to change ourselves, develop our skills and capabilities to eventually change our societies," she added.

UAE calls for world body on democratic accountability

The UAE on Tuesday called for establishing an international independent body representing peoples of the world to act as a parliamentary arm of the United Nations (UN) and hold any country — big or small — accountable democratically if it flouts its international responsibilities as per the principles of the international law and legitimacy. The UAE proposal was floated by Speaker of the Federal National Council (FNC) Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair in an address before the third World Conference of Speakers of Parliament — a global summit focusing on democracy, the role of legislative institutions and their relationship with the UN. Being held by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) till today at the UN Office (Palais des Nations) here, the broad theme for the 2010 Conference is 'Parliaments in a world of crisis: securing global democratic accountability for the common good'. "I believe the new international accountability organisation should represent all peoples of the world and serve as a voice for principles of international justice. It's necessary for the UN to mull deeply, creating such a parliamentary arm," Al Ghurair said.

UAE is committed to assisting Afghanistan: Abdullah

UAE Foreign Minister H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan reiterated yesterday commitment of the leadership, government and people of the UAE to continue their support and assistance for efforts to maintain security and stability in Afghanistan. "The UAE represented by the government and non-government organisations and civil society institutions have delivered development programmes that contributed to creating job opportunities and improving living conditions of the people of Afghanistan. They also supported the education sector through building of schools and universities that have contributed directly to generate Afghani cadres to serve their country's interest," Sheikh Abdullah told the concluding session of the international donors conference in Kabul.

Mohammed, Mitchell discuss Middle East peace efforts

General Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, met the US' Middle East envoy, Senator George Mitchell, here on Monday. The US envoy briefed Shaikh Mohammed on the results of his talks with Egyptian President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, as well as with Palestinian and Israeli sides within the framework of his efforts to push forward the peace negotiations aimed at resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict . General Shaikh Mohammed and Mitchell discussed the recent developments in the peace process and the reconciliation efforts between Palestinian and Israeli sides. They also pondered over the steps to be taken in order to achieve concrete progress in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations to ensure an independent and viable Palestinian state. General Shaikh Mohammed also asserted the importance of the US and international efforts exerted to resolve the conflict in accordance with international legitimacy resolutions and agreements and the Arab peace initiative. He stressed the need to remove obstacles that impede progress in talks between the Palestinians and Israelis as the step toward a peaceful solution and the achievement of peace in the region, including cessation of all procedures and practices that would undermine the trust between the two sides.

UAE aid to Seychelles for combating piracy, regulating fishing

The UAE has signed an agreement worth \$ 15 million to assist Seychelles in the fight against piracy, regulation of fishing and navigation on the island. The UAE will finance the construction of a new Coast Guard office in Seychelles off Mahe, the largest island in the archipelago. It will offer five patrol ships to double Seychelles' fleet in this task. The move follows the directives from President His Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan and follow up of Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.

Social Front

Programme to detect colorectal cancer launched in Abu Dhabi

The Health Authority Abu Dhabi (HAAD), in collaboration with Hoffman Laroche, initiated the implementation of a programme for detecting colorectal cancer. The programme aims at assessing the importance and possibility of detecting the disease and determining the most effective methods of diagnosing it at early stages while keeping the patient's tension and discomfort to a minimum. During a press conference on Thursday, Dr Salim Adib, head of the public health section at Haad, affirmed that the authority had taken the initiative to set up a comprehensive cost-effective programme for diagnosing colorectal cancer across the UAE and Arabian Gulf. He added that timely detection and treatment of the disease could help control it in more than 90 per cent of the cases.

UAE urged to let deportees appeal

A leading rights group yesterday urged the United Arab Emirates to allow hundreds of deported Lebanese citizens and people from Gaza to appeal their expulsions. The UAE has expelled at least 120 Lebanese families and “scores of Palestinians, mainly from Gaza,” since June 2009 without due process, charged Human Rights Watch (HRW) in a letter to the UAE government. “It’s now been more than a year since the UAE started deporting hundreds of Lebanese and Gazans, and the government has yet to give any adequate justification,” said Sarah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch, in a statement. Interrogations of deportees surrounding their affiliation to Hezbollah and other groups also “raise concerns that the expulsions were politically motivated,” said HRW. Governments have the right under international law to regulate the presence of foreigners in the country, but they are also constrained in the deportation process, insisted the rights group. HRW urged the UAE government to suspend any deportation pending an appeal and to “publicly state the steps each deported person wishing to appeal his or her expulsion order may take.” In the UAE meanwhile yesterday, US Middle East envoy George Mitchell held talks with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahayan on the ongoing efforts to engage Israel and the Palestinians in direct peace talks.

Schooling compulsory till age 18 for UAE nationals

The Ministry of Education (MoE) could raise the compulsory education age to 18 by next year for UAE nationals to check high dropout rates in schools, Khaleej Times has learnt. At present, education is compulsory for UAE citizens up to the age of 15, that is till Grade 9 in the country. A majority of the dropouts have been recorded at the high school level by the education authority. According to latest ministry figures, more than 10,000 secondary public school students have dropped out while Dubai’s Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) placed the dropout rate in the emirate at 22 per cent among boys and 14 per cent among girls.

“We are working on increasing the compulsory education age and by the beginning of next year it will be announced,” said Shaikha Al Shamsi, chief executive for educational affairs at the ministry. In 2008, the UAE announced its plan to raise the age for compulsory education to 18 years at the UN meeting in Geneva. “Raising the compulsory education age is one of the key component of the strategy that will help minimise the dropout rate,” she told Khaleej Times.

