

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

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

SUMMARY

Gulf countries have embarked on a "new golden era" with their firm focus on culture, scientific research and infrastructure development. They are investing more than any other Islamic country in these fields, according to a new study on social changes in Islamic societies. There is also a noticeable increase in young students joining universities and substantial increase in funding for scientific research, said Lorna Casselton, vice-president of Britain's Royal Society, which conducted the three-year study. More women in the Gulf study in universities than in the US, she pointed out in an interview with German Press agency Deutsche Presse-Agentur. In Saudi Arabia, for example, 58 per cent of university students are women, although many of them do not work after graduation, she said. However, that too may change soon, Casselton said. Women's increasing participation in education and culture will also lead to radical social changes, she said. According to the study, culture and scientific research have been neglected in the Islamic world for a long time in terms of financial funding. Yemeni Prime Minister Ali Mohammad Mojawwer inaugurated on Monday the second regional Arab conference for the fight against corruption and the support of integrity with the attendance of 100 icons and officials from 17 Arab nations. Mojawwer explained that corruption represents a stumbling block to development, increasing poverty and widening the gap between the rich and the poor. While corruption exists, he said, nations' ability to map out plans and development strategies decreases, as it wastes a major proportion of resources allocated to fund these policies, thus impeding the whole process of sustainable development. The Yemeni prime minister pledged his government's commitment to transparency and the fight against corruption as well as implementing a comprehensive agenda of state reforms on the political, economic and social scales. For his part, attending Head of the Kuwait Transparency Society Salah Al-Ghazaly told KUNA that the conference comes amid the move from Arab states toward fighting corruption and encouraging transparency, also in accordance with a UN agreement on the matter. He urged the importance of increasing efforts to combat corruption and to make use of international peers, "taking off from where they ended." Saudi Arabia is keen on preserving security and stability of Iraq, the Second Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister re-affirmed on Wednesday. Prince Naif Bin Abdul Aziz, in a statement broadcast by the official Saudi Press Agency, said Riyadh supports all political trends in Iraq, and expressed hope the Iraqis would succeed in ruling themselves without external help in the future. The deputy premier was speaking during a meeting with the Iraqi Ambassador to the Kingdom, Dr. Ghanem

Al-Jumaili. Iraq is currently witnessing a dilemma regarding formation of a new government. The United Arab Emirates is toughening its posture toward Tehran, worried that the risks of a nuclear Iran on its doorstep may outweigh the cost of a conflict between Iran and the West. The US-allied UAE, like many Gulf Arab states that are home to US military installations, is keen to avoid a war over Iran's nuclear program that would almost certainly draw in the Arab countries just across the water from the Islamic republic. But oil-exporting Abu Dhabi appears increasingly concerned that a nuclear bomb could give non-Arab Shiite Iran ammunition to bully its mostly much smaller, Sunni-dominated Gulf Arab neighbors at will. "The UAE feels threatened," said Shadi Hamid, research director at the Brookings Doha Centre, adding that the UAE's strategic approach to Tehran seemed to be shifting some. "If something isn't done soon, Iran might be very much on its way to nuclear capability," he said. "No one will be affected by this more than the Gulf countries. So I don't want to say they are panicking, but there definitely is a growing level of concern and nervousness. As heat rises between Iran and the West, pressure has grown on Abu Dhabi, the seat of the UAE federal union, to show where it stands as it seeks to avoid war while also hoping Washington will not simply let Iran go nuclear and then try to contain the ensuing threat. It has been a tough line to walk. The UAE signaled it was no longer as willing as before to serve as a financial lifeline for Iran after the UN imposed fresh sanctions on Tehran last month, prompting the central bank to order a freeze on any accounts of dozens of targeted firms. Dr Yahya bin Mahfoudh al Mantheri, Chairman of the Majlis Addawla, has hailed the official and public response to Oman's pavilion at Shanghai Expo 2010. He said that the pavilion, which showcases various pictures and other items exhibiting the Sultanate's Renaissance over the past 40 years under His Majesty Sultan Qaboos's leadership, was very well received by the visitors. Al Mantheri, who valued the efforts of the pavilion's organisers, said that he saw admiration in the eyes of the Chinese public who appreciated all the details of the Sultanate's heritage and modern development. Al Mantheri also hailed the aspects of respect and amity shown by the Chinese officials during the celebration of the Nation Day of the Sultanate. He pointed out that the event helps bring the two peoples together and develop bilateral ties at all levels. The Chinese officials, he said, hold His Majesty the Sultan in great esteem due to his wise policies advocating peace and justice in the world. Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, the Premier of Bahrain lauded here yesterday, in his name and on behalf of the cabinet, the summit between Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz and Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, that took place recently in Morocco. In a press statement, following the cabinet meeting, Sheikh Ahmad bin Attitallah Al Khalifa, Minister for Cabinet Affairs, said that the Cabinet asserted the importance of such summits and fraternal meetings in consolidating bilateral cooperation and strengthening well-established bonds binding the two fraternal nations and peoples. Qatar's Attorney General HE Ali bin Fetais al-Marri said yesterday that Qatar's "full legal and political commitment" had placed it among the top rank of countries globally in fighting corruption. Addressing the opening session of the second conference of the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network (ACINET), currently in session in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa, al-Marri noted that Qatar had been transferring its experience in the fight against corruption to international forums, inspired by its Arab and Islamic culture. He referred to the sixth Global Forum on Fighting Corruption and Safeguarding Integrity, which was hosted by Doha last November. The Doha forum, he said, had asserted the necessity of a partnership to be launched among various sectors of the society to fight corruption. The public prosecutor, who is also the chairman of the third session of the Conference of States Parties to the UN Convention against Corruption, praised the approval of the Doha mechanism to review the implementation of

the United Nations Convention against Corruption. He warned against the continued global financial crisis, which was the result of corruption in its various forms in the economic organisations of the developed countries and thus in the world's financial establishments. He noted the need for a continued voluntary support to be provided by states and civil society institutions to assist in the campaign against corruption.

Saudi Second Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Prince Naif bin Abdulaziz said here Tuesday Saudi Arabia has no constitution other than Holy Quran. While receiving the Kingdom's investigation and prosecution body chief Sheikh Mohammad Al Abdullah, Prince Naif said: "Saudi Arabia has no constitution or law other than Holy Quran and the Sunnah (teachings) of the Prophet (pbuh)." "This matter is satisfying to everybody (in the kingdom); officials and citizens alike," he said. He urged investigators and prosecutors to do their job properly. The Civil Service Commission (CSC) called for providing more retirement pensions for civil officials to encourage them to consider retirement. This would be similar to the procedures carried out with servicemen. This step aims to persuade younger and able-bodied civilians to take charge of important posts at ministries and other public firms. Their competency and energy would add more value to the comprehensive state development's plans. The CSC indicated that they are yet to receive an official decision from the Cabinet with regard to retiring officers with over 30 years of service and elaborated that such a step cannot be taken without the Cabinet's consent. Meanwhile, it is believed that the Cabinet is not very keen on the proposal owing to the fact that the country lacks experienced personnel who are qualified to handle their duties. The Cabinet is considering 'refreshing' ministries by recruiting younger staff, after providing them with ample training to handle their duties well, reported Al-Rai. Nevertheless, financial encouragement is required to encourage officials to consider stepping down from their positions in favor of younger staff", a CSC official said. Leaders around the world and the region and Omani dignitaries felicitated His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said as the sultanate celebrated its 40th 'Renaissance Day' on Friday. The event, previously called 'Accession Day', is marked every year on July 23, the day on which Sultan Qaboos assumed power in 1970. Traditionally, the occasion is celebrated on a low-key, with the major festivities set aside for National Day on November 18, the birthday of the Omani monarch. "On this dear occasion, we ponder with pride on the epic journey of the renaissance, the long road to achievement and the feats of Your Majesty's loyal people, inspired by your royal directives, which have led to the building of a modern state," Chairman of the State Council Dr Yahya bin Mahmoudh al Mantheri said is a cable of congratulations to Sultan Qaboos. He underlined that one of the country's main concerns right from the dawn of the renaissance had been the education of its people so that they were able to shoulder their responsibility in nation building. "After 40 years of hard work, the Omani people have been able to manage their own affairs in all areas and serve their country in a better way," Mantheri said. His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa yesterday directed all ministries to pursue quality assurance in performance and excellence in services provided for citizens. Chairing the weekly Cabinet meeting, he stressed the crucial role of harmony and compatibility in government work leading to better performance and quality. He said government work is integrated and co-operative in nature and any shortfalls in any area will not be directed to a certain ministry but will be considered collective responsibility. It also praised the Minister of State for Defence Affairs for his role in the arbitration committee's activities for excellence, following a report and directed officials to co-ordinate between the quality, excellence and public administration government bodies. The

Cabinet hailed the outcome of His Majesty's talks with British Premier David Cameron and other top leaders during a visit to the UK and talks with Saudi Monarch King Abdullah.

