



**4** Turkish-Kuwaiti joint committee helped bolster ties: Assistant FM



**19** Filmmaker sheds new light on Britain's role in 1953 Iran coup



**24** Rihanna blasts Trump in new Vogue interview



**28** Iran women to attend football match for first time in decades



# Hashem welcomes 100% hike in expatriate maternity charges

Fadhil: No govt plan for taxes • Tabtabaei warns MoI after police officer insulted

## Kuwait leaps ahead in WEF competitiveness index



By Jamie Etheridge

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait leaped eight spots to rank 46 out of 141 countries on the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index, a signal that government efforts to improve Kuwait's investment climate and diversify the oil-based economy are starting to pay dividends. Kuwait earned the label "most improved in the [MENA] region", scoring high in macroeconomic stability, health and financial sector, though it earned lower

marks for institutions, labor markets and innovative capabilities.

Among the Gulf states, UAE ranked highest at 25, Qatar came next at 29 and Saudi Arabia 36. Bahrain at 45 scored just above Kuwait, and Oman completed the GCC states at 53. The annual WEF report examines a variety of factors including macroeconomic stability, labor market, institutions, infrastructure, innovation, business dynamism, health, skills and adoption of ICT. It then ranks the world's economy on a variety of subfactors,

positing that these are the key factors that produce economic growth and stability.

"The Global Competitiveness Index 4.0 (GCI 4.0) provides stakeholders with a detailed map of the factors and attributes that drive productivity, growth and human development," the report notes. The WEF report is utilized by governments and investors as one way to gauge a country's economic potential and especially its attractiveness to foreign investors.

Continued on Page 24

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** MP Safa Al-Hashem yesterday welcomed a decision by the health ministry to increase by 100 percent charges expatriate women have to pay at maternity hospitals, saying the new raise will regulate the service. Hashem, who has been pressing the government to increase charges on expatriates, said the decision will greatly benefit operations at maternity hospitals run by the health ministry. She praised the health minister for accepting some of her proposals that call for imposing a raft of charges on expatriates, whom she blames for disruption of main services in the country.

The health ministry announced yesterday that it has decided to increase maternity charges for expatriate women from KD 50 to KD 100 for natural delivery and KD 150 for caesarean delivery (C-section), saying the decision came after a thorough study. The raise is effective immediately. The ministry said that unlike before, expat women will also have to pay for their stay at hospitals, which is KD 10 daily in wards, raising at the same time charges for private rooms at maternity hospitals from KD 50 to KD 100 per day.

The ministry of health has been regularly increasing medical charges at public hospitals, following last year's major

increase in most medical charges. On top of that, expats are required to pay KD 50 annually in health insurance as a prerequisite for a residence permit. Hashem also claimed that expatriate doctors at Farwaniya and Adan hospitals favor expat patients ahead of Kuwaitis and urged the health minister to stop such practices. The lawmaker called on authorities to continue their fight against visa traders and "residency mafias", whom she blamed for distorting the demographic structure in Kuwait, where 3.3 million expats live against 1.4 million native Kuwaitis.

Meanwhile, a proposal recently made by Hashem on violations mandating expats' deportation was referred to relevant parliamentary committees, said parliamentary sources, noting however that the time remaining in the new Assembly term might not be enough to discuss them. The sources added that some of the points mentioned in Hashem's proposal are already being implemented, such as deporting expats with expired residency visas, those working for employers other than their sponsors and those whose jobs in their work permit do not match what they actually do.

Further, the sources said that manpower authority will soon start taking measures leading up to deportation against expat violators, including those

Continued on Page 24

## News in brief

### Initial nod for KFH AUB takeover

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House has received conditional approval from Kuwait's Central Bank for its proposed acquisition of Bahrain's Ahli United Bank. The deal depends on a number of requirements to ensure adherence to sharia, transparency and protection of free competition, the Central Bank said in a statement. KFH announced its plan to take over the Bahraini lender in January. — Reuters

### Health insurance payment online

**KUWAIT:** The interior ministry's PR and security media department announced launching health insurance payment online for all residency affairs departments, adding applicants desiring to renew their residency visas should pay the fees online at [www.moh.gov.kw](http://www.moh.gov.kw) before heading to residency affairs departments or service centers to complete the renewal process. — Hanan Al-Saadoun

### Driver who jumped curb arrested

**KUWAIT:** The interior ministry's PR and security media department announced that in response to social media videos showing a public transport bus being driven on the sidewalk, traffic police patrols tracked down the bus driver, arrested him and impounded the bus. — Hanan Al-Saadoun