Murder trials must follow Sharia law, UAE Supreme Court rules

Judges in capital murder cases must follow Sharia law without exception, the Federal Supreme Court has ruled – but experts say the decision could mean long delays in some trials. The requirements of Sharia state that the victim’s relatives must accept or decline blood money in court. But in cases in which the victim’s relatives cannot be easily found or cannot attend court, trials can be adjourned for months or even years. In extreme instances, where there are no relatives, the judge, acting in the name of the state, will become the victim’s guardian and decide on blood money. The UAE legal system follows a dual track, with laws passed by the Government and Sharia law functioning side-by-side. Judges have discretion as to which laws

take precedence. The Supreme Court ruling, handed down on June 8 and publicly disclosed in a document released this week, says judges have no discretion in cases of premeditated murder, which call for the death penalty. The case in the ruling originated in Sharjah and involved an illegal immigrant whose identity was never known. SSS, an Indian, was convicted of murder late last year by Sharjah Criminal Court and sentenced to death. But the court of appeal changed the sentence to life imprisonment. Neither court followed the Sharia requirement for the family of the victim to attend the sentencing.

Economy Front

Emirates to begin new service to Dakar from September

With the launch of Emirates' new route to Dakar now just six weeks away, the airline has unveiled a raft of economic benefits that the service will bring to the Middle East, West Africa and markets throughout the airline's international network. As the only scheduled passenger service between the UAE and Senegal, Emirates' new route will cut current journey times to Dakar by around the equivalent of an eight-hour working day, creating an easy, fast and convenient service for business and leisure travellers. Richard Vaughan, Divisional Senior Vice-President of Emirates' Commercial Operations Worldwide, said: "Dakar is a dynamic, emerging destination that we are delighted to welcome as our nineteenth African route. As the only direct air link between Senegal and the Middle East, our new service will play an important role in supporting trade ties and tourism, facilitating the smooth movement of travellers and cargo between Senegal and Emirates' extensive global network." "This new route launch is a further demonstration of Emirates' commitment to investing in and supporting the development of its pan-African footprint. Not only is the service already paying dividends through the creation of new jobs, such as our first Senegalese cabin crew and sales staff, but it will provide a significant long-term boost to trade and commerce," he said.

UAE: Bank to appeal massive payout

Abu Dhabi-listed National Bank of Umm Al Quwain is to appeal against a Dubai court decision ordering it to pay \$ 250 million to Kuwait's Global Investment House. Global told Reuters that the court decision had gone in its favour over the sum, a deposit placed by the company with National Bank in August 2008. The sum was paid by Global to National Bank as a deposit for a National Bank convertible bond issue. Global later cancelled the planned purchase, and wanted the money back, but National Bank decided it was entitled to keep it.

UAE and HK sign deal to avoid double taxation

The UAE and Hong Kong have signed an initial agreement to avoid double taxation on commodities and services to boost trade and investments. "The agreement will have a positive impact on protecting investments and securing a strong economic and trade cooperation among our two fast growing economies and the region in general," Younis Hajji Al Khoori, director-general of MoF, said. "It will create more opportunities for growth of the existing businesses and the formation of new ones and will add to the prosperity of our two countries," the director-general said. The agreement is expected play a vital role in facilitating the movement of capital

and is in line with the UAE's efforts to strengthen financial relationships with various countries of the world. It will encourage economic openness between the two economic powerhouses in Asia by facilitating the movement of production material, encouraging export and import operations and increasing investment opportunities. The deal will also enhance trade and exports and advance economic relationships.

Prices of construction materials rise

Prices of construction materials rose by 3.2 per cent in the Muscat governorate in the first quarter of the year over the corresponding period of 2009, according to statistics released by the Ministry of National Economy. The increase was 1.4 per cent over the last quarter of 2009. A 4.3 per cent rise in the price of plywood resulted in a 0.4 per cent increase in the 'wood' category, while glass and fibreglass costs went up by 8.5 per cent. The electrical equipment and appliances group registered an increase of 7.9 per cent, copper products by six per cent and steel and iron products by 4.3 per cent. However, there was a decline in costs of some products. Stones, sand and gypsum fell by 5.4 per cent, while the aluminium products group declined by 3.5 per cent. The other metals category saw a 1.6 per cent decrease and cement fell by 1.3 per cent.

KUWAIT

International Front

Kuwait, Brazil ink five agreements

His Highness the Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held official talks Thursday with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. The talks were attended by the official Kuwaiti delegation, members of the Brazilian government, and members of the Brazilian business community. During the talks, over which a cordial spirit prevails, the two sides discussed bilateral relations in the political, economic, commercial, cultural, sports and youth spheres, as well as means to enhance these ties in the interest of the two countries and their peoples. The two sides also discussed regional and international matters, and means for coordination between them at international conventions. Following the talks, five agreements were signed between the governments of Kuwait and Brazil. The first agreement was a memorandum in the field of the environment and sustainable development. It was signed by Kuwait's Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Brazil's Acting Minister of Foreign Relations Antonio Patriota. The second agreement was on technical cooperation. It was signed by Kuwait's Minister of Finance Mustafa Jassem Al-Shimali and Brazil's Acting Minister of Foreign Relations Antonio Patriota. Meanwhile, the third agreement was a protocol amending the economic cooperation agreement. It was signed by Kuwait's Minister of Finance Mustafa Jassem Al-Shimali and Brazil's Minister Guido Mantega. As for the fourth agreement, it was a memorandum of understanding for sports cooperation. It was signed by Kuwait's Minister of Commerce and Industry Ahmad Rashed Al-Haroun and Brazil's Minister of Sports Orlando Silva. The fifth and final agreement was on aviation services. It was signed by Kuwait's Foreign Undersecretary Khalid Sulaiman Al-Jarallah and Brazil's Acting Minister of Foreign Relations Antonio Patriota.

In a statement following the inking of the agreements, Undersecretary Al-Jarallah said that the talks were "fruitful and constructive," over which a spirit of true friendship prevailed. He said that all aspects of mutual relations were discussed, as well as means to further consolidate this "excellent" relationship and to take it to higher levels in all areas. Al-Jarallah added that the two sides also discussed international affairs, including regional matters in the Gulf and others. He noted that views on these matters were identical for both sides, adding that he sensed the appreciation of the Brazilian side for this visit by the Kuwaiti Premier, the latter who told President da Silva that the visit to Latin America aimed at strengthening ties between Latin American and Arabian Gulf states, as well as with Arab countries in general.

