



2 Kuwaiti and Turkish ministers explore business opportunities



22 Arresting looks: Russian protests get a fashion twist



24 Bezos attends first anniversary memorial of Khashoggi murder



26 France survive scare to beat USA 33-9 at Rugby World Cup



Seven killed as protests against government spread across Iraq

Outrage as prime minister blames violence on 'aggressors'



BAGHDAD: Protesters gather next to a burning building amidst clashes with Iraqi riot police during a demonstration against state corruption and poor services yesterday. — AFP

BAGHDAD: Popular protests multiplied across Iraq yesterday as demonstrators braved live fire and tear gas from security forces in rallies that have left seven dead in the past 24 hours. The demonstrations are the first major challenge to Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi, who formed his government a year ago this month and who controversially blamed the violence on "aggressors" among the protesters. Since they began Tuesday in Baghdad the protests have spread to other cities in the country's south, with disparate crowds railing against state corruption, failing public services and unemployment.

Yesterday, a police officer and three protesters were shot dead and five were wounded in the southern city of Nasiriyah, a provincial health official told AFP, bringing the death toll in two days of violent protests to seven. In Baghdad yesterday, riot police attempted to disperse crowds in a half-dozen neighbourhoods using tear gas and firing live rounds into the air. Protesters regrouped and began heading towards the capital's iconic Tahrir Square for the second day, but police had sealed off the area, several nearby roads and the adjacent Jumhuriya bridge.

Security forces feared protesters would cross the Tigris river into the Green Zone, which hosts government buildings and embassies and was walled-off until just a few months ago. In the southern neighborhood of Zaafaraniya, protesters were burning tyres on streets lined with police vehicles. "I came out today in support of my brothers in Tahrir Square," said Abdallah Walid, 27. "We want jobs and better public services. We've been demanding them for years and the government has never

responded," he said.

Journalists covering protests in central Baghdad said security forces had assaulted them and detained one of their colleagues. "No state would attack its own people like this. We're being peaceful, but they fired," said unemployed graduate Mohammad Jubury in the nearby Al-Shaab district. Some 60 people were wounded across Baghdad yesterday, including nine from bullet wounds and the rest from tear gas inhalation, medical sources said.

In addition to Baghdad and Nasiriyah, crowds also gathered in the holy city of Najaf and the flashpoint southern city of Basra, which was rocked by protests last year. Security forces used live rounds to break up the Baghdad, Nasiriyah and Najaf protests, much like the previous evening. Even after Tuesday's Baghdad protest had been broken up, heavy gunfire could be heard well into the night, including in the Sadr City district, where a funeral was held for the protester killed in the capital.

The other demonstrator killed in the capital was wounded Tuesday and succumbed to his injuries yesterday. It was not clear if bullets were fired directly at protesters or into the air. Tuesday's bloodshed drew condemnation from President Barham Saleh, who urged "restraint and the respect for the law". "Peaceful protest is a constitutional right granted to citizens," he said. The UN's top official in Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, expressed "grave concern" yesterday, saying she "deeply regrets the casualties". She urged authorities to "exercise restraint in their handling of the protests".

Continued on Page 24

News in brief

Traffic nightmare on 4th Ring Road

KUWAIT: Motorists were stuck for hours during the evening rush hour on Fourth Ring Road yesterday as two out of three lanes were closed due to road maintenance works. The ministry of public works is rushing to complete roadworks before the start of the rainy season. Partial road closures began in two phases from April from 6 pm till 6 am on weekdays and from midnight till noon on weekends. The roads involved include King Fahd Expressway (from the First Ring Road till Bayan Palace), First Ring Road, Fourth Ring Road, Sixth Ring Road and Doha Spur Motorway.

Iran allows women to pass citizenship

DUBAI: A top Iranian constitutional body has approved a law allowing Iranian women to pass their nationality to their children, state media reported yesterday. Human rights experts have said the measure could help thousands of children living in legal limbo by letting them acquire citizenship in Iran, one of about 25 countries that do not permit women married to foreigners to hand their nationality to their children. The Guardian Council had earlier objected to the proposed law on security grounds and required changes allowing background checks on foreign fathers of the children, according to local media reports. — Reuters

Iranian, Saudi oil ministers 'friends'

MOSCOW: Iran's oil minister sought to defuse tensions with Saudi Arabia yesterday, calling his counterpart in Riyadh "a friend" and saying Tehran was committed to stability in the region. The comment came at a top Russian energy conference chaired by President Vladimir Putin, where Iran's oil minister Bijan Zanganeh met Saudi energy minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman and OPEC's Secretary General Mohammed Barkindo. "Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman has been a friend for over 22 years," Zanganeh said. The two ministers were later seen holding hands together with Barkindo. — Reuters

Sanders treated for blocked artery

NEW YORK: Senator Bernie Sanders put his campaign for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination on hold "until further notice" yesterday, after being treated for a blocked artery following chest pains. "During a campaign event yesterday evening, Sen. Sanders experienced some chest discomfort," Sanders' senior advisor Jeff Weaver said in a statement. "Following medical evaluation and testing he was found to have a blockage in one artery and two stents were successfully inserted." — AFP

MoI to terminate expats working in 'sensitive' sectors

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: As part of the interior ministry's plans to replace expatriate employees with Kuwaitis, it issued internal instructions to make lists of all expat employees pending terminating their contracts, said informed sources. The sources explained that many expat adminis-

trative employees at the traffic, citizenship and passport departments will be laid off in view of the availability of citizens qualified to replace them, in addition to the need to transfer extra Kuwaiti employees from other interior ministry departments to the abovementioned ones.

