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Amir warns Arab sky overcast, laments paralyzed joint action

Saudi king slams Iran, announces \$200m for Palestinians at 'Jerusalem' summit



DHAHRAN, Saudi Arabia: Arab leaders pose for a family picture during the 29th Summit of the Arab League at the Ithra center yesterday. — AFP



HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (center) is welcomed by Saudi King Salman (right) and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman during a luncheon yesterday. — KUNA

DHAHRAN: The sky of our Arab nation is overcast, while joint action is stagnant if not paralyzed at times, HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said yesterday at the beginning of his speech during the opening session of the 29th Arab Summit in Dhahran. The Amir offered condolences to the Algerian people over a military plane crash near Boufarik Airport that killed and wounded hundreds, asking Almighty Allah to bestow mercy upon those who were killed and speedy recovery to those wounded.

Commenting on the current Arab state of affairs, HH

the Amir said: "Before such hurtful facts, the convening of this summit under the chairmanship of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is seen as a fresh start that would revive hopes of the people of this nation, as well as an outlet for the state of frustration they are living. Therefore, it is demanded from us to double efforts in order to solve our differences: a challenge that is weakening us and giving leverage to those who wish us harm."

The Amir also called for addressing deficiencies marring Arab joint action through invigorating recommendations and resolutions. "Through its non-perma-

nent membership at the United Nations Security Council, my country - Kuwait - will relentlessly work to defend Arab causes, as well as contribute in reactivating the role of the Council in lessening impacts of such inactivity. You might have followed such efforts, which led to the unanimous adoption of resolution 2401 regarding recent developments in Eastern Ghouta, Syria, which unfortunately was hindered due to recent escalations.

"The now eight-year-long conflict in Syria, which led to a humanitarian crisis, makes hearts bleed, as it

reveals the unfortunate incapacity and double-standardness of the international community in dealing with this issue. Such community condemnns, and might take some measures, for a sporadic explosion here or there. However, at the same time, it stands helpless to denounce or take action in favor of hundreds of thousands of killed, injured and displaced people in Syria. But Kuwait has not, and will not, hesitate to fulfill its humanitarian obligations with regards to helping the brotherly Syrian people in its plight"

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Panel: Remittance tax a fee for expats using govt services

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The parliamentary financial affairs committee said it will discuss the 31st report concerning taxing expats' remittances in its meeting tomorrow. The committee stressed that the aim of such proposals is to find new sources of income by taxing remittances by expats as a fee for the educational, health and other services the state provides them. The committee also believes that expats have access to subsidized goods such as fuel, gas and electricity, and that this tax will eventually affect the quality of the services as a whole.

On the other hand, the parliamentary legislative committee unanimously rejected the proposals for various reasons such as suspicion of the proposals' unconstitutionality on grounds of discrimination against expats, that taxing expat remittances would create an illegal market outside official providers like banks and money exchange companies, taxes will impact the cost of goods and that the majority of expats have low incomes.

Although seconding the legislative committee's concern about creating new sources of income, Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf highlighted the danger of constitutional violations by such proposals. He also stressed that measures taken to create new sources of income should be done with more comprehensive views of financial and economic reforms. He noted that rushing towards economic reform measures without understanding the mechanisms and how they would be applied will impede the government from performing its executive role.

Commenting on the issue, the Central Bank said the proposals have some technical and financial loopholes that should be reconsidered and dealt with. The Central Bank argued that economic reform should be done through reforming the state's treasury in general through re-pricing state-provided services and goods that are underpriced and lead to much waste and overuse.

The bank also pointed out that the total figure of KD 4.14 billion reported as expats' remittances is misleading, as many expats have been making

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Envoy: Ethiopia to send helpers only after deal signed

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The Ethiopian government is committed to resending domestic helpers to Kuwait only after a labor agreement is signed, the Ethiopian ambassador to Kuwait told Kuwait Times. Abdulaziz Ahmed Adem said the Kuwaiti government expressed a desire to again recruit domestic helpers from Ethiopia, but he informed his counterparts that it would

take some time to deploy the workers. "The normal process of signing agreements has to take its due course, since we only submitted the draft proposal last week. It depends on the ministry - if they act fast on the agreement, maybe by next month we can start deploying workers," he said.

Authorities in Kuwait announced they will recruit domestic workers from Ethiopia to cover for a 'deficit' after the Philippines banned its citizens from working in Kuwait following the murder of 29-year-old Joanna Demafelis, who went missing in Sept 2016. Her body was found in a freezer earlier this year, bearing signs of torture. Her employers, a Lebanese man and Syrian woman, were sentenced to death last week.

Last year, Kuwaiti police detained a

woman for filming her Ethiopian maid falling from the seventh floor without attempting to save her. Rights groups have criticized Kuwait and other Arab countries, where migrant labor is regulated under a system known as kafala. The kafala, or sponsorship, system ties migrant workers' visas to their employers, prohibiting workers from leaving the country or changing jobs without prior consent.

According to Adem, Addis Ababa wants to ensure that the helpers' rights will be protected while working in Kuwait. "Last week we sent the draft copy of the new agreement to the ministry of foreign affairs to be signed by both countries. Once approved, the deployment of workers will resume soon," he added.

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Abdulaziz Ahmed Adem

Arrest in India rape case as outrage mounts

NEW DELHI: Indian police have made another arrest after the alleged rape of a teenager by a ruling party politician sparked protests across the country, fed-

eral investigators said yesterday. The case, along with the rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl, has brought Indians onto the streets for mass demonstrations not seen since the rape and murder of a Delhi student in 2012. The outrage has put pressure on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is accused of trying to shield its state lawmaker in one case and of defending the accused in the other.

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MUMBAI: Indian demonstrators hold placards during a protest in support of rape victims yesterday following high profile cases in Jammu and Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh states. — AFP

Inspectors launch Syria probe after Western strikes

DAMASCUS: International inspectors launched their investigation yesterday into an alleged chemical attack near Damascus that prompted an unprecedented wave of Western strikes against Syria's regime. Russian President Vladimir Putin, the regime's top ally, warned that fresh strikes would spark

"chaos", but Washington promised economic sanctions on Moscow rather than further military action.

US, French and British missiles destroyed sites suspected of hosting chemical weapons development and storage facilities Saturday, but the

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Preliminary Damage Assessment: Him Shinshar Chemical Weapons Storage Site



Images released by the US Department of Defense show the damage assessment at the Him Shinshar chemical weapons storage site after US, French and British forces launched strikes against Syria on Friday. — AFP