UNSC OKs providing extra funds for coordinators for missing Kuwaitis

The Security Council on Thursday approved a request by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to allocate USD 233,600 from the Iraq escrow account to finance the activities of the High-Level Coordinator for Missing Kuwaitis and Property Gennady Tarasov to enable him to achieve progress in the coming six months. In a letter to the council President Joy Ogwu of Nigeria, circulated Thursday, Ban noted that the council members had agreed in a press statement in June to finance the continuation of the activities of the coordinator for six months. "Given that all parties should translate political statements of goodwill into concrete actions so as to enable progress during the coming months and resolving outstanding issues, the period ahead will require further intensification of the activities of the High-level Coordinator," Ban wrote in a letter to Ogwu. "To that end, it would be necessary to allocate the resources sufficient to finance the activities of the High-level Coordinator and his support staff until 31 December 2010 in the amount of USD 233,600," he added, suggesting that these funds be earmarked from the Iraq escrow account where oil revenues are deposited. In her letter in response to Ban's also circulated today, Ogwu said the council members "reiterate their continuing support for the important work" of the High-level Coordinator, (and) wish to inform you that the Security Council has decided to earmark 233,600" from the Iraq escrow account to finance the High-Level Coordinator's activities until the end of December. She further requested Ban to report to the council on progress in Tarasov's activities by 10 December 2010.

Kuwaiti-Comorian relations strong, strategic: diplomat

Relations between Kuwait and the Comoros are strong and strategic with Kuwait acting as a strong partner since the independence of the Union of the Comoros, Director-General of the Arab Affairs at the Comorian Foreign Ministry Ambassador Ibrahim Abdullah Ibrahim said here Friday. Ibrahim told KUNA that Kuwait has always played an important part in aiding the Comoros, noting that the branch office of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), established on orders of late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, had played an important role in several development projects in the country. His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah continued legacy by backing up the Comoros, said Ibrahim, adding that the recent visited by top state officials such as His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah to the country also solidified the notion that Kuwait was amongst the best of allies to the country. In regards to the recent visit by President Ahmed Abdullah Sambi to Kuwait, the official stressed that the President's meeting with Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah focused primarily on pursuing measures to

further develop the strong relations. On the volume of mutual investments, Ibrahim noted that via KFAED, Kuwait had been a contributor for integration in the Comoros, adding that the Gulf country had involved itself in developing projects in every possible aspect.

Al-Kharafi, Larijani agree on coordinating efforts over joint issues

Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Jassem Al-Kharafi said here on Tuesday that there was a consensus in his views with the President of the Iranian Shura Council Ali Larijani over bilateral issues discussed on the sidelines of the Third World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments currently being convened in Geneva. Al-Kharafi told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the meeting dealt with the coordination of positions within the Union of the Parliament of the Islamic states on the agreement currently under way to transform the Inter-Parliamentary Union to an Organization, according to what was agreed upon between the parliaments of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Union of Arab Parliaments. He noted that negotiations between the two sides discussed the importance of focusing on reconciliation efforts between the Palestinians which should be pooled for the benefit of residents of the Gaza Strip, and to lift the siege imposed on them.

Kuwait's PM arrives in Guyana

His Highness the Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah arrived in the Co-operative Republic of Guyana on Tuesday, the fourth stop of his Latin American and Caribbean tour. Receiving His Highness the Prime Minister at the airport was the President of Guyana Bharrat Jagdeo, several cabinet officials and the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Brazil and non-resident Ambassador to Guyana Walid Al-Kandari. A warm reception was given to the Kuwaiti prime minister, during which both national anthems were played. HH the Prime Minister is expected to hold official talks with Jagdeo on Wednesday, which will focus on bilateral relations and international along with regional affairs of mutual importance.

Kuwait nod for oil border post: Iraq

Kuwait has given initial approval to open a special border crossing with neighbouring Iraq for international oil firms working there, an Iraqi oil official said yesterday. "There is kind of initial approval from Kuwait's side," Abdul-Mahdy al-Ameedi, director of the oil ministry's licensing office, said on the sidelines of a meeting between oil executives and the oil ministry in Baghdad. "This information we got from the contracting companies who said they talked with the Kuwaiti government, and that there is an initial approval to use the road that is close to Safwan and passes through Rumaila oilfield." Several oilfields straddle the border between the two countries, including the Rumaila and Safwan fields. The new border point would facilitate the inflow of equipment for oil companies that secured contracts to develop Iraq's oilfields, Ameedi said, adding that Iraq's ministry of foreign affairs is also due to start official talks with Kuwait.

World Conf. of Parliament Speakers to discuss crucial issues: Al-Kharafi

Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Jassem Al-Kharafi said on Saturday that the World Conference of Speakers of Parliament is set to discuss a number of crucial issues at this intricate period in time. Al-Kharafi, in his first statement since arriving in Geneva to attend the event, said that Gulf Cooperation Council states are to meet on Sunday to coordinate a unified position - notably on the Palestinian issue - to a gathering of 150 parliament speakers from around the world. The leading Kuwaiti parliamentarian is also set to attend a meeting of the Inter-Arab Parliamentary Union on Sunday. Al-Kharafi expressed his gratitude and thanks to the Swiss government for their hosting of the event, after attending delegations of the last two sessions in New York found it hard to obtain visa entries into the United States. Receiving the National Assembly speaker was the Kuwaiti permanent envoy to the UN, Ambassador Dhirar Rezougi and the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Switzerland Suhail Shehaiber, among other Kuwaiti diplomats in Geneva. The World Conference of Speakers of Parliament is set to kick off early Monday, with the attendance of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. The conference aims to discuss issues related to global crises and means to solve them, along with the relation between parliaments and the UN, namely on security, peace, comprehensive development challenges and the dialogue of nations and cultures. The conference will also discuss a number of reports related to current international affairs and reforms presented by the UN.