Gulf stock markets ended the week mixed as investors continued to come under psychological pressure from global markets and indecisive indicators of world recovery. However, the markets were expected to rebound next week in response to gains scored by Wall Street and European bourses on Thursday and Friday following reports of strong earnings by US and European businesses and the record jump in German business sentiment. Regional markets were forecast to retain their psychological linkage with global markets for some time to come. Gulf bourses will react positively in the coming weeks to any improvement in economic indicators in the United States and key European economies, analysts predicted. The rising oil prices to have a positive impact on regional stocks. The Kingdom is to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Yemen for cooperation to protect consumer interests in the two countries. The decision was taken at a joint meeting held on Saturday in Jeddah between the consumer protection organizations of Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The Saudi team was headed by Chairman of the Consumer Protection Agency (CPA) Mohammed Al-Hamad while his Yemeni counterpart Fadhel Mansour led the visiting team at the talks. Following the meeting, Al-Hamad said the two sides agreed to sign an accord pertaining to rationalization of consumption as well as fighting products that do not conform to required specifications and standards. "Such an agreement between the two neighboring countries is overdue since we have to protect consumers and ensure they get the right goods in their hands. We must also ban items that do not conform to standard specifications since they damage the security, safety and health of consumers," Al-Hamad said. He pointed out that Saturday's talks with his Yemeni counterpart had further strengthened bilateral cooperation and helped the two organizations exchange experience in the field of consumer protection. "The discussions also helped us in the fight against counterfeit consumer goods that are being smuggled into the country across the border with Yemen and which are injurious to human health," he said. Most UAE consumers are now increasingly cautious in their spending habits as they realise that the road to full economic recovery might take longer than expected, a report by Nielsen revealed. The UAE remained among the world's top ten countries in consumer morale despite the index recording a slight dip of two points in the second quarter, said the report. The UAE's Consumer Confidence Index has dropped from 103 points in the first quarter of 2010 to 101 in the second quarter even as globally consumer morale cautiously edged up one index point to 93 in the same period as confidence levels increased in booming Asian markets in contrast to battered confidence in nine out of 24 European markets. Index levels above and below a baseline of 100 indicate degrees of optimism and pessimism. Nielsen's Global Consumer Confidence Index, which tracks consumer confidence and spending intentions among 27,000 Internet users in 48 countries across the globe, said the UAE maintained first quarter's ranking among the top 10 most optimistic nations. Bahraini authorities closed down the offices of Gulf International Investment (GII) on Tuesday over alleged violations, suggesting regulators are taking a tougher stance toward the Gulf state's opaque investment sector. Employees left the company's floor in the Bahrain Financial Harbour office towers in Manama after the doors were closed with official seals from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce reading "Closed due to commercial law violations". "It's a small thing, we'll sort it out in one or two days," one employee said. It was not immediately clear why the offices were closed and whether the closure was temporary or permanent. The cell phones listed on the company's website were switched off.

GCC

- **GCC stresses importance of Saudi king's Arab tour**
- **Workers in Gulf unhappy over salary**
- **Gulf countries embarked on a 'new golden era': study**
- **Improved Gulf power grid reduces blackouts**
- **Gulf stocks recovery seen as oil, world economy improve**
- **Qatar to be the top performer in next 2 years, UAE 'to weigh'on GCC growth**

YEMEN

- **Shia rebels to take part in Yemen national dialogue**
- **EU to give EUR 10 mln in humanitarian aid to Yemen**
- **Yemen hosts Arab anti-corruption network conf.**
- **Sarkozy Affirms France's Support to Yemen**
- **Saudi Arabia, Yemen to sign protocol on consumer protection**

SAUDI ARABIA

International Front

- **Abdullah to lead three-way Beirut summit**
- **Saudi king begins 4-nation tour**
- **Saudi Arabia re-affirms keenness on Iraq's stability**
- **WWF apologises to Saudi Arabia over climate meet vandalism**
- **King Abdullah to embark on Arab unity tour**
- **Two Chinese universities seek to establish King Abdullah Chair**
- **Bahrain's Cabinet hails Saudi-Bahraini Kings Summit**
- **King of Bahrain meets Saudi counterpart in Morocco**

Social Front

- **Saudi Arabia says Quran kingdom's constitution**
- **Cleric wants only Muslim maids allowed into Saudi**
- **Muslim women can respect veil bans: Saudi cleric**

Economy Front

- **Saudis urged to invest in Pakistan**
- **Saudi Arabia, Jordan to spur business ties**
- **Saudi Arabia to spur trade with Mauritius**
- **Saudi construction spending to grow in 2010**

UAE

International Front

- UAE, Cyprus ink deal on visa exemption for diplomatic, special passport holders
- Dubai to extradite Nigerian ex-governor to UK: report
- UAE, Jordan discuss bilateral relations
- UAE lining up with West over N- Iran
- UAE, South Africa discuss development of bilateral relations
- UAE charity aids children in Egypt

Social Front

- Firms cannot cut workers' salaries, says UAE ministry

Economy Front

- UAE retains top ranking
- Dubai World document reveals price of failure
- Dubai crude oil price determination

KUWAIT

International Front

- Kuwaiti PM meets Argentinean leader
- Kuwaiti-Lebanese friendship committee hails bilateral ties
- Kuwaiti parliamentarians stress support to Lebanon stability
- Kuwait for better ties with Latin America

Social Front

- More retirement privileges needed: Kuwait Civil Service Commission
- Kuwaiti MP raises conflict of interests question with ministers

Economy Front

- Kuwait maintains FDI despite global dip
- Kuwait stamps 2.1 tons of precious metals in June
- Kuwait, Brazil agree on establishing joint investment company

OMAN

International Front

- Oman's pavilion a symbol of present and past glory

- **Al Mantheri returns after successful China visit**

Social Front

- **Oman marks Renaissance Day with stress on education**
- **Oman launches major initiatives to commemorate Renaissance Day**

Economy Front

- **Oman and Latvia sign agreements to regulate air transport services**
- **Oman exhibition in Singapore opens**

Health Front

- **Health front sees major developments in Oman**
- **Oman succeeds in eradicating trachoma**

BAHRAIN

International Front

- **Bahrain's Cabinet hails Saudi-Bahraini Kings Summit**
- **King of Bahrain meets Saudi counterpart in Morocco**

Social Front

- **King Hamad praised one-family spirit characterising Bahrainis**
- **Outrage over Bahrain MP's call to use live rounds on rioters**
- **Bahrain pledges quality services**

Economy Front

- **Bahrain shuts GII offices**
- **Bahrain plans to privatize Gulf Air**

Health Front

- **Bahrain's leaders pledged world-class health services**

QATAR

International Front

- **Qatar Emir visits Lebanon tomorrow**
- **Darfur deal drafting panel meets**

- **Qatar Emir's visit to UK 'will boost ties': Martin Day**
- **State, civil society 'should help in fight against graft': Al-Marri**
- **Qatar PM slams negative response from Israel**

Economy Front

- **Qatar bank seeks 81% stake in UK Islamic lender**
- **Qatar, Iran share world's biggest gas field**

GCC

GCC stresses importance of Saudi king's Arab tour

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary General Abdulrahman Al-Attiyah underlined here Tuesday the significance of an Arab tour to be made by Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz as of Wednesday. The Saudi king is set to embark on a tour of several Arab countries, notably Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan on Wednesday. Al-Attiyah stressed the tour as "historic and significant", given the current Arab challenges and swift developments that require more Arab solidarity. He wished the Arab tour would lead to firmer joint Arab action in face of Arab and regional challenges.

The GCC chief hailed the Saudi king for his sincere efforts to back Arab issues, chiefly the Palestinian cause. In this context, he pointed to favorable initiatives launched by the Saudi king, mainly purposed to support Arab and Muslim issues.

Workers in Gulf unhappy over salary

Two-thirds of employees in the Arab world complain they are underpaid, with those in the Gulf region among the most dissatisfied, a new survey has found. Sixty-six percent of workers said they were not paid fairly, compared to just 16 percent who said they were content with their salaries, according to the survey by job site Bayt.com. Seventeen percent of respondents were unsure about whether they were paid fairly. Bayt.com surveyed an unspecified number of people across the MENA region between June 4 and July 7. In the UAE, around three-quarters of respondents said they were unhappy with their salaries, with only 12 percent saying they were well paid. Fifteen percent said they were unsure if they were paid fairly. In Kuwait, around 80 percent of respondents were unhappy with their pay, whereas 71 percent said they were underpaid in Saudi Arabia and 75 percent in Qatar, the survey said.

Gulf countries embarked on a 'new golden era': study

Gulf countries have embarked on a "new golden era" with their firm focus on culture, scientific research and infrastructure development. They are investing more than any other Islamic country in these fields, according to a new study on social changes in Islamic societies. There is also a noticeable increase in young students joining universities and substantial increase in funding for scientific research, said Lorna Casselton, vice-president of Britain's Royal Society, which

conducted the three-year study. More women in the Gulf study in universities than in the US, she pointed out in an interview with German Press agency Deutsche Presse-Agentur.

In Saudi Arabia, for example, 58 per cent of university students are women, although many of them do not work after graduation, she said. However, that too may change soon, Casselton said. Women's increasing participation in education and culture will also lead to radical social changes, she said. According to the study, culture and scientific research have been neglected in the Islamic world for a long time in terms of financial funding.