### Saudi women can join armed forces

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia announced yesterday it will allow women in the ultraconservative kingdom to serve in the armed forces as it embarks on a broad program of economic and social reforms. The move is the latest in a series of measures aimed at increasing the rights of women in the kingdom, even as rights groups accuse Riyadh of cracking down on women activists. — AFP

### German gunman filmed shooting

**BERLIN:** The gunman in yesterday's deadly shooting in the German city of Halle filmed himself during the attack and posted the footage on a video game site, the SITE monitoring group said. In an excerpt of the footage, the suspected perpetrator launches into an anti-Semitic diatribe in English. The suspect is a 27-year-old German, magazines Spiegel and Focus Online reported. — AFP

## Turkey launches Syria push with air, artillery fire

**AKCAKALE, Turkey:** Turkey launched a military operation against Kurdish fighters in northeast Syria yesterday just days after US troops pulled back from the area, with warplanes and artillery striking militia positions in several towns in the border region. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, announcing the start of the action, said the aim was to eliminate what he called a "terror corridor" on Turkey's southern border, but European countries immediately called on Ankara to halt the operation.

Thousands of people fled the Syrian

town of Ras al Ain towards Hasaka province, held by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. The Turkish air strikes had killed two civilians and wounded two others, the SDF said. Turkey had been poised to enter northeast Syria since US troops, who have been fighting with Kurdish-led forces against Islamic State, started to leave in an abrupt policy shift by US President Donald Trump. The withdrawal was criticized in Washington as a betrayal of America's Kurdish allies.

A Turkish security source told Reuters the military offensive, dubbed "Operation Peace Spring", opened with air strikes. Turkish howitzer fire then hit bases and ammunition depots of the Kurdish YPG militia. The artillery strikes, which also targeted YPG gun and sniper positions, were aimed at sites far from

Continued on Page 24

## Trio wins Nobel for developing Li-ion batteries

**STOCKHOLM:** Three researchers won the Nobel Chemistry Prize yesterday for the development of lithium-ion batteries, paving the way for smartphones and a

fossil fuel-free society. John Goodenough of the United States - at 97 the oldest person to be awarded a Nobel prize - Britain's Stanley Whittingham, and Japan's Akira Yoshino will share the nine million Swedish kronor (about \$914,000) prize equally, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences said.

"This lightweight, rechargeable and powerful battery is now used in everything from mobile phones to laptops and electric vehicles... (and) can also store



**KIRIKKALE, Turkey:** This handout picture shows Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan chairing the coordination meeting with the attendance of Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar and other officials yesterday. — AFP

significant amounts of energy from solar and wind power, making possible a fossil fuel-free society," the jury said. "Lithium batteries have revolutionized our lives since they first entered the market in 1991," and were "of the greatest benefit to humankind".

Over two-thirds of the world's population own a mobile device, nearly all of which are powered by rechargeable lithium-ion batteries, Paul Coxon of the University of Cambridge's Department

of Materials Science and Metallurgy told AFP. Seeking an alternative source of power during the oil crisis of the 1970s, Whittingham discovered a way to harness the potential energy in lithium, a metal so light it floats on water. He constructed a battery partly made of lithium that utilized the element's natural tendency to shed electrons, thereby transferring energy. However the battery was too unstable to be used.

Continued on Page 24

## 3D printer makes meat in space

**MOSCOW:** The prospect of astronauts tucking into a roast dinner has grown slightly closer after a successful experiment used a 3D printer to create meat on the International Space Station. The bioprinter produced beef, rabbit and fish tissue using magnetic fields in microgravity, a Russian medical technology company involved in the experiment said yesterday. The experiment - an international collaboration involving US, Russian and Israeli companies - was carried out in September by cosmonaut Oleg Skripochka in the sta-

tion's Russian segment using a 3D printer developed in Moscow.

The creators say it is the first to create a small amount of artificial meat in conditions of weightlessness. "It's one small nibble for man, one giant bite for mankind," said Yusef Khesuani of 3D Bioprinting Solutions, the Russian laboratory that created the bioprinter. The laboratory was founded by Invitro, a large Russian private medicine company. The Roscosmos space agency part-financed the experiment as of national importance.

"It was really a breakthrough both for Roscosmos and Russia as a whole," said Nikolai Burdeiny, executive director of the state space corporation, which includes Roscosmos. "For us it was the first experience of international scientific collaboration in space," Khesuani said, using cells

Continued on Page 24



**MOSCOW:** Grigory Shalunov, project manager of the Bioprinting Solutions company, gestures as he looks at a 3D bioprinter developed in Russia during a press conference yesterday. — AFP