Kuwaiti Premier holds official talks, signs agreements in Havana

His Highness the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held official talks with the First Vice President of the Council of State, Jose Ramon Machado Ventura, on Saturday. The top officials met in presence of members of the Kuwaiti accompanying delegation as well as Cuban ministers and other officials. The officials reviewed the strong brotherly relations, which span three decades, and cooperation in the fields of politics, economy, trade, and culture. The officials also discussed regional issues topped by the Palestinian cause and Israeli settlement expansion and desecration of Muslim sanctities and holy places and international issues including the global financial crisis and the global effort to counter terrorism. In press remarks, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah described the talks as "fruitful and constructive" and also wide-ranging in theme. He also said the two parties announced a new era of bilateral relations with the appointment of a resident Kuwaiti Ambassador in the Cuban capital, Havana, a move met favorably in Cuba.

The two sides followed the talks with signing of three agreements; a foreign ministries bilateral consultation agreement signed by Sheikh Mohammad and Cuban Minister of Foreign Relations Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla; a culture and arts cooperation agreement signed by Kuwaiti Minister of Finance Mustafa Al-Shimali and Cuban Minister of Culture Abel Prieto Jimenez; a trade cooperation agreement signed by Kuwaiti Minister of Commerce and Industry Ahmad Rashid Al-Haroun and Cuban First Vice Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment Antonio Carricarte Corona. Kuwaiti Minister of Commerce Al-Haroun said the new trade cooperation agreement would open wide horizons for cooperation, especially as Cuba increases its investment appeal. Meetings would be held to work out the technical aspects, and the Kuwaiti side showed

willingness to venture into investment as well as boost cooperation in trade and industry, the minister noted.

Social Front

Kuwait speaker satisfied with int'l parliament conf. outcomes

Kuwait's National Assembly (parliament) Speaker Jassem Al-Kharafi voiced here Wednesday his satisfaction with the outcomes of the just-concluded 3rd World Conference of Speakers of Parliament. Speaking to Kuwait TV, Al-Kharafi hailed the gathering as "good" thanks to Gulf and Arab coordination with African, Asian and European parliamentary delegations. He said this coordination had led to scrapping a suggestion aiming to transform the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) into an international organization. "Such a step (transforming IPU into an international organization) could have put unjust conditions for our countries, which contradict our local constitutions and laws," he said. For his part, Kuwaiti MP Marzouq Al-Ghanim, speaking to KUNA, said Gulf and Arab coordination was the key achievement of the conference. He said Gulf and Arab efforts had led to the omission of all draft resolutions that could breach states' sovereignty, constitutions and laws.

Kuwait in dire need of national unity project

A Ministry of Justice report issued earlier this week indicated that the crime rate in Kuwait increased dramatically between 2008 and 2009, rising by 68 percent over that period. The report revealed that the number of cases tried in local courts last year reached 168,312. Commenting on the shocking new statistics, the deputy of the justice council Faisal Al-Mershid told the press that this increase is abnormal. "It indicates that our society is in dire need of a national unity project, an awareness project that would bring people closer and let them see past their differences," he asserted. The population must combat this defect in order to reduce the number of crimes, said Al-Mershid. He added that there are many issues and conflicts that can be resolved without the need to go to court, but many people choose to go to court regardless. "People no longer have tolerance towards others; the tolerance level of the Kuwaiti citizen has reached zero. This is a dangerous situation that must be salvaged immediately," Al-Mershid warned. He noted that a large number of plaintiffs go to court to seek revenge rather than solve a problem. "People set out to destroy their opponent, be it a business partner, a friend or even a family member. There are married and divorced people whose cases are in court for years, and they are determined to cause destruction rather than solve a dilemma," said the senior judicial official.

Economy Front

Kuwait, Bulgaria sign agreement on air transport

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation announced Thursday initially signing an agreement between Kuwait and Bulgaria on organizing air transport services. Head of Kuwait's delegation and the directorate's deputy director for the safety of aviation and air transport affairs Nabeel Al-Zamil told KUNA that the agreement comes as part of the directorate's policy to strengthen aviation relations with other countries, ease the operation of commercial aviation companies, and

encourage trade exchange between the two countries. He pointed out that it was agreed that aviation companies from Kuwait and Bulgaria will cooperate with each other. The Kuwaiti delegation which took part in the talks included head of the directorate's air transport department Nader Al-Blushi, Nasser Burisli and Abrar Al-Shimmeri from the international affairs department and Wafa Al-Baker from the Foreign Ministry.

Kuwait's crude oil exports to China hit new record

Kuwait's crude oil exports to China skyrocketed 139.7 percent in June from a year earlier to a record high of 1.26 million tons, equivalent to around 308,000 barrels per day (bpd), becoming China's sixth-biggest crude supplier, the latest government data showed. The previous record was 264,000 bpd logged in April. Kuwait provided 5.6 percent of China's total crude oil imports, compared with 3.2 percent in the same month of last year and 3.3 percent in May, according to the General Administration of Customs. Kuwait's exports in the first half of 2010 reached 203,000 bpd, up 23.8 percent from the same period last year. China's overall imports of crude jumped 34.1 percent year-on-year to a record of 5.44 million bpd in June. Angola returned to China's top supplier with its shipments expanding 24.0 percent from a year earlier to 913,000 bpd, followed by Saudi Arabia with 897,000 bpd, up 25.0 percent. Iran became third, with imports from the country falling 6.7 percent to 423,000 bpd). China is the world's second-biggest oil consumer after the US. The Chinese government in May gave preliminary approval to state-run Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its partner Sinopec for a USD 9 billion oil refinery project in south China's Guangdong Province, to which Kuwait is expected to supply all the crude. As the project is included in the China's 11th Five Year Plan (2006-2010), preparatory work for final approval is currently in full swing. The Environmental Impact Assessment and the Project Application Report, submitted by the alliance late April to the Ministry of Environmental Protection, must be approved before Beijing's final nod.