Improved Gulf power grid reduces blackouts

The new GCC electricity grid has put an end to power cuts in four countries in the northern Gulf but the lack of an agreed tariff is hampering more effective use of the US\$ 1.4 billion (Dh5.14bn) network, a senior official says. The grid, which was connected for the first time last year, has allowed Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar to better handle surges in demand on the hottest summer days. "Normally there would be load-shedding, there would be scheduled cuts – half-hour here, half-hour there," said Mohammed al Shaikh, the maintenance manager at the GCC Interconnection Authority (GCCIA), based in Dammam. "No single load-shedding event happened this year after the connection." The grid helped cover electricity shortages on the hottest days for as little as a minute or as much as a few hours. On some occasions, the extra supply provided the few seconds needed to start back-up generators, Mr al Shaikh said. Those four nations linked their power grids last year and began exchanging electricity this year. The UAE and Oman will connect to the grid by the middle of next year, Mr al Shaikh said.

Gulf stocks recovery seen as oil, world economy improve

Gulf stock markets ended the week mixed as investors continued to come under psychological pressure from global markets and indecisive indicators of world recovery. However, the markets were expected to rebound next week in response to gains scored by Wall Street and European bourses on Thursday and Friday following reports of strong earnings by US and European businesses and the record jump in German business sentiment. Regional markets were forecast to retain their psychological linkage with global markets for some time to come. Gulf bourses will react positively in the coming weeks to any improvement in economic indicators in the United States and key European economies, analysts predicted. The rising oil prices to have a positive impact on regional stocks.

Qatar to be the top performer in next 2 years, UAE 'to weigh'on GCC growth

Qatar's economy will be the region's 'top performer' in the next two years, a report by the Bank of America Merrill Lynch has said. According to the Breport, Qatar, the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG), would record a GDP growth of 11.3% this year and 9.6% in 2011. The UAE economy is forecast to weigh on GDP growth in the GCC this year and next, the Bank of America Merrill Lynch report said. In the Global Economic Weekly Report, analysts said the UAE's economy would see sluggish growth of just 1% in 2010, with growth forecast at 2% in 2011. It said it would be the "worst performing economy" in the GCC region for both years although better than the 1.4% contraction it believes happened in 2009.

The UAE, Dubai in particular, was “hard hit” by the impact of the global economic crisis with Dubai World announcing in November that it was rescheduling \$ 24bn worth of debt. Oman is seen as the ‘second best performing country’ in 2010 with 4.6% GDP growth, improving to 4.8% growth next year. Saudi Arabia, which launched a \$ 400bn five-year development plan in 2008, is seen growing by 3.2% this year and 3.9% in 2011. BoA Merrill Lynch estimated that Kuwait’s economy ‘suffered most’ in the region, contracting 2.2%, but said it would rebound with 2.5% GDP growth in 2010, improving to 3.1% in 2011. Rounding off prospects for GCC economies, the report said Bahrain would see 2.4% and 2.8% growth this year and in 2011 respectively. In May, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said economic prospects for the Middle East and North Africa region would improve this year with the resumption of capital inflows and rising crude oil prices. But it added that stress in the banking and financial sectors along with slow credit activity were continuing to weigh on the rebound.

YEMEN

Shia rebels to take part in Yemen national dialogue

Shia Zaidi rebels are to take part in a national dialogue between Yemen’s ruling party and the opposition aimed at easing tensions across the country, a ruling party member said on Thursday. Three rebel figures, including their spokesman, are among those nominated to represent Yemen’s opposition in the national dialogue accord of July 17, Sadok Abu Ras of the General People’s Congress told reporters. In principle, we will participate in the national dialogue,” rebel spokesman Mohammed Abdul Salam told AFP by telephone. The accord was signed by the government and the opposition Common Forum which groups Al-Islah (Reform) Party, the main Islamist opposition, and the Yemeni Socialist Party, as well as with other smaller factions. It focuses on mechanisms to implement a February 2009 accord for national dialogue and the postponement of a parliamentary election until April 2011 to allow time to amend Yemen’s constitution and restructure its political system.

EU to give EUR 10 mln in humanitarian aid to Yemen

The European Commission has announced a funding package of EUR 10 million to respond to urgent humanitarian needs in Yemen saying the situation is "exacerbated by a lack of support from the international community." The funds will be used to provide shelter, water and sanitation, food and livelihood support, basic health care and protection. The money is directed to the most vulnerable among the 350,000 internally displaced persons, their host communities, and 170 000 foreign refugees in Yemen. "Yemen is facing two major humanitarian challenges which are overstressing the country's resources," said EU Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid Kristalina Georgieva in press statements. "Due to the recurrent conflict, we have about 350,000 internally displaced people in the north. There are also over 170,000 refugees, mainly from Somalia, who are trying to escape the instability in the Horn of Africa, scattered all around Yemen," she aid. The most vulnerable among both groups of population are largely dependent on international humanitarian aid as livelihood opportunities are scarce and the resources of host communities have been depleted and overstretched over the past few months, added the EU Commissioner.

Yemen hosts Arab anti-corruption network conf.

Yemeni Prime Minister Ali Mohammad Mojawwer inaugurated on Monday the second regional Arab conference for the fight against corruption and the support of integrity with the attendance of 100 icons and officials from 17 Arab nations. Mojawwer explained that corruption represents a stumbling block to development, increasing poverty and widening the gap between the rich and the poor. While corruption exists, he said, nations' ability to map out plans and development strategies decreases, as it wastes a major proportion of resources allocated to fund these policies, thus impeding the whole process of sustainable development. The Yemeni prime minister pledged his government's commitment to transparency and the fight against corruption as well as implementing a comprehensive agenda of state reforms on the political, economic and social scales.

For his part, attending Head of the Kuwait Transparency Society Salah Al-Ghazaly told KUNA that the conference comes amid the move from Arab states toward fighting corruption and encouraging transparency, also in accordance with a UN agreement on the matter. He urged the importance of increasing efforts to combat corruption and to make use of international peers, "taking off from where they ended."

Sarkozy Affirms France's Support to Yemen

French President Nicolas Sarkozy affirmed his country's support for the unity, security, stability and development process of Yemen. In a letter sent to his Yemeni counterpart Ali Abdullah Saleh, the French President praised the distinguished bilateral cooperation between France and Yemen in energy sector, which made France the first investor in Yemen through the implementation of Yemen LNG (YLNG) liquefaction plant, Yemen News Agency (Saba) said. The letter also dealt with bilateral security cooperation and prospects of promoting it, through Navy and coast guard training programs as part of the international partnership to tackle piracy. The French president welcomed as well his Yemeni counterpart 's upcoming visit to France, which aims to discuss means of developing bilateral cooperation.

Saudi Arabia, Yemen to sign protocol on consumer protection

The Kingdom is to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Yemen for cooperation to protect consumer interests in the two countries. The decision was taken at a joint meeting held on Saturday in Jeddah between the consumer protection organizations of Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The Saudi team was headed by Chairman of the Consumer Protection Agency (CPA) Mohammed Al-Hamad while his Yemeni counterpart Fadhel Mansour led the visiting team at the talks. Following the meeting, Al-Hamad said the two sides agreed to sign an accord pertaining to rationalization of consumption as well as fighting products that do not conform to required specifications and standards. "Such an agreement between the two neighboring countries is overdue since we have to protect consumers and ensure they get the right goods in their hands. We must also ban items that do not conform to standard specifications since they damage the security, safety and health of consumers," Al-Hamad said. He pointed out that Saturday's talks with his Yemeni counterpart had further strengthened bilateral cooperation and

helped the two organizations exchange experience in the field of consumer protection. “The discussions also helped us in the fight against counterfeit consumer goods that are being smuggled into the country across the border with Yemen and which are injurious to human health,” he said.

SAUDI ARABIA

International Front

Abdullah to lead three-way Beirut summit

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah will lead a rare tripartite summit in Beirut on Friday to bring together President Bashar Assad of Syria and President Michel Suleiman of Lebanon in an effort to improve inter-Arab relations. The reconciliation summit is widely seen as the successful outcome of King Abdullah's diplomatic overtures to strengthen Arab unity and confront the challenges facing the Arab Ummah. The Saudi-Syrian summit talks focused on the Palestinian issue and the suffering of the Palestinian people as a result of the Israeli blockade of Gaza and the repeated aggression of Israeli forces against Palestinians and their properties. The two leaders emphasized the need to unify the ranks of Palestinians and revive peace talks to establish a just and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. They called for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital on the basis of international resolutions and the Arab peace initiative. According to the Saudi Press Agency, the Kingdom and Syria urged Iraqi leaders to expedite their efforts to set up a unity government, giving priority to national interests rather than personal ones.

Saudi king begins 4-nation tour

King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, Wednesday met Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in the Red Sea resort of Sharm El-Sheikh as part of a regional tour that takes him to Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The King arrived in Sharm El-Sheikh from Casablanca, Morocco. Abdullah and Mubarak held wide-ranging talks Wednesday at a conference center in Sharm El-Shaikh. The two leaders discussed events and developments in the Arab world and focused on the Palestinian issue, the faltering peace process and the suffering being experienced by the Palestinian people due to the Israeli siege, demolition of their houses and confiscation of their lands. They stressed the importance of reaching a just and comprehensive solution that guarantees the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people according to legitimate international resolutions and the Arab peace initiative.

