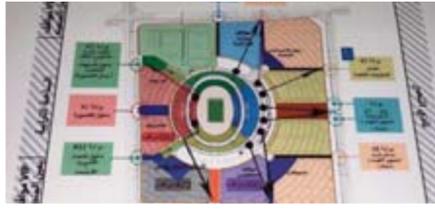


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# Opposition MPs walk out as new ministers take oath

VAT law referred to finance panel • Minister warned over expat health fees

By B Izzak

## Saudis intercept Houthi missile over Riyadh

RIYADH: Saudi air defenses intercepted a ballistic missile fired towards the capital Riyadh yesterday, the Saudi-led coalition said, the latest attack by a Yemeni group that could escalate a proxy war between the kingdom and regional rival Tehran. There was no immediate report of casualties or damages. The Iran-aligned Houthi movement said the missile targeted the royal court at Al-Yamama palace, where a meeting of Saudi leaders was under way, describing the attack as a new chapter in the conflict.

The Saudi-led coalition said the missile was directed at residential areas and there were no damages, the Saudi state news agency SPA reported. Quoting a statement from the coalition, SPA said Iranian-made missiles were a threat to regional and international security, and accused the Houthis of using humanitarian entry points to import missiles from Saudi Arabia's arch-foe Iran. "Coalition forces confirm intercepting an Iranian-Houthi missile targeting (the) south of Riyadh."

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KUWAIT: About 11 opposition MPs walked out of a National Assembly session yesterday - the first regular meeting since the term opener on Oct 25 - when new Cabinet ministers began taking the oath to become members of the Assembly. The lawmakers were protesting against the government for taking no action towards the jailing of two opposition MPs - Jamaan Al-Harbash and Waleed Al-Tabtabaei - after they were convicted for storming the Assembly in Nov 2011. The lawmakers protested the fact that their colleagues were sent to jail although they still enjoyed parliamentary immunity.

MP Adel Al-Damkhi submitted a letter on behalf of the opposition MPs criticizing the inaction of the Assembly and the government over the jailing of the two lawmakers. Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghneim said he discussed the issue with the Assembly's constitutional experts and it was decided to refer the letter to the legal and legislative committee.

Damkhi criticized the interior ministry for arresting the two MPs even though they are members of the Assembly. Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah said the ministry did not arrest Harbash or Tabtabaei, as they gave themselves up to police, while a third MP, Mohammad Al-Mutair, is still outside the country.

During the debate, the Assembly agreed to refer a draft law on value-added tax (VAT) to the financial and economic affairs committee from the legal committee to study the contents of the law, which is part of the GCC agreement. The VAT law stipulates imposing a five per-



KUWAIT: Opposition MPs stage a walkout during a parliament session at the National Assembly yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 3)

cent tax on almost all products to raise non-oil revenues. Saudi Arabia and UAE are planning to start imposing the tax in January, while Kuwait must get the approval of the Assembly before imposing it.

During the session, MP Khalil Al-Saleh called on the new health minister Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah to study the decision raising medical charges on expatriates "very

carefully". The warning came after the minister said the decision will be reevaluated after three months of imposing it. The Assembly also rejected with a comfortable majority a request to establish a committee for combating vice and promoting virtue, as only 17 MPs out of 47 present approved the request.

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