Kuwait, top Arab investor in Kurdistan

The State of Kuwait leads the Arab investors in Iraq's northern semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan with investments topping USD 1.554 billion, a regional official said Tuesday. "The total value of Arab investments in the region hit USD 2.693 billion, accounting for 74 percent of the total foreign investment," Haidar Mustafa, director of the Research and Information Division of Kurdistan Investment Board, told reporters here. "Only four Arab countries invested in Kurdistan, namely Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan between August 1, 2008 and July 20, 2010," Mustafa pointed out. "Lebanon came in the second place among the Arab investors with USD 759.714 million followed by Egypt - USD 350 million, and then Jordan USD 28.899 million," he disclosed. "The Arab investments in the region came first and outpaced the foreign ones," Mustafa said, voicing hope that the Arab investors would keep coming into the region in order to tap into the promising opportunities here and contribute to the reconstruction process. Chairman of the investment board Herish Muharram has recently stated that the foreign investments in the region topped USD 12 million.

OMAN

International Front

Oman's Alawi in China, praises ties

Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdallah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, met here yesterday with Li Chen Jeon Deputy Chief of the Foreign Liaison Department of the Chinese Communist Party. During the meeting, Alawi praised the deep-rooted Omani-Chinese ties and the great development china is experiencing as well as its essential role in international relations. On his part, the Chinese official expressed satisfaction over the level of relations reached and ways of boosting them in economic and social fields between the two countries.

Oman a role model in region

Abdul Rahman bin Hamad al Attiyah, GCC Secretary-General said that July 23 is a great day for every Omani citizen and all GCC citizens as well. In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), Al Attiyah affirmed that this occasion is very special at the national level, especially in relation to the Renaissance witnessed by the Sultanate of Oman under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in all walks of life. He added that His Majesty the Sultan's keenness to provide welfare, security, stability and prosperity for the Omani people is a source of appreciation at the local, Arab and international levels. Al Attiyah congratulated His Majesty the Sultan and the Omani people on the 40th anniversary of the Renaissance Day. He pointed out that His Majesty the Sultan's political vision, deep insight, strong keenness to provide security and welfare, wise approach and realistic leadership made the Sultanate a model to be followed at all levels and fields. Al Attiyah hailed the wisdom and experience of His Majesty the Sultan and other GCC leaders in leading the blessed march of the GCC, as well as their support which has a positive impact on continuing the GCC's work and achievements.

Alawi, Japanese official explore ways to boost bilateral ties

Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdallah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, met in Tokyo yesterday with Koichi Takemasa, Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister, within the framework of his current visit to Japan. The meeting discussed bilateral relations between the two friendly countries, issues of common concern and latest regional and international developments. During the meeting, Alawi said that the Sultanate has deep-rooted relations with Japan. He stressed the importance of promoting these relations to include the cultural aspects and consultation between the two countries at all levels. The Japanese State Secretary for Foreign Affairs stressed the advanced level of bilateral and ways of enhancing them in various fields.

Oman-UK panel to foster bilateral ties in key areas

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Secretary-General of the Foreign Ministry, and William Jefferson Hague, British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, said in a joint press statement issued here yesterday prior to Hague's departure that the British minister's audience with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos at Bait al Baraka on Saturday was a good opportunity

which opened wider scope for more constructive ties. Sayyid Badr and Hague valued the history of partnership between the Sultanate and the United Kingdom, saying that it derived strength from a Treaty of Friendship signed by the two countries in 1800, and subsequent agreements. Hague expressed the British Government's keenness on enhancing ties with the Gulf region in general and the Sultanate in particular. The two sides agreed that they should continue building bilateral relations for the future, as well as expanding the existing co-operation in various areas, including culture, education, defence and security, trade and investment and foreign policy. They decided to establish a joint Steering Committee to take this forward. They agreed on boosting trade links that would bring great benefit to the two countries' economies.

Sultan Qaboos, British minister review bilateral ties

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos gave an audience at Bait Al Baraka here yesterday to William Hague, British Secretary of State for Foreign and the Commonwealth Affairs. The audience discussed aspects of co-operation between the Sultanate and Britain and other matters of common concern. The audience was attended by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Secretary-General of the Foreign Ministry, Dr Noel Joseph Guckian, UK Ambassador to the Sultanate, and the delegation accompanying the guest.

Social Front

Omani citizens proud of glorious achievements

The loyal people of Oman will celebrate a historic day as the modern Omani Renaissance rose and His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said announced the beginning of a new and glorious era on July 23, 1970. On Friday, with the completion of 40 years of the blessed Renaissance, Oman, the homeland, citizens and the state feel proud of the achievements made over the last four decades. It is happy for the achievements made across the country and renews loyalty and gratitude to His Majesty the leader. Thanks to His Majesty the Sultan's wise leadership and deep belief in great capabilities of the Omani citizen, strong determination and ability to mobilise the resources of the nation, people and material, historic and contemporary, the modern Omani blessed Renaissance march goes ahead towards attaining its goals. The aim of these goals is to make the Omani citizen happy by availing everything that ensure good living conditions for him and enabling him at the same time to play an active role and participate in drafting and steering the development in all walks of life and construct the edifice of the modern state that is capable of turning aspirations into reality. July 23, as His Majesty the Sultan once said: "A new era for a great future for the nation and the citizen". Throughout the past 40 years, the march of construction and development continued to cover all walks of life all over the country. His Majesty the Sultan has been a real model in work, dedication and infinite giving for Oman and its people in a bid to ensure its development and resumes its positive active role and to become a harbour for peace, a driving force for stability and the homeland for boom not only for its people but for the region around it.