Saudi Arabia re-affirms keenness on Iraq's stability

Saudi Arabia is keen on preserving security and stability of Iraq, the Second Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister re-affirmed on Wednesday. Prince Naif Bin Abdul Aziz, in a statement broadcast by the official Saudi Press Agency, said Riyadh supports all political trends in Iraq, and expressed hope the Iraqis would succeed in ruling themselves without external help in the future. The deputy premier was speaking during a meeting with the Iraqi Ambassador to

the Kingdom, Dr. Ghanem Al-Jumaili. Iraq is currently witnessing a dilemma regarding formation of a new government.

WWF apologises to Saudi Arabia over climate meet vandalism

The environmental group WWF said yesterday that it had apologised unreservedly after an employee vandalised Saudi Arabia's conference nameplate at a UN climate meeting last month. WWF International acknowledged that the incident, which sparked an uproar at a meeting of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bonn, Germany on June 11, was gravely offensive to Saudi Arabia. "The incident was completely unacceptable under the standards of the Convention and the standards of WWF," WWF International's Director General Jim Leape said in a statement. "We have apologised formally to the UNFCCC and the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," he added. WWF said an employee of its British branch was involved in taking and distributing "offensive photographs" featuring the official nameplate. Delegates said in Bonn that the plastic nameplate was broken in two and thrown into a toilet and a photo of it was then posted on the Internet, allegedly by climate activists. "The individual responsible has expressed deep remorse and apologised unreservedly for his actions. He is no longer working for WWF," Leape said Wednesday.

King Abdullah to embark on Arab unity tour

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah will begin a four-nation Arab unity tour on Wednesday, which will take him to Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. He will discuss major issues including Palestine, Iran and Iraq with the leaders of the four countries. The office of the Egyptian president has announced that King Abdullah will meet President Hosni Mubarak in the resort city of Sharm El-Sheikh on Wednesday, adding that the two leaders would discuss major regional and international issues, especially Middle East peace. According to high-level sources, reconciliation between Cairo and Damascus would figure high during the Saudi-Egyptian talks. At the Kuwait summit in 2009, King Abdullah urged Arab leaders to set aside their differences and open a new era of unity.

Two Chinese universities seek to establish King Abdullah Chair

Two prestigious Chinese universities have asked the office of the Saudi cultural attaché here to approve establishing chairs, for studying civilizations and religions, in the name of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz. This announcement was made by Saudi Cultural Attaché in China Dr. Salih Al-Saqri in a statement at the end of the Saudi Cultural Days, a five-day event in Beijing. He noted that the universities of International Business and Economics and Sun Yat-Sen made the request to recognize King Abdullah's service to humanity through his efforts to encourage dialogue among civilizations and followers of different religions and his role in developing education in the Kingdom. A number of Saudi students are studying at the University of International Business and Economics, which was established in 1951 and has more than 30,000 students, and at the University of Sun-Yat-Sen, which was established in 1924 and has more than 80,000 students. Dr. Al-Saqri said 600 Saudi students are on scholarship at 40 universities in China. The number of students is expected to jump to 3,000 in the next two years, he added. The diplomat pointed out that Chinese universities have signed more than 35 contracts

with their Saudi counterparts for exchange of expertise and more than 30 Chinese universities have sought the enrollment of more Saudi students.

Bahrain's Cabinet hails Saudi-Bahraini Kings Summit

Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, the Premier of Bahrain lauded here yesterday, in his name and on behalf of the cabinet, the summit between Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz and Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, that took place recently in Morocco. In a press statement, following the cabinet meeting, Sheikh Ahmad bin Attitallah Al Khalifa, Minister for Cabinet Affairs, said that the Cabinet asserted the importance of such summits and fraternal meetings in consolidating bilateral cooperation and strengthening well-established bonds binding the two fraternal nations and peoples.

King of Bahrain meets Saudi counterpart in Morocco

The King of Bahrain Hamad Bin Issa Al-Khalifa returned home on Saturday after wrapping up visits to the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Morocco, it was officially reported. King Hamad, during the visit to Britain, held talks with Prime Minister David Cameron on means of cementing bilateral ties and various current issues. In Morocco, the monarch met with the visiting King of Saudi Arabia, Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz, discussing the historic bilateral ties between the two brotherly countries in addition to regional and Arab issues. The King was received upon arrival at home by the Crown Prince, Prince Salman Bin Hamad Al-Khalifa.

Social Front

Saudi Arabia says Quran kingdom's constitution

Saudi Second Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Prince Naif bin Abdulaziz said here Tuesday Saudi Arabia has no constitution other than Holy Quran. While receiving the Kingdom's investigation and prosecution body chief Sheikh Mohammad Al Abdullah, Prince Naif said: "Saudi Arabia has no constitution or law other than Holy Quran and the Sunnah (teachings) of the Prophet (pbuh)." "This matter is satisfying to everybody (in the kingdom); officials and citizens alike," he said. He urged investigators and prosecutors to do their job properly.

Cleric wants only Muslim maids allowed into Saudi

A Saudi cleric said only Muslim housemaids should be allowed in the country and they should be kept segregated from men in the home, an online news site reported yesterday. "If there is a need to import workers as female domestics, they should be Muslims," Sheikh Yusef al-Ahmed, a strong opponent of men and women mixing in the kingdom, told the sabq.org website. He also said female domestics should cover themselves in the home, and that they should also be required to have a male relative guardian, or mahram, with them. "They should be required to work in the home covered with the hijab (veil), and not mix with men in the home," he said.

Muslim women can respect veil bans: Saudi cleric

A leading Saudi cleric hit out at France for moving to ban Muslim face-veils, but approved Muslim women foregoing veils when visiting a country which outlaws them, a Saudi paper reported on Saturday. "It is illogical and unreasonable that the French government undertakes such a thing, which is condemned by neutral people, not just Muslims, because the secular state assures freedom of religion," Sheikh Aed Al Qarni told Al Hayat. "The state has to respect religious rituals and beliefs, including those of Muslims," he said in an interview. However, he added, if Muslim women are in a country that has banned the niqab, or full-face veil, or if they face harassment in such a place, "it is better that the Muslim woman uncovers her face." Numerous scholars of various Islamic schools of thought agree on this point, Qarni said. "For Saudi tourists who face such a decision, there is a point in Islamic law where God says: 'So fear Allah as much as you can.'"

Economy Front

Saudis urged to invest in Pakistan

Pakistan Consul General Abdul Salik Khan has called on Saudi businessmen and fellow Pakistanis in the Kingdom to consider investing in areas like finance, economy and technology for the mutual benefit of the two countries. "The government and people (back home) are passing through a tough time, but due to the commitment and hard work we will overcome the situation and Pakistan will soon be a developing country," he said. He was speaking as the chief guest at an Engineers Welfare Forum (EWF) workshop on strategic marketing on Wednesday night.

Pakistani business consultant Asif J. Mir, who visited the Kingdom to conduct the workshop, offered to run the training institute for professional development for EWF free of charge. The forum's general secretary Masroor Elahi accepted the offer and said the institute project would be pursued and implemented. Mir said marketing had totally changed and assumed tremendous importance in modern business. "To start a business in a professional manner, the first requirement is to have a vision followed by planning and management of the customer's needs," he said. "Brand management is another important aspect of today's business, since customer trust allows higher return on sales." He called on the Pakistani government to establish ethics regulating business operations and management so that trading activities could be monitored, while customers locally and abroad received professional and trusted services and products.

Saudi Arabia, Jordan to spur business ties

The expected visit of King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, to Jordan this week will boost economic ties between the two countries, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said on Tuesday, quoting the country's commercial section. Jordan Chamber of Commerce Deputy Chairman Issa Murad said the private sector in the Hashemite Kingdom is working to increase Saudi investments in the country, particularly in fields that represent strategic challenges such as water, energy, transport and infrastructure, the report said. He noted that during the first five months of this year, local exports to the Gulf state rose to JD157 million from JD132 million

during the same period of last year, while imports from Saudi Arabia went up to JD747 million from JD585 million. Murad added that Saudi Arabia ranked first on a list of the top 10 countries investing in Jordan, stating that investments from the neighboring country reached around JD2 billion by the end of March. The Jordanian economy is dominated by services (around two thirds of its GDP). Manufacturing is the second important sector (about one fifth of GDP); agriculture contributes around 3 percent to GDP. The largest exporting industries in Jordan are the pharmaceutical industry with 75 percent of production being exported.

Saudi Arabia to spur trade with Mauritius

Saudi Arabian plans to strengthen trade relations with Mauritius, an island county in the Indian Ocean with the recent meeting between Saudi Arabian Ambassador to the country Mohammed Bin Ali Al-Ali and Mauritius Minister of Industry and Commerce Showkutally Soodhun. The meeting took place at the Minister's Office in the capital city during the ambassador's three-day visit, in the presence of Saudi Embassy Attache Malek Ghawas and the Minister's Adviser Yasine Mohabuth. Al-Ali, who has residence in Pretoria, South Africa, talked about the need to increase relations with the Indian Ocean island. "Trade relations are becoming more important than politics", Al-Ali said. "Regarding food security we can see how Mauritius can help us in planting our crops and exporting them to Saudi Arabia." Al-Ali also enquired about the port and free-port facilities in Mauritius especially regarding storage of petroleum products and the entrance of big vessels.

