

## DUTCH CREATE WORLD'S LARGEST MAN-MADE WAVE

**DELFT, Netherlands:** In a country where most people live below sea level, studying the oceans is a matter of survival. Now Dutch scientists have created the world's biggest man-made wave in a bid to prepare for the worst. "Here we can test what happens if enormous waves hit our dykes," said Dutch Infrastructure Minister Melanie Schultz van Haegen as she inaugurated the giant wave machine Monday in the city of Delft. Dubbed the "Delta Flume," the machine, which took three years to build at the Deltares institute, can send waves as high as five metres crashing down a 300-m long channel which is some 9 and a half metres deep.

"At the end of the long channel we have a wave maker, and that's basically a vertical wall that moves back and forth, and it can make very large waves," explained Bas Hofland, an expert in coastal defences working on the project. Four powerful pistons behind the seven-metre high metal plaque push the water -

some nine million litres or four times the capacity of an Olympic-size swimming pool - at the speed of 1,000 litres a second down the channel.

The aim of the 26-million euro (\$29-million) project is to simulate the power of the oceans, and recreate tsunami conditions to help build better, stronger flood defences. The Netherlands is a country where half the population lives below sea level on reclaimed land. "Safety against floods is one of the main issues here in the Netherlands, so we want to test the dykes and the dunes," Hofland told AFP. "It is not possible to make it at a small scale, so we must have real life-scale dikes and dunes."

### Surf's Up

After a centuries-long battle with the oceans, the Netherlands has dubbed itself the "safest delta in the world" thanks to a

unique network of dykes and dunes stretching over thousands of kilometres, which literally hold back the tides. One of them, known as the Oosterscheldekering (or Eastern Scheldt storm surge barrier), stretches across nine kilometres to the south of the country. It is made up of 64 gates, each about 42 metres wide, which can be closed during stormy weather to hold back rising waters.

"The water and its logistics are those sectors for which the Netherlands is known around the world," Schultz van Haegen said, who saw for herself the full force of the machine when she was drenched by one of the waves. And it's not just those working in coastal defences who have been drawn to the gigantic project in Delft. The team at the Deltares institute have also been flooded by requests from surfers, keen to try out the power of the wave. — AFP

## SPLIT OVER ASSAD, ARAB STATES MUM ON RUSSIA

**CAIRO:** Divided over the fate of President Bashar Al-Assad, Arab countries have kept silent over Russian air strikes in Syria, apart from Cairo which openly supports Moscow's campaign, experts said. "The Arab world has lacked regional leadership for years from within the region, and in that void, the US and Russia have been engaging," said H A Hellyer, Middle East policy expert at the Washington-based Brookings Center.

"There are some signs that some wish to change that from within the region, but the first example of leadership is being shown in the multilateral Arab intervention into the Yemen (conflict) — and it is not a promising example at all," he said referring to a Saudi-led coalition against Shiite rebels backed by Iran, a regional heavyweight.

Moscow launched air strikes on Syria last week, but it has come under fire for raids on Western-backed moderate opponents of Assad instead of what it says are targets connected to jihadists of the Islamic State group. US President Barack Obama has severely criticized Russia, saying its military campaign is only strengthening IS. But Arab countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar in a US-led coalition that has been carrying out strikes on IS since last year have so far refrained from making any statements other than one jointly issued by the US-led alliance urging Moscow to "immediately" halt the campaign and "focus" only on IS.

### Divergent Views

Just hours before Moscow unleashed its bombing campaign on Wednesday, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir had insisted that "there is no place for Assad in the future of Syria". But not all Arab regimes are against Russia's intervention in Syria. Egypt, the world's biggest Sunni Arab country which boasts the region's largest and best-equipped military, welcomed the Russian campaign as a measure to fight jihadist

groups like IS. "We believe that the (Russian intervention) will impact the fight against terrorism in Syria and help eliminate it," Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shukri said in New York on Saturday.

Relations between Cairo and Moscow have flourished in recent times, with President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi warming up to Russia after Egypt's ties with traditional ally Washington strained following the ouster of president Mohamed Morsi in 2013 by then army chief Sisi. A government crackdown targeting Morsi supporters that left hundreds dead and tens of thousands jailed caused deep resentment in Washington, although this has waned in recent months. "Russia is concerned by the resistance to terrorism and the purpose of its intervention is a fatal blow to terrorism in Syria, and its strikes are in line with those of the anti-Daesh coalition in Syria and Iraq" led by Washington, Shukri said, using the Arabic acronym for IS.

Arab world's silence was expected and reflects its division over how to proceed in Syria, experts said. "Cairo has been gradually embracing Moscow's view on Syria, which is diametrically different from Riyadh's," said Hellyer. "For the Saudis, the main strategic objective remains the fall of Assad's regime - a goal irreconcilable with Russian interests," said Karim Bitar, Arab affairs specialist at the Paris-based Institute of International and Strategic Relations. In contrast, "Egypt's Sisi is more in line with (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's policy that seeks to revive the camp of authoritarian nationalism in the face of Islamist movements."

Even if Saudi Arabia wants the fall of the regime in Damascus it has a "confusing" foreign policy as seen from its intervention in Yemen, said Yezid Sayegh, Syria expert at the Carnegie Middle East Center. "It does not know what to do or how to do it. The Saudis have reached a limit" when it comes to Syria, he said. — AFP

## COMPANIES IN KUWAIT PAY KD 1BN IN TAX

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The meetings held between the ministry and the IMF resulted in the conclusion that it would be senseless to impose taxes on individuals while collecting annual taxes of 10 percent - after it was 15 percent - on companies operating in the country, while the percentage should be adjusted according to the country's interests.

The issue of borrowing to tackle the budget deficit "is not determined yet", Hamadah said, noting that the ministry had discussed with both the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) their capability to issue annual bonds valued at three to four billion dinars. The ministry is awaiting a response from PIFSS and KPC in the

current week, he said. This is considered the "first borrowing stage, while the second stage is not determined yet, cost-wise or time-wise, as the picture will be clear by the end of October", he added.

The ministry signed a contract two months ago with Ernst & Young (EY), a multinational professional services firm, in order to prepare a study about rationalization of subsidies, to be ready before November. The current income tax law was approved in 2008. It was later modified, particularly with respect of foreign companies operating in Kuwait. One of the amendments included abandoning progressive taxes that ranged between five and 55 percent and uniting the rate at 15 percent for all companies. — KUNA

## JEERAN PLANS AMENDMENTS TO ELECTORAL LAW...


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MP Ahmad Al-Azmi is also expected to speak in support of the grilling. Ahead of the new term due to open on Oct 27, MPs have threatened to grill several ministers over a variety of allegations. Besides the minister of social affairs and labour, lawmakers have threatened to grill ministers of health, commerce and industry, electricity and public works and oil. Other lawmakers have urged the prime minister to reshuffle the Cabinet in order to change at least three ministers.

In another development, MP Abdullah Al-Turajji sent a


series of questions to Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh over the Olympia commercial center in Salmiya which is built on government-leased land for the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA). Turajji asked if the contract is a lease contract or a Build-Operate-Transfer contract as stated in the contract itself.

He asked if the law allows OCA to carry out an investment commercial project on state-leased land and if the buildings in the project are registered under the name of OCA or a real estate company. He also asked why the lease value was not raised from a mere KD 22.5 per year to KD 376,750 per year, the amount agreed with and accepted by OCA. Since its establishment, OCA has been headquartered in Kuwait.



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