Economy Front

Oman, Indonesia to boost trade relations

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) Chairman HE Khalil Bin Abdullah Al Khonji said on Monday private sector can play a lead role in exploring and strengthening trade and business relations between the Sultanate and Indonesia. In a meeting with Dr Alawi Shihab, Special Envoy of the Indonesian President to the Middle East at the Republican Palace in Jakarta, Khonji said sectors like infrastructure and services especially held bright prospects for mutual cooperation. The meeting was also attended by Hussain Bin Ali Bin Tahir Meqaibel, Oman's Representative to Jakarta. The two sides discussed the future of economic and investment ties between the Sultanate and Indonesia, particularly in the private sector. The officials explored the possibility of holding joint exhibitions to develop trade and economic cooperation. Khonji also met his counterpart, Adi Putra Tahir, Chairman of the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, during which trade and economic exchange between the two countries were discussed. Khonji invited Tahir to visit the Sultanate along with a delegation of Indonesian businessmen to attend a joint trade and economic forum to get acquainted with the investment opportunities in the Sultanate and other GCC states.

Oman-Russia trade discussed

Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdallah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, met here yesterday with Yevgeny Primakov, Chairman of the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The two sides discussed means of developing trade, economic and tourism relations. They stressed the strong bilateral relations and identical stand on many international issues. Later, Alawi gave a statement to the TV channel Russia Today (RT) during which he elaborated on the distinguished relations between the Sultanate and Russia and regional and international issues of common concern.

BAHRAIN

International Front

Bahrain condemns Zahedan bombings

Bahrain Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa sent a cable on Sunday to his Iranian counterpart Munachehr Mottaki, in which he expressed the Kingdom's condemnation of the terrorist bombing in Zahedan, in which many innocent people were killed. In his cable, Sheikh Khalid expressed his country's full support for Iran in countering such cowardly acts. He also expressed Bahrain's condolences to the Iranian leadership, people, and the families of the victims. The Bahraini foreign minister prayed for Iran's security and stability.

Social Front

Bahrain govt warns against fraudulent CIO officials

The government of Bahrain has warned its citizens against being tricked by fake Central Informatics Organisation (CIO) officials into giving them personal information. The warning was issued by the CIO after receiving information about individuals faking their identities as CIO officials ahead of the parliamentary and municipal elections. "We have no such survey and we do not know who those people are, so the public has to be more careful and not give personal information. "We also urge the public to insist on seeing the ID of those individuals," General Director of Statistics at the CIO, Dr Nabeel Shams, said in a statement. He said all CIO surveys, before they are introduced, are announced through the media, so people have to be careful of these fraudsters. He warned that acting as government officials to know the success of candidates is a serious crime that is penalised in Bahrain. "We are issuing our surveyors with special cards to make their work easier when they are touring various places in Bahrain, so the public should ask for those cards if they encounter surveyors to check if they are officially assigned by us or not," he explained.

Appeal for new society in Bahrain rejected

AN application to set up a new society to raise awareness about the benefits of Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030 has been rejected. It was earlier reported that a group of lawyers had taken legal action against the Social Development Ministry after waiting more than eight months for an answer. However, the GDN yesterday obtained a copy of a letter sent to the Al Nazaha (Integrity) Society, in which the ministry referred the body to the Culture and Information Ministry. It stated the decision was based on the fact the society did not have any social goals, making the ministry the wrong body to acquire approval from. "The society's application had no indication that one of its goals is social," said the letter. "The Culture and Information Ministry is the body specialised in registering the society, according to the legal affairs directorate's opinion." Society president Hussain Mansour said the letter was merely an attempt to get the group to drop its case. "There are societies which have similar goals as us and have been approved by the Social Development Ministry," he said. "One that comes to mind is the Bahrain Transparency Society." Mr Mansour stressed that the society would continue its civil legal action against the ministry, which aimed to force it to approve the society's request. "We will not cancel the court case and will keep fighting for our rights," he said. "We have the right to have our society acknowledged like any other society aiming to serve this country." Mr Mansour added a hearing had been fixed for October 5. Lawyers, media representatives and academics submitted their request to the ministry last November only to be left waiting with no reason given for the delay. The society had earlier sent a letter addressed to Social Development Minister Dr Fatima Al Balooshi urging her to intervene and help speed up procedures.

Bahrain Shias not expecting major gains in poll

Bahrain's main opposition group, the Shia Muslim Al Wefaq bloc, will field candidates for up to 24 out of 40 voting districts in upcoming elections and does not expect to win a majority, an official said on Monday. The tiny Gulf Arab country, with a majority Shia Muslim population

but a Sunni ruling family, is expected to hold parliamentary elections in October or November. But observers forecast few changes, as diplomats say voting districts are expected to be carved out in such a way as to ensure Shi'ites do not get a majority.

Jasim Husain, a member of parliament for Al Wefaq, told Reuters his party was focusing on districts where it had a chance of success, and would field 18 to 24 candidates. "We don't want to overstretch our resources," Husain said, adding that he expected to win around 18 seats. "In other districts we will endorse other candidates ... independents or nationalists, Sunnis who are not too anti-Shi'ite." Bahrain, a close ally of the United States and top oil exporter Saudi Arabia, is ruled by the Sunni al-Khalifa family and the majority Shi'ite population complains of discrimination in jobs and services, a claim the government denies.

Bahraini woman minister named media personality

A Bahraini woman minister has been named the Gulf media personality for the year 2010 in recognition of her efforts to promote media in the region. Minister of Culture Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa was awarded the title on Wednesday by the Gulf Society for the Press and Freedom of Information and the Arab Society for the Press and Freedom of Information (Araps).

Shaikha Mai won the prestigious award for her constant defence of the freedom of speech and expression. Both societies stressed that the award was an appreciation of her work and in honour and respect for Shaikha Mai who dedicated all her efforts to promotion of media. Shaikha Mai was selected by 30 judges from all GCC countries.

Economy Front

Bahrain economy likely to grow by 4%

Bahrain's economy is expected to grow by slightly more than 4 per cent this year, the Economic Development Board (EDB) said on Sunday, while it sees the country's financial sector recovering only slowly. "The EDB expects the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Bahrain in the current year of 2010 to increase a little bit more than 4 per cent," it said in a statement. EDB's forecast is in line with the central bank's expectation of about 4 per cent economic growth in Bahrain this year, compared with 3.2 per cent in 2009. The EDB, a government body responsible for setting Bahrain's economic policies, also said that GDP grew 5.2 per cent during the first quarter year-on-year and 1.4 per cent compared to the last quarter of 2009.