Saudi construction spending to grow in 2010

Investment in Saudi Arabia's construction sector increased by around 5.8 per cent in 2009 and is projected to swell further this year as the government is lavishing funds on the infrastructure and banks are gradually reopening their credit lines, the Gulf kingdom's largest bank said on Sunday. After a decline in 2008 and 2009 because of the global fiscal crisis, the country's construction sector's contribution to real GDP is forecast to rebound this year, boosting its share of the domestic economy to more than 10 per cent, National Commercial Bank (NCB) said in a study sent to Emirates 24|7. Its figures showed growth in the kingdom's construction sector, the second largest in the Middle East after the UAE, is projected to reach 6.4 per cent to widen its contribution to gross domestic product to SR64.1 billion (Dh62.7bn) this year. The growth in this sector will surpass the 4.4 per cent expansion in the non-hydrocarbon sector in 2010 and will boost its share of GDP to 10.4 per cent. Furthermore, the construction sector alone provided employment to more than 2.51 million workers in 2008 and accounted for nearly 40.4 per cent of the kingdom's total labour force, up 1.5 per cent from the previous year. "The increase in demand for construction labor reflects the growing volume of work being implemented. We estimate that the investments made in 2009 would have increased the size of the construction sector's labour force by four per cent to reach 2.62 million workers. With this rise, we anticipate that sector's share of the Kingdom's total labor force to have remained unchanged," it said. Citing a recent survey conducted by NCBNCB, nearly 52 per cent of Saudi companies expect to hire new employees by 2010 and only five per cent expect reduction in their headcount.

UAE

International Front

UAE, Cyprus ink deal on visa exemption for diplomatic, special passport holders

UAE Foreign Minister Shaikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Cypriot Foreign Minister Markos Kyprianou on Wednesday signed an agreement on the mutual exemption of UAE and Cypriot holders of diplomatic and special passports from entry visas. Shaikh Abdullah and Kyprianou also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on diplomatic consultations between the two ministries. The two sides also held talks in the premises of the Cypriot Foreign Ministry in Nicosia. Talks also took in the close bilateral relations between the countries as well as relations between Cyprus and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and ways to further promote them in all areas. The Cypriot issue, current regional developments including the Palestinian issue, the siege imposed on Gaza as well as the peace process efforts and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state were discussed.

Dubai to extradite Nigerian ex-governor to UK: report

A former Nigerian official arrested in Dubai by Interpol on charges of siphoning off millions of dollars of state assets is due to be extradited to Britain, local media reported yesterday. James Ibori, governor of the southern oil-rich Delta from 1999 to 2007, who was arrested in May, "will soon be extradited to London," the report quoted a police source as saying. Ibori is charged with embezzling \$ 290mn of public funds and money laundering while he was in office. An international arrest warrant was issued against the ex-governor who also faces corruption charges in Britain after the discovery of assets suspected to have been bought with stolen money.

UAE, Jordan discuss bilateral relations

Jordanian Foreign Minister Nasser Joudah received at his office yesterday UAE ambassador in Amman Dr. Abdullah Nasser Sultan Al Amiri. The ambassador conveyed to the minister greetings from UAE Foreign Minister H.H Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan. They discussed bilateral relations between UAE and Jordan and reflected upon the ways to enhance these relations in all fields.

UAE lining up with West over N- Iran

The United Arab Emirates is toughening its posture toward Tehran, worried that the risks of a nuclear Iran on its doorstep may outweigh the cost of a conflict between Iran and the West. The US-allied UAE, like many Gulf Arab states that are home to US military installations, is keen to avoid a war over Iran's nuclear program that would almost certainly draw in the Arab countries just across the water from the Islamic republic. But oil-exporting Abu Dhabi appears increasingly concerned that a nuclear bomb could give non-Arab Shiite Iran ammunition to bully its mostly much smaller, Sunni-dominated Gulf Arab neighbors at will. "The UAE feels threatened," said Shadi Hamid, research director at the Brookings Doha Centre, adding that the UAE's strategic approach to Tehran seemed to be shifting some. "If something isn't done soon,

Iran might be very much on its way to nuclear capability," he said. "No one will be affected by this more than the Gulf countries. So I don't want to say they are panicking, but there definitely is a growing level of concern and nervousness.

As heat rises between Iran and the West, pressure has grown on Abu Dhabi, the seat of the UAE federal union, to show where it stands as it seeks to avoid war while also hoping Washington will not simply let Iran go nuclear and then try to contain the ensuing threat. It has been a tough line to walk. The UAE signaled it was no longer as willing as before to serve as a financial lifeline for Iran after the UN imposed fresh sanctions on Tehran last month, prompting the central bank to order a freeze on any accounts of dozens of targeted firms.

UAE, South Africa discuss development of bilateral relations

UAE Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to South Africa Ismail Obaid Al Ali met yesterday in Pretoria, South Africa's Minister of Social Development Mrs. Edna Molewa. They discussed ways to develop bilateral relations and strengthen areas of cooperation and exchange of experiences between the two countries in fields of mutual interest. Molewa hailed the development and the social, cultural and economic renaissance achieved by the the United Arab Emirates.

UAE charity aids children in Egypt

Under the patronage of Shaikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Supreme Chairperson of the Family Development Foundation and Chairwoman of the General Women's Union, and upon an initiative of Shaikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Ruler's Representative in the Western Region and Chairman of the Red Crescent Authority (RCA), 'Giving Hands' initiative continues to provide medical help for poor children in Egyptian villages. World-class doctors from the UAE, Egypt and other countries are involved in treating underprivileged Egyptian children in coordination with the Egyptian Ministry of Social Security and the Ministry of Health. Prof. Mursi Ameen, Head of the Cardiology Center at the Ain Shams University, hailed efforts by Shaikha Fatima and Shaikh Hamdan to provide help for needy people worldwide. He said the Giving Hands' operation in Egypt is a reflection of the strong relations with the UAE.

Social Front

Firms cannot cut workers' salaries, says UAE ministry

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) clarified on Monday that companies cannot slash workers' pay for any reason, even if they face mounting losses. This will come as welcome reassurance for workers of firms battling the downturn. Saleh Al Jabri, Director of the Establishments Department at the Ministry, said: "It is illegal for a company to cut workers' pay as the employment contract is a binding agreement attested by the Ministry and all parties must comply with its clauses." He warned companies against tampering with pay packages and said "the ministry will not accept that at all". The official advised workers to immediately report any case, so that the inspection department of the MoL could swing into action and investigate such violations.

Companies that do not adhere to the contractual provisions will have their files closed by the Ministry and all transactions with them will be suspended. "The violating company will be prosecuted as manipulating workers' salary is considered a crime." Al Jabri's statement came at the 'open day' when many workers lodged complaints against their company for allegedly reducing their salaries. They were asked to accept new terms in their contracts, or have their employment visas cancelled after a ban was slapped on them. The ban would deny them entry into the country for six months.

Economy Front

UAE retains top ranking

Most UAE consumers are now increasingly cautious in their spending habits as they realise that the road to full economic recovery might take longer than expected, a report by Nielsen revealed. The UAE remained among the world's top ten countries in consumer morale despite the index recording a slight dip of two points in the second quarter, said the report. The UAE's Consumer Confidence Index has dropped from 103 points in the first quarter of 2010 to 101 in the second quarter even as globally consumer morale cautiously edged up one index point to 93 in the same period as confidence levels increased in booming Asian markets in contrast to battered confidence in nine out of 24 European markets. Index levels above and below a baseline of 100 indicate degrees of optimism and pessimism. Nielsen's Global Consumer Confidence Index, which tracks consumer confidence and spending intentions among 27,000 Internet users in 48 countries across the globe, said the UAE maintained first quarter's ranking among the top 10 most optimistic nations.

Dubai World document reveals price of failure

Dubai World warned that lenders, aside from the government's own support fund, would face a "significantly" worse deal if its debt plan fails and it is forced to seek liquidation, according to the debt restructuring plan outlined to bankers yesterday. The document seen by Reuters also said the repayment of an initial \$ 4.4 billion, five-year debt tranche would be financed by its Istithmar World portfolio and its Infinity investment- two segments that were ringfenced from the conglomerate's debt proposal agreed by a core group of bankers in May. A source close to the company said other Dubai World assets could also be used to finance repayment. Infinity is in a joint venture with MGM Resorts International. Dubai World bought a 9.5 percent stake in MGM in 2007. Dubai World's other assets include a 20-percent stake in Cirque du Soleil and Scotland's Turnberry Golf course. The document made clear that creditors would suffer in a liquidation scenario and that Dubai's own coffers would be protected.

Dubai crude oil price determination

The Department of Oil Affairs in the government of Dubai today announced that it had advised its customers that the official price of Dubai crude oil, which will be delivered in October 2010, will be twenty cents less per barrel than the average daily settlement price of the DME Oman Crude Oil Financial Contract in Dubai Mercantile Exchange contracts traded during the next

month. It should be mentioned that the department sets the price of Dubai crude oil in the markets in parallel with Oman oil prices, which reinforces the transparency of pricing process' commitment and setting a fair value of crude oil in the Middle East.