"The interior ministry believes that the traffic, citizenship and passport departments are closely linked to Kuwait's security, and thus their staff members should all be citizens," the sources explained, reminding of the previous involvement of expat employees in driving license forgeries. The sources added that all expat administrative employees in other interior ministry departments, with the exception of legal advisors, will be laid off within a maximum of two years.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti daily Al-Qabas quoted well-

informed sources as saying that in a bid to resolve the unemployment problem, the Cabinet will discuss a comprehensive government study on nationalizing thousands of jobs in the private sector and replacing expats working as administrative, legal and secretarial staff with Kuwaitis.

The sources added that such a step will increase the amounts paid by the state in national labor support allowances to around KD 1 billion after laying off 130,000 to 150,000 expats - 8 to 10 percent of the total of 1.6 million expat employees in the private sector. In addition, the sources explained said Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel is coordinating with various bodies to formulate a new strategy to develop and increase Kuwaiti manpower in the private sector.

Modi hails toilet 'milestone' on Gandhi's 150th

AHMEDABAD, India: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday declared the country of 1.3 billion people free of open defecation, and turned his sights towards eradicating single-use plastic next. Modi - whose claim has been challenged by experts - made his ambitious "latrines for all" pledge when he first took office in 2014 and his announcement late yesterday coincided with the 150th birthday of Mahatma

Gandhi, an icon not just for Indian independence but also sanitation.

"In 60 months, 600 million people have been given access to toilets, more than 110 million toilets have been built," Modi said in a speech to 20,000 village chiefs in western Ahmedabad city in his and Gandhi's home state of Gujarat. "The women of our country no longer have to wait for darkness to descend. Innocent lives of young children are being saved... the expense on healthcare has come down," Modi added, calling the achievement a significant milestone for the vast developing country.

However, despite huge progress, experts have expressed skepticism about his bold claim, saying millions still

Continued on Page 24

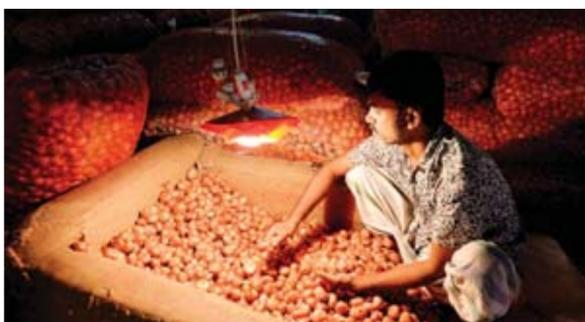


NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi gestures beside a portrait of independence icon Mahatma Gandhi at Parliament House yesterday to mark Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary. — AFP

Eye-watering onion prices over India ban

MUMBAI/DHAKA: From Kathmandu to Colombo, it's a kitchen nightmare: Onion prices have gone crazy. That's because India, the world's biggest seller of the Asian diet staple, has banned exports after extended monsoon downpours delayed harvests and supplies shrivelled. And dedicated buyers across the region, like Nepalese housewife Seema Pokharel, are flummoxed. "This is a terrible increase," said Pokharel, out shopping for vegetables in Kathmandu. "Onion prices have more than doubled in the last month alone."

Whether it's Pakistani chicken curry, Bangladeshi biryani or Indian



DHAKA: A salesman prepares onions for sale at Kawran Bazaar wholesale market yesterday. — AFP

sambar, Asian consumers have developed a serious dependence on Indian onion supplies for go-to dishes. Shorter shipment times than from rival exporters like China or Egypt play a crucial role in preserving the taste of the perishable commodity.

But last Sunday New Delhi banned all exports from India after local prices jumped to 4,500 rupees (\$63.30) per 100 kg, their highest in nearly six years, due to the delay in summer-sown crop arrivals triggered by longer, heavier rains than

Continued on Page 24

Rouhani didn't take Trump call

PARIS: US President Donald Trump phoned his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani on the sidelines of the UN summit last month but he refused to take the call, a French diplomatic source said on Tuesday. The call happened on Sept 24, the source said, after French President Emmanuel Macron had shuttled between the US and Iranian leaders in a bid to arrange a historic encounter that he hoped would reduce the risk of all-out war in the Middle East. "In New York, up to the last moment, Emmanuel Macron tried to broker contact, as his talks with presidents Trump and Rouhani led him to think contact was possible," the diplomatic source said.

Speculation was a buzz last month that the leaders could meet on the sidelines of the General Assembly. But Rouhani said he would only hold talks with the US if Trump lifted economic sanctions on Tehran.

Continued on Page 24