Bahrain plan will spur investment

A new proposal to reduce minimum capital requirement for commercial companies will promote Bahrain's competitiveness as an ideal location for investment projects, Deputy King Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa said last night. He also said that small and medium investors should be encouraged as he chaired an Economic Development Board executive committee meeting at Riffa Palace. Economic laws and tools must serve the kingdom's growth, he added.

The Deputy King said the main goal desired by His Majesty King Hamad is that every new economic law must directly benefit citizens and facilitate investment, and legislation must be used to protect the nation and serve its economic achievements. Present were Deputy Prime Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa. The Deputy King directed officials to endorse the proposal as part of amendments to the law on commercial companies in view of its positive effects on trade, investment and the economic situation in general.

Bahrain pushes for Gulf stability fund

Bahrain, the smallest economy in the six-nation Gulf Arab economic bloc, is pushing for the creation of a regional stability fund to counter potential fiscal crises, its finance minister said in published remarks. The fund should also work on bridging economic disparities among the member states of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohamed al-Khalifah said in an interview published on the bloc's July news bulletin Almaseera. The GCC aims to forge an economic and monetary union emulating the eurozone, some of whose members have recently run into serious fiscal problems. Debt problems at Dubai's flagship state conglomerate Dubai World have raised concern among officials in some GCC member states. "Bahrain put forward in December ... a proposal to set up a fund dedicated to support fiscal stability and economic growth in GCC countries. The proposal is currently under examination," Sheikh Ahmed said in the undated interview. "The proposal aims mainly at creating a mechanism that would provide necessary support to member states if needed, in a way that would ensure both a convergence of economic models within the GCC and similar standards of living for its citizens," he added.

QATAR

International Front

Emirati, Qatari women students make their mark in Scotland

Nearly 43 young women from the UAE and Qatar received an exclusive opportunity to attend a month-long summer course in Scotland to learn about the country's history, tradition and culture. Students of Zayed University, College of Islamic and Arabic Studies in Dubai, UAE University, American University of Sharjah, Higher Colleges of Technology, British University of Dubai, Abu Dhabi University and Qatar University were the lucky participants in the cultural-exchange programme that began on June 23. "Our experience here over the last 30 days has been remarkable. The once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that was given to us by Al Maktoum Institute has benefited us greatly," said Hiba Eissa Al Redha, a student of International Relations at the Zayed University.

"We have come from cultural and social backgrounds in the Gulf region to live in a different cultural atmosphere in this beautiful and fascinating city — Edinburgh. This programme is just the beginning to change ourselves, develop our skills and capabilities to eventually change our societies," she added. Sponsored by Shaikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Deputy Ruler of Dubai and UAE Minister of Finance, the concept of the programme was conceived in 2003 by

Zayed University in collaboration with Al Maktoum Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Aberdeen and the Edinburgh College of Art. Its purpose is to encourage participants to interact with students from other universities in a relaxed environment and record their daily experiences in a journal that is to be printed later.

Qatar, Bosnia sign accords

HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani and the chairman of the presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina Haris Silajdzic yesterday held official talks, exploring ways to strengthen relations of co-operation between the two countries. Several issues of mutual concern were also taken up. The talks were attended by HH Sheikha Mozah Nasser al-Misnad and members of the official delegation accompanying the Emir. On the Bosnian side the session was attended by member of the presidency and representative of the Croatian ethnicity Jilko Comic, member of the presidency and representative of the Serbian ethnicity Nibocia Radomanovic and a number of ministers. After the session, the Emir and the Bosnian president attended the signing of two agreements and the protocol of minutes of the meeting held between the State of Qatar and the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The two sides signed an agreement on the avoidance of dual taxation and the prevention of financial evasion with regard to income tax, another accord on exchange of news between Qatar News Agency (QNA) and the Bosnian Federation News Agency (Fena) and the protocol of the minutes of the second session of the joint committee in the fields of economy and trade and technical co-operation.

Qatar, Slovenia sign accords to expand ties

HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani and Slovenian President Dr Danilo Turk held a round of official talks at the Presidential Palace in Ljubljana yesterday. The talks were attended by members of the official delegation accompanying the Emir. On the Slovenian side, the talks were attended by Finance Minister Dr Franc Krizanic, Health Minister Dorijan Marusic, head of the president's office Mojca Seliskar Tos, adviser to the president on diplomatic affairs Dusan Snoj, adviser to the president on economic issues Franci Percic, adviser to the president on public relations Bostjan Lajovic and plenipotentiary at the foreign ministry Tanya Miscova. The talks dealt with mutual co-operation and ways to enhance them in various fields. Several regional and global issues of common interest were also reviewed. After the talks the Emir and the Slovenian president witnessed the signing of a number of agreements and memorandums of understanding. Among them were a memorandum of understanding on co-operation in the health sector and another one in the field of sports between Qatar Olympic Committee and the Slovenian Olympic Committee, an agreement for exchange of news between Qatar News Agency and Slovenia News Agency, a consultation protocol between the two countries' foreign ministries, a memorandum of understanding for the establishment of a joint ministerial committee between the two countries, a memorandum of understanding for co-operation in the field of tourism and an agreement for the donation of 100,000 euros for the rehabilitation of Gaza children at Ljubljana university rehabilitation hospital.

UN commends Qatar for mediating between Eritrea, Djibouti

UN Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs Lynn Pascoe on Tuesday commended Qatar for its mediation efforts between Eritrea and Djibouti over their border dispute, and offered UN help should it be needed. "We commend the recent concrete steps taken by Eritrea and Djibouti on the border issue, with the active mediation efforts of the State of Qatar. The Secretary-General avails the technical support of the UN, should it be requested," Pascoe told the Security Council as it examined the issue. The dispute between the two countries erupted in March 2008 following Eritrea's deployment of troops and military equipment on Ras Doumeira Island, two localities adjoining the de facto Djibouti-Eritrea border. Eritrea and Djibouti decided in an agreement signed in Qatar, last month, to resolve their border dispute through a negotiated settlement. The agreement mandated Qatar to establish a mechanism that would facilitate the demarcation of their border by an international company, and to monitor it.