The official monthly price of Dubai crude oil - with the transition to the pricing futures contracts - is determined in advance, for a differential price is placed before three months, "M-3", while the official final monthly price is determined at the end of the second month "M-2". The DME Oman crude oil is considered as a benchmark for pricing crude oil by the countries that produce it, and it gives them a differential price that reflects the quality of the product.

KUWAIT

International Front

Kuwaiti PM meets Argentinean leader

His Highness the Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met Wednesday Argentinean President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, at the presidential palace. During the meeting, His Highness Sheikh Nasser delivered a letter from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the Argentinean leader, dealing with bilateral relations and means to boost them in the interest of their two countries and peoples.

He also extended an invitation from His Highness the Amir to the Argentinean leader to visit Kuwait, saying that Their Highnesses the Amir and the Crown Prince wished the leadership and people of Argentina further advancement and prosperity.

Kuwaiti-Lebanese friendship committee hails bilateral ties

Kuwaiti-Lebanese Friendship Committee hailed here Monday the historic ties binding Kuwait and Lebanon, particularly in the field of cooperation between parliaments of the two countries. This remark was made during the meeting held today by the committee at the headquarters of the Lebanese parliament and presided over from the Kuwaiti side by member of National Assembly Dr. Walid Al-Tabtabaei and from the Lebanese side by representative Ayub Hameid in the presence of Kuwaiti and Lebanese members of parliament. The meeting dealt with boosting and developing the ties of bilateral parliamentary cooperation and it was also attended by adviser at Kuwait's embassy in Lebanon, Jassem Al-Najem. Al-Tabtabaei asserted in a statement to KUNA the deep-seated parliamentary ties between Kuwaiti National Assembly and the Lebanese parliament, stressing the necessity of bolstering such relations and pushing them to a new high. He also noted that the meeting was an occasion for bolstering parliamentary ties through exchanging expertise and cooperation in regional and international gatherings.

Kuwaiti parliamentarians stress support to Lebanon stability

Kuwait is fully in support of development projects and other efforts to bolster stability of Lebanon, stressed Head of the Parliamentary Kuwaiti-Lebanese Friendship Committee MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei on Tuesday. The MP made the remark after the Kuwaiti delegation's

meeting with Lebanese Premier Saad Al-Hariri in presence of the Kuwaiti Ambassador Abdelal Al-Qinaei. The Kuwaiti delegation includes MPs Jamaan Al-Hirbish, Hasan Johar, and Mohammad Hayef Al-Mutairi. The MP expressed satisfaction with the Lebanese government's approach to current issues. "Kuwait is fully in support of Lebanon's stability, as attested to by the support extended through Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) and the grant extended by the state to Lebanon post the Israeli aggression of 2006," he pointed out. On the meeting with the premier, he said it was an opportunity to discuss issues of interest to and problems facing Kuwaitis currently in Lebanon. Al-Hariri on his part promised swift resolution of all concerns, he added.

Kuwait for better ties with Latin America

His Highness the Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is keen on boosting his country's bilateral relations with Latin American states, and is discussing means to strengthen the diplomatic ties during his current tour of the region, said Kuwait's Ambassador to Argentina Saud Al-Roumi yesterday. Ambassador Al-Roumi, who is also Non-Resident Ambassador to Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay, said that he held several meetings with senior government officials, including the Argentinean premier, the ministers of health, education, defense, economy, science and technology and culture. He also met with governors of provinces to discuss means to further boost relations between the two countries and promote exchange in a number of fields, such as the health, education, trade and military, in addition to organizing workshops for the Kuwaiti armed forces. Al-Roumi noted that as a result of these efforts, the Argentinean Minister of Science and Technology Lino Barana recently paid a visit to Kuwait, during which he met with top Kuwaiti officials and laid out a plan for exchanging expertise in technology and science.

Social Front

More retirement privileges needed: Kuwait Civil Service Commission

The Civil Service Commission (CSC) called for providing more retirement pensions for civil officials to encourage them to consider retirement. This would be similar to the procedures carried out with servicemen. This step aims to persuade younger and able-bodied civilians to take charge of important posts at ministries and other public firms. Their competency and energy would add more value to the comprehensive state development's plans. The CSC indicated that they are yet to receive an official decision from the Cabinet with regard to retiring officers with over 30 years of service and elaborated that such a step cannot be taken without the Cabinet's consent. Meanwhile, it is believed that the Cabinet is not very keen on the proposal owing to the fact that the country lacks experienced personnel who are qualified to handle their duties. The Cabinet is considering 'refreshing' ministries by recruiting younger staff, after providing them with ample training to handle their duties well, reported Al-Rai. Nevertheless, financial encouragement is required to encourage officials to consider stepping down from their positions in favor of younger staff", a CSC official said.

Kuwaiti MP raises conflict of interests question with ministers

MP Ahmad Al-Saadoun has submitted a question to a number of ministers concerning alleged conflicts of interest in tenders and contracts between state-owned bodies and private sector firms in which state officials have an interest. MP Ahmad Al-Saadoun warned that serious legal action would be taken against any state officials proved to have any personal interests in firms which are awarded contracts or tenders by state bodies. The veteran parliamentarian demanded that ministers provide him with a list of the state officials discovered to be involved in such dubious business transactions. Al-Saadoun previously raised the same issue in a question to oil minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, in which he enquired whether any members of the Supreme Petroleum Council (SPC) had connections with those firms awarded oil sector contracts.

On a separate note, Al-Saadoun also warned finance minister Mustafa Al-Shamali over adding any new categories of beneficiaries to the recipients of funding from the country's insolvency fund. The MP stressed the importance of ensuring that the fund's monies are only available to those currently eligible for assistance, saying that extending eligibility to others would be "paving the way to squandering public funds. Responding to the MP's points, Al-Shamali underlined the government's commitment to adhering to the existing regulations, saying that the finance ministry "ensures that all beneficiaries are entitled to [monies from] the fund as per the law."

Economy Front

Kuwait maintains FDI despite global dip

Kuwait is among three East Asian countries which have managed to maintain the level of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the region, according to World Investment Report 2010. Although global foreign direct investment (FDI) edged down by 24 percent to USD 68 billion in 2009, Kuwait, Qatar and Lebanon were exceptional cases, indicated the report - released by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The value of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) investments fell by 39 percent to USD 23 billion in 2009. Saudi investments were not enough to make up for the negative impacts of the global financial crisis on Dubai, it added.

Foreign direct investment sharply shot down in Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as export-characterized industries were dented by the fallout of the global financial crisis, the report noted. The report ascribed the drop to what it called restrictions on international credit markets, and dwindling international trade. GCC investors showed interest in new projects in Africa in an unequivocal competition with Chinese, India and Malaysian investors, it said.

Kuwait stamps 2.1 tons of precious metals in June

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry stamped 2.1 tons of precious metals at KD 3,891 in June. According to recent statistics issued recently by the ministry's department concerned with gold and precious metals, silver topped the list with 371 kilograms worth of KD 376, whereas the number of pieces examined and evaluated reached 105. Silver and gold plates were at 368

kilograms at KD 524,800, it said, adding that 2,795 samples were examined whereas 15 parcels of jewelry that do not match qualifications were exported and 22 locally-made ones were destroyed. Department Director Mislum Al-Anzi told KUNA earlier that the ministry was keen on developing its cadres' performance and provide them with hi-tech used in the domain worldwide. He added that the ministry also was keen on participating at local and international events concerned with gold and precious metals such as the international gold and jewelry fair.

Kuwait, Brazil agree on establishing joint investment company

Kuwait and Brazil agreed on establishment of a joint investment company, said Board Member of Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Sayer Al-Sayer here. Al-Sayer said late on Saturday, after a banquet held by Brazil's President in the honor of His Highness the Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, that the two countries agreed on preparing "an initial study for the establishment of the company." He said the aim of the company will be to boost economic relations between Kuwait and Brazil, adding that it would also have positive effect on trade exchange between Kuwait and Brazil. Brazil is rich in oil, agricultural resources and livestock, he pointed out, noting that the country is due to host several crucial international events, namely international Olympic games and the World Soccer Cup -- events that will contribute to reviving the national economy and impact in particular on the private sector, he noted. The two countries will form a joint committee to prepare studies on the issue, he said, alluding to the accord.

OMAN

International Front

Oman's pavilion a symbol of present and past glory

Dr Yahya bin Mahfoudh al Mantheri, Chairman of the Majlis Addawla, has hailed the official and public response to Oman's pavilion at Shanghai Expo 2010. He said that the pavilion, which showcases various pictures and other items exhibiting the Sultanate's Renaissance over the past 40 years under His Majesty Sultan Qaboos's leadership, was very well received by the visitors. Al Mantheri, who valued the efforts of the pavilion's organisers, said that he saw admiration in the eyes of the Chinese public who appreciated all the details of the Sultanate's heritage and modern development. Al Mantheri also hailed the aspects of respect and amity shown by the Chinese officials during the celebration of the Nation Day of the Sultanate. He pointed out that the event helps bring the two peoples together and develop bilateral ties at all levels. The Chinese officials, he said, hold His Majesty the Sultan in great esteem due to his wise policies advocating peace and justice in the world.

Al Mantheri returns after successful China visit

Dr Yahya bin Mahfoudh al Mantheri, Majlis Addawla Chairman, and his delegation returned home yesterday from China after presiding over the Nation Day of Oman at Shanghai Expo 2010. During the visit, Dr Al Mantheri met with Senior Chinese officials and visited pavilions of brotherly and friendly countries as well as Huawei company, one of the Chinese leading company specialised in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems. Dr Al Mantheri was received on arrival by Khalid bin Salim al Saidi, Secretary-General of Majlis Addawla; Pan Weifang, China's Ambassador to the Sultanate and officials from Majlis Addawla.

Social Front

Oman marks Renaissance Day with stress on education

Leaders around the world and the region and Omani dignitaries felicitated His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said as the sultanate celebrated its 40th 'Renaissance Day' on Friday. The event, previously called 'Accession Day', is marked every year on July 23, the day on which Sultan Qaboos assumed power in 1970. Traditionally, the occasion is celebrated on a low-key, with the major festivities set aside for National Day on November 18, the birthday of the Omani monarch. "On this dear occasion, we ponder with pride on the epic journey of the renaissance, the long road to achievement and the feats of Your Majesty's loyal people, inspired by your royal directives, which have led to the building of a modern state," Chairman of the State Council Dr Yahya bin Mahmoudh al Mantheri said in a cable of congratulations to Sultan Qaboos. He underlined that one of the country's main concerns right from the dawn of the renaissance had been the education of its people so that they were able to shoulder their responsibility in nation building. "After 40 years of hard work, the Omani people have been able to manage their own affairs in all areas and serve their country in a better way," Mantheri said.

Oman launches major initiatives to commemorate Renaissance Day

Two major initiatives have been announced in the southern Dhofar region to commemorate the country's July 23 'Renaissance Day' on orders from His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. The first is a youth complex and the second a project to grow 100,000 coconut trees. The 'Sultan Qaboos Youth, Culture and Entertainment Complex' will be set up in Salalah, the region's main city, Sayyid Ali bin Hamoud Al Busaidi, the Minister of Diwan of Royal Court, said, revealing the royal instructions. The new facility, he added, was specifically meant to "make the best use of the potential of youth, coinciding with the 40th anniversary of the sultanate's Renaissance Day." The complex, Sayyid Ali said, would incorporate all the latest "facilities and amenities designed to utilise the time of young people in the best possible manner." He said Sultan Qaboos' order to plant 100,000 coconut trees in the Dhofar governorate reflected the Omani ruler's keen interest in developing the country's agricultural sector. Agriculture Minister Shaikh Salim Bin Hilal Al Khalili, commenting on the project, underlined the "diversity of climate conditions" in Oman that made its different regions suitable for cultivation of different crops.

Economy Front

Oman and Latvia sign agreements to regulate air transport services

The Sultanate and Latvia have concluded a draft agreement to regulate air transport services between the two countries based on the principles of open skies. A Memorandum of Understanding to this effect was signed by civil aviation authorities of the two countries here yesterday. The agreement covers organisational and operational procedures agreed during the talks. The procedures include measures to allow the two countries' national carriers to operate any number of organised and crossbar flights through any intermediate points and points beyond the two countries. They also provide for the transportation of goods and

passengers between the two countries and those intermediate points and points beyond. The step was taken at the conclusion of talks here yesterday. The MoU allows the airlines to reach code sharing to help utilise the rights available under this memorandum and the open skies agreement that has been reached. The Sultanate has appointed its national carrier, Oman Air, while Air Baltic has been appointed from the Latvian side.

Oman exhibition in Singapore opens

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Secretary-General of the Foreign Ministry, and Singaporean Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Zainul Abidin Rasheed inaugurated here yesterday the Oman Exhibition in Singapore which coincides with the Sultanate's celebrations of the blessed Renaissance Day. In a speech to mark the occasion, Rasheed expressed greetings on the 40th anniversary of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos's assuming rein of power in Oman, as the Sultanate witnessed Renaissance in various spheres under His Majesty's wise leadership. He added that we are honoured the Trade and Friendship Exhibition is being held in Singapore on this occasion. The Singapore minister said the exhibition and the Jewel of Muscat project are models for reviving historic ties between the two friendly countries. On his part, Sayyid Badr thanked the Government of Singapore, expressed delight over the 40th anniversary of the Oman Renaissance is being celebrated in Singapore, underlining the historic moments in Oman's modern history. He said trade and friendship existed between the Omani and the Singaporean people for centuries and staging this event at the Asian Civilisation Museum deeply underscores the joint vision for peace, tolerance and co-operation.

Health Front

Health front sees major developments in Oman

Oman has made remarkable progress in the field of healthcare in recent years, thanks to the blessed Renaissance that channels resources in public welfare projects. As a result of five-year health development plans, the life expectancy of Omani people is now 70 years for males and 75 years and seven months for females. Mortality rate has decreased to three per 1,000. The infant mortality has come down to 9.6 and the mortality rate of children below five years has decreased to 12. The above data has been published in the health report by the Ministry of Health titled, "The Annual Health Facts 2009". The report that includes vital indicators of health institutions and their functioning also gives information about the manpower employed in this sector as well as the number of in-patients and out-patients.

On the expansion of health services network in 2009 in the Sultanate, the report says there are about 151 healthcare centres of which 72 are equipped with beds (total 159 beds) and 79 centres are without beds. There are also 21 polyclinics divided into specialised clinics that provide high quality services and care. There are about 50 hospitals being run by the Ministry of Health, with a total of 4,653 beds. It is estimated that there are 5,563 doctors in Oman by the ratio of 17.5 per 10,000 population. The Ministry of Health provides 3,909 doctors (12.3 doctors per 10,000 population). There are 9,753 nurses (30.7 per 10,000), about 240 pharmacists and 231 dentists. The report indicates that there were about 3.8 outpatient visits by each individual during the year and more than 258,000 patients got admitted. About 93,701 surgeries had been conducted, of

which 39,644 were major ones. More than 14 million laboratory tests and a million X-ray scans were conducted. There are 16 cases of Ischemic Heart Disease per 10,000 of population. The report says 99 per cent of children have been immunised against poliomyelitis, measles, tuberculosis and Hepatitis-B. The Sultanate has not registered any case of children's diseases such as poliomyelitis and tetanus for some consecutive years now. Other diseases like measles have also decreased to a low level which indicates the control and potential of the country. On the other side, the report reveals that the number of non-contagious diseases has increased.

Oman succeeds in eradicating trachoma

Oman has succeeded in eradicating trachoma, a widely prevalent eye disease in the country until the late 1980s, and will soon achieve the feat in measles as well, a senior official said. Dr Khalid bin Mohammed Al Mashaikhi, Director-General of Health Services in the Dhofar Governorate, said trachoma had been virtually wiped out from the country. Its prevalence had fallen to less than two per cent from 70-80 per cent in the 1970s and 30-40 per cent in the 1980s. "The sultanate also is about to eradicate measles that can influence eyesight and cause blindness at a later stage," Mashaikhi said at the opening of an international ophthalmology conference in Salalah.

BAHRAIN

International Front

Bahrain's Cabinet hails Saudi-Bahraini Kings Summit

Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, the Premier of Bahrain lauded here yesterday, in his name and on behalf of the cabinet, the summit between Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz and Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, that took place recently in Morocco. In a press statement, following the cabinet meeting, Sheikh Ahmad bin Attitallah Al Khalifa, Minister for Cabinet Affairs, said that the Cabinet asserted the importance of such summits and fraternal meetings in consolidating bilateral cooperation and strengthening well-established bonds binding the two fraternal nations and peoples.

King of Bahrain meets Saudi counterpart in Morocco

The King of Bahrain Hamad Bin Issa Al-Khalifa returned home on Saturday after wrapping up visits to the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Morocco, it was officially reported. King Hamad, during the visit to Britain, held talks with Prime Minister David Cameron on means of cementing bilateral ties and various current issues. In Morocco, the monarch met with the visiting King of Saudi Arabia, Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz, discussing the historic bilateral ties between the two brotherly countries in addition to regional and Arab issues. The King was received upon arrival at home by the Crown Prince, Prince Salman Bin Hamad Al-Khalifa.

Social Front

King Hamad praised one-family spirit characterising Bahrainis

His Majesty King Hamad yesterday praised the one-family spirit characterising Bahrainis, renowned for their generosity, knowledge, tolerance, love and hospitality - qualities they have acquired over hundreds of years. He was speaking as he visited Shaikh Yousef bin Ahmed Al Siddiqui at his residence in Zallaq and Shaikh Ahmed Khalaf Al Asfoor at his residence in Boori and was reassured of their health. His Majesty expressed pride over the efforts by the kingdom's scholars and clerics to establish peace, love and co-operation among all people, praying that God Almighty may protect Bahrain and its people and preserve their safety and security. He lauded religious scholars for their contributions to Islamic issues, reflecting the real image of Islam as a religion of love and peace. He also praised their sincere calls to adhere to great Islamic values.