Qatari Premier meets US peace envoy

HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani yesterday met with the US special envoy for peace in the Middle East, Senator George Mitchell, in Sardinia. During the meeting, Mitchell briefed the Prime Minister on the latest developments of indirect negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis. The Prime Minister stressed that the current Israeli policies did not encourage the Arab parties to take initiatives or measures to push the peace process in the region.

Social Front

Committee to look into child abuse cases in Qatar

Qatar has established a national multi-disciplinary committee, which will be looking into issues of child abuse or neglect in the country, Gulf Times learnt yesterday. The committee comprises a medical team from the Hamad Medical Corporation, forensic medicine experts and representatives of Qatar Foundation as well as of the Interior Ministry, according to the Paediatric Emergency Centre's director Dr Khalid Mohamed al-Ansari. "This committee will address and look into different aspects of child abuse in a collaborative way, making use of each member's expertise and specialisation," he explained. Dr al-Ansari pointed out that the country's rapid rise in population and diverse culture had led to a variety of abuse cases. "Qatar used to be a small country with a few thousands of people, but now we are becoming a bigger community - crossing almost 2mn residents. As today's population is formed of multi-cultural, multi-religious and different social backgrounds, we are witnessing diversity in such cases," he said. While admitting that a "fair number" of child abuse cases occurred in the country every year, Dr al-Ansari stressed that the figures were on par with other countries in the region and the world. "The issue of child abuse is one of those things that is seen everywhere throughout the world. And this could mean, children are either being neglected or mentally, sexually and physically abused by an adult or persons of their own age," he explained.

Heat hits construction works in Qatar

Construction labourers working in the night at a project in Doha as Qatar continues to swelter in record high temperatures. Work at a number of construction sites had to be halted during the day this week owing to the extremely harsh weather. Some construction companies introduced night shift at their projects instead of working during the day. The maximum temperature in Doha yesterday, as given by the Meteorology Department, was 47C.

Economy Front

\$ 12bn projects boost Qatar development plans: Meed

Qatar has about \$ 12bn industry projects planned or under way in line with the government's push to industrialisation, Meed said in a recent report. The largest scheme under execution is the \$ 4bn expansion of Qatar Fertiliser Company's (Qafco) production facilities. Qafco is set to achieve an annual production capacity of 3.6mn tonnes of ammonia and 4.2mn tonnes of urea with the completion of Qafco 5 in 2011. The completion of Qafco 6 in 2012 will mark an 'unprecedented' event with regard to the company's production capacity of urea, which will reach 5.5mn tonnes annually. According to Meed, the largest Qatari project in the pipeline is the proposed \$ 6bn olefins complex at Ras Laffan, announced by Qatar Petroleum and ExxonMobil. "This project is still in the study phase," Meed said. A heads of agreement (HoA) on the world-scale joint venture was signed here early this year. Under the HoA, the QP-ExxonMobil Chemical Qatar JV will have the world's largest steam cracker and polyethylene plants, and one of the largest ethylene glycol plants.

Qatari crude up as refiners seek cheaper gasoil

Crude oil from Qatar rose as refiners sought middle distillate-rich grades for lower prices than traditional types such as Abu Dhabi's Murban. Qatar Marine for September loading climbed two cents to a premium of seven cents a barrel to its official price, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Murban fell two cents to a discount of three cents to its official price, Bloomberg data show. Lower Zakum, also produced in the emirate, dropped seven cents to a discount of 13 cents. Qatar Marine has a similar yield of middle distillates including gasoil to both Abu Dhabi grades after basic processing. The Qatari type is selling at a discount of \$ 1.24 to benchmark Dubai crude for June as opposed to a premium of 81 cents for Murban. Middle East producers retroactively price their sales and refiners will use that as a gauge for future supplies.

Qatar Airways places orders for two more Boeing 777-200 planes

Qatar Airways has announced orders worth QR1.8bn for two additional Boeing 777-200 Long Range aircraft as part of its continued growth plans. The national carrier also revealed a revised delivery schedule of its Boeing 787 Dreamliners, with the first to arrive in the fourth quarter of 2011 and help meet early aircraft requirements. Currently, Qatar Airways has 19 Boeing 777 aircraft in its fleet – 11 Extended Range (300-ERs), six Long Range (200-LRs) and two freighter versions. The Boeing 777 is fast becoming the 'cornerstone' of the airline's long-haul fleet, Qatar Airways said. With this announcement, Qatar Airways has firm orders for 10 Boeing 777s

and a further three on option with the US aircraft manufacturer. Speaking at the Farnborough Air Show in England yesterday, Qatar Airways chief executive officer Akbar al-Baker said the airline was continuing with its 'ambitious' growth plans, undeterred by the difficult global economic situation. Al-Baker said: "Air travel demand is continuing to rise in the Middle East and it is becoming clear that international demand is returning as the global economy shows signs of recovery.

Industry experts expect Doha round deal in 2011

Trade is moving back up the US political agenda and there is scope to reach a deal next year in the long-running Doha round and other stalled trade negotiations, industry lobbyists said yesterday. But to get the backing of business, a Doha agreement must be more ambitious than what is currently on the table, said Christopher Wenk, senior director for international policy at the US Chamber of Commerce. "2011 is going to be a big year for trade in the US," Wenk told reporters, saying the year would see action on free-trade deals between the United States and South Korea, Colombia and Panama, as well as a strong push on the Doha negotiations as part of President Barack Obama's exports initiative. The comments are the latest in a series of hints that the Doha negotiations launched in 2001 are not as deadlocked as they appear.