Outrage over Bahrain MP's call to use live rounds on rioters

Rights activists were outraged yesterday after a Bahraini MP allegedly urged the government to use live ammunition against rioters. MP Jassim Al Saeedi made the comments to an Arabic newspaper, which quoted him demanding the death penalty for violent protesters. However, both the Bahrain Human Rights Society (BHRS) and Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights (BYSHR) said they were appalled by the suggestion. "All I have to say is that thank God he is not in a position where he can order the country's police to use such force against citizens," said BHRS secretary general Dr Abdulla Al Derazi. "It's strange that an MP, who has an important role in creating Bahrain's legislature, is for the use of violence. "He should defend the dignity, integrity and humanity of people instead of calling for such an act. "Human rights activists in Bahrain are calling for the reduction in using force against demonstrators and he is proudly demanding law enforcers to use live ammunition to stop demonstrators. "This is not acceptable and we completely reject his statements." Meanwhile, the BYSHR said Mr Al Saeedi's comments went against a campaign it is currently running against the police use of pellet guns in Bahrain, called Against the Use of Shotguns in Bahrain. "We are in the midst of running an international campaign and there is an MP in Bahrain who is supporting the use of such weapons" he said.

Bahrain pledges quality services

His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa yesterday directed all ministries to pursue quality assurance in performance and excellence in services provided for citizens. Chairing the weekly Cabinet meeting, he stressed the crucial role of harmony and compatibility in government work leading to better performance and quality. He said government work is integrated and co-operative in nature and any shortfalls in any area will not be directed to a certain ministry but will be considered collective responsibility. It also praised the Minister of State for Defence Affairs for his role in the arbitration committee's activities for excellence, following a report and directed officials to co-ordinate between the quality, excellence and public administration government bodies. The Cabinet hailed the outcome of His Majesty's talks with British Premier David Cameron and other top leaders during a visit to the UK and talks with Saudi Monarch King Abdullah.

Economy Front

Bahrain shuts GII offices

Bahraini authorities closed down the offices of Gulf International Investment (GII) on Tuesday over alleged violations, suggesting regulators are taking a tougher stance toward the Gulf state's opaque investment sector. Employees left the company's floor in the Bahrain Financial Harbour office towers in Manama after the doors were closed with official seals from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce reading "Closed due to commercial law violations". "It's a small thing, we'll sort it out in one or two days," one employee said. It was not immediately clear why the offices were closed and whether the closure was temporary or permanent. The cell phones listed on the company's website were switched off.

Bahrain plans to privatize Gulf Air

Bahrain plans to privatize national carrier Gulf Air as soon as possible encouraged by positive results in its restructuring, a senior government official said in remarks published yesterday. The loss-making carrier could return to profit within a year, paving the way for privatization, the head of Bahrain's Economic Development Board, Sheikh Mohammed bin Essa Al-Khalifa, told newspaper Akhbar Al-Khaleej. Gulf Air was established as a regional airline but has undergone years of restructuring after shareholders Oman, Abu Dhabi and Qatar gave up their stakes, partly to establish national carriers. The emergence of regional heavyweights such as Dubai-based Emirates Airline has forced Gulf Air to revamp operations, cutting staff and refocusing its network on regional routes. Sheikh Mohammed told Reuters in February that the company could be privatized within about a year. Bahrain is a small oil producer that cannot afford to support a large public sector and has therefore launched a privatization program. Gulf Air is one of the single largest employers in Bahrain, where privatizations are opposed by most opposition politicians and the general public due to fears over job security. Sheikh Mohammed told the newspaper that the government would not allow Gulf Air's return to profits and the subsequent sale to come at the expense of the "Bahrainis involved".

Health Front

Bahrain's leaders pledged world-class health services

Bahrain's leaders yesterday pledged world-class health services for the nation. His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander, decided to form a committee headed by Minister of State for Defence Affairs Dr Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulla Al Khalifa to supervise and administer the new hi-tech King Hamad General Hospital. The Premier will set out its function and responsibilities. The move is in harmony with the government's commitment to provide high-quality health care, in line with international standards, they said. King Hamad Hospital will serve as a model operated by international experts and provide services to all citizens. The two leaders reviewed Bahrain's education process, including vocational and higher education, based on reports by a committee headed by

Deputy Premier Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa and work by public establishments like the Education and Training Quality Assurance Authority, headed by Premier's Court Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, and the Higher Education Council.

QATAR

International Front

Qatar Emir visits Lebanon tomorrow

The Emir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani will visit Beirut tomorrow, the Lebanese Ambassador to Qatar, Hassan Saad, told reporters yesterday. The Emir's visit coincides with the visits of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia and Syrian President Bashar Al Assad. Talking to media persons, the Lebanese envoy said his country was seeking to boost cooperation in strategic sectors like oil, gas and electricity. Lebanon is giving top priority to Qatari investment. His country was looking to build facilities for importing liquefied natural gas from Qatar and the feasibility study for the project had been completed, he said.

Darfur deal drafting panel meets

HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Mahmoud and the joint African Union-United Nations chief mediator for Darfur Djibril Bassole yesterday co-chaired the drafting committee set up by the mediation. The committee's mission is to draft a comprehensive agreement proposal to be based on the outcome of works of joint groups between the Sudan government and the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) in implementation of the framework agreement signed in Doha on March 18.

Qatar Emir's visit to UK 'will boost ties': Martin Day

The regional Arabic spokesman for the British government, Martin Day, said the visit of HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani to the UK, scheduled for October, was expected to give a major boost to the ties between Qatar and the UK. Addressing reporters at the British embassy in Doha yesterday, Day said the UK supported Qatar's mediation efforts to resolve Sudan's Darfur conflict. About Iran's nuclear programme, the diplomat said the latest sanctions imposed on Iran by the EU were mainly meant to "bring Iran back to the negotiation table". "The EU countries are still ready for talks with Iran because they believe that the nuclear issue could be solved peacefully," he added. Day expected that the sanction would be a success in what he called "detering the Iranian government", saying that Iran was facing several problems and internal divisions. "Iran is expected to import petrol within a decade," he added.

State, civil society 'should help in fight against graft': Al-Marri

Qatar's Attorney General HE Ali bin Fetais al-Marri said yesterday that Qatar's "full legal and political commitment" had placed it among the top rank of countries globally in fighting corruption. Addressing the opening session of the second conference of the Arab Anti-

Corruption and Integrity Network (ACINET), currently in session in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa, al-Marri noted that Qatar had been transferring its experience in the fight against corruption to international forums, inspired by its Arab and Islamic culture. He referred to the sixth Global Forum on Fighting Corruption and Safeguarding Integrity, which was hosted by Doha last November. The Doha forum, he said, had asserted the necessity of a partnership to be launched among various sectors of the society to fight corruption. The public prosecutor, who is also the chairman of the third session of the Conference of States Parties to the UN Convention against Corruption, praised the approval of the Doha mechanism to review the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. He warned against the continued global financial crisis, which was the result of corruption in its various forms in the economic organisations of the developed countries and thus in the world's financial establishments. He noted the need for a continued voluntary support to be provided by states and civil society institutions to assist in the campaign against corruption.

Qatar PM slams negative response from Israel

HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani yesterday received a telephone call from US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Discussions focused on bilateral relations as well as regional and international developments. They also centred on the Middle East peace process. The Prime Minister praised the efforts exerted by US President Barack Obama on this. But he expressed his dissatisfaction because no breakthrough had been achieved in the peace process since Israel was not responding favourably to peace efforts.

Economy Front

Qatar bank seeks 81% stake in UK Islamic lender

Qatar International Islamic Bank has said it plans to raise its 11.2% stake significantly in Islamic Bank of Britain by offering to buy new shares, Reuters has reported. On Tuesday, IBB announced plans to raise £20m through the placement of new shares priced at 1 pence per share to QIIB. Following the shares placement, the Qatari lender will be an 81% shareholder in IBB. The increase is subject to regulatory approval and shareholders of the Islamic Bank of Britain, it said in a statement.

Qatar, Iran share world's biggest gas field

The world's biggest gas field is shared between Iran, which calls its share South Pars, and Qatar, owner of the North Field (also known as the North Dome). Qatar has brought in international firms and used the field to become the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG), whereas Iran's development of South Pars has been hampered by protracted delays, in part because of international sanctions. Iran and Qatar are respectively holders of the world's second and third largest natural gas reserves, behind Russia. Their South Pars/North Field gas field holds an estimated 50.97 trillion cubic meters of in-situ gas and some 50 billion barrels of condensates, according to the International Energy Agency.

It covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, of which 3,700 square kilometers (South Pars) is in Iranian territorial waters and 6,000 square kilometers (North Field) is in Qatari territorial waters. The following brings together facts on Qatar's North Field. LNG production in Qatar is divided between two companies, Qatargas and Rasgas. State oil company Qatar Petroleum (QP) owns a majority stake in both, with international oil companies holding smaller stakes in individual production trains. RasGas is 70 percent-owned by QP and 30 percent-owned by ExxonMobil, while Qatargas is owned by a consortium including QP, Total, ExxonMobil, Mitsui, Marubeni, ConocoPhillips and Royal Dutch Shell.

Qatar Gas Transport Company provides ships to transport Qatar's LNG. LNG, natural gas cooled to liquid form for export by tanker, is produced in large facilities known as trains. Qatar expects to reach a goal of having the capacity to liquefy 77 million tons of natural gas annually by the end of the year, concluding a massive expansion plan that has made it the world's top LNG exporter only 14 years after shipping its first cargo.