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MP: Kuwait's fiscal position sound, reserve not depleted

Lawmaker drops plan to grill social affairs minister over social aid

Amir receives Omani, UAE, Bahraini FMs



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday welcomed the foreign ministers of Oman, Bahrain and UAE, namely Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, Khaled bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa and Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahayan, at his residence in the

US. They were assured about HH the Amir and his medical checkups, which were successful. The Amir expressed his appreciation to this initiative which embodies the depth of relations between the Gulf Cooperation Council states, wishing them good health. — KUNA

By B Izzak And Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Rapporteur of the National Assembly's budgets committee MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said yesterday that Kuwait enjoys a sound financial position backed by huge assets, denying statements that the state's reserve fund has been reduced to just KD 7 billion. The lawmaker said assets in the state reserve are "greatly higher" than the figure announced by current and former officials, including former finance minister Bader Al-Humaidhi, who warned of a financial crisis if Kuwait does not rationalize spending.

Adasani said the budgets committee exerted efforts with the government that resulted in transferring some KD 8.4 billion to the state reserve fund. He also said the expected actuarial deficit of the pension agency is KD 17.4 billion and not KD 19 billion as was said, adding that the most important thing here is that the deficit is not current but is expected to happen in the future based on calculations. Adasani said the country has huge assets, but they must be managed in the best way possible, recalling that the government must tackle problems related to distortions in the state budget and final accounts.

Adasani also warned that he will go ahead with

plans to grill the prime minister and the finance minister unless the government appeals against the prosecution's decision to shelve investigation into suspected money laundering cases in which current and former MPs are involved. He said the government pledged to file the petition but so far nothing has been done. The lawmaker reiterated his pledge to grill the interior minister.

Meanwhile, MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei said he has suspended plans to grill the minister of social affairs and labor over the ministry's alleged mistreatment of needy Kuwaiti women who receive social aid from the state. The lawmaker had vowed to grill the minister because the ministry suspended social aid to thousands of Kuwaiti women.

Subaei however said yesterday that ministry officials informed him that only 1,130 women were affected because they failed to update their files by bringing certificates from various ministries to prove they were in need. He added the officials informed him that the women are no longer required to bring such certificates personally, as the ministry has already written to other government bodies and the update is expected to be completed within a week's time.

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News in brief

Iran oil sector on 'full alert'

TEHRAN: Iran's oil minister yesterday ordered his country's energy sector to be on high alert to the threat of "physical and cyber" attacks. Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said "it is necessary for all companies and installations of the oil industry to be on full alert against physical and cyber threats," in a statement published on the oil ministry's Shana website. Zanganeh said precautions were needed due to American sanctions and the "full-scale economic war" that the Islamic republic accuses the United States of waging against it. Iran denied press reports on Sept 21 that its oil installations were disrupted by a cyber attack. — AFP

Egypt kills 15 militants in Sinai

CAIRO: Egyptian security forces have killed 15 suspected militants in a shootout in restive north Sinai, the interior ministry said yesterday. A militant group was "planning hostile acts targeting military and police forces...in order to destabilize national security", the ministry said in a statement, adding "terrorist elements" had been hiding in a farm in El-Arish, the capital of North Sinai province. Authorities also said they found a small trove of stashed weapons including an explosive belt, several rifles and an explosive device. Graphic pictures of the bodies of the alleged militants were sent along with yesterday's press release. — AFP

Prominent Egypt dissident detained

CAIRO: Prominent Egyptian dissident Alaa Abdel Fattah was detained yesterday morning beyond his overnight probation, his family and a judicial official said. Abdel Fattah, 37, is serving five years of probation after completing a five-year jail sentence in March for staging a protest against a 2013 law effectively banning public gatherings. His probation requires him to report to a police station near his home in Cairo at 6:00 pm every evening, and stay overnight in a cell until 6:00 am. Yesterday, officers denied his mother Laila Soueif access to the police station and refused to say why he was not released. — AFP

2 killed in rollercoaster accident

MEXICO CITY: Two people were killed and two more injured when a rollercoaster carriage derailed at a theme park in Mexico, authorities have said. Early reports suggest a mechanical problem caused the carriage to become detached from the ride and fall some 10 m to the ground, the public prosecutor said in a statement. It is believed the two men died as a result of head injuries, it added, while two women were taken to hospital - one of them in a serious condition. The accident happened at La Feria amusement park in the capital Mexico City on Saturday. — AFP

Saudi king's bodyguard shot dead by 'friend'

RIYADH: A prominent bodyguard of Saudi Arabia's King Salman has been shot and killed at a friend's house in what has been described as a personal dispute, according to state media. Major General Abdelaziz Al-Fagham's death triggered an outpouring of emotion on Twitter, with some condemning the killing of the Saudi ruler's "guardian angel". Fagham, who was frequently seen by the king's side, died Saturday evening in the western city of Jeddah, police in Makkah said in a statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA).

A spokesman said that the gunman was shot dead by security forces, but that five officers were wounded in the melee that has shocked the kingdom, where gun violence is rare. Police said the trouble broke out when Fagham was visiting a friend who was receiving guests at his home in Jeddah, the port city in western Saudi Arabia. An acquaintance, Mamdouh Al-Ali, entered the residence and an argument ensued.

"The conversation between Fagham and Ali escalated... Ali left the home, came back carrying a gun and fired at Fagham, injuring two others in the household, a Filipino worker and the brother of the house's owner," it said. Ali "refused to surrender" and barricaded himself into the house, exchanging shots with security forces before he was ultimately killed, it said.

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Fire hits Saudi high-speed train station

RIYADH: Five people were injured in a fire that broke out at a new high-speed train station in Saudi Arabia's western city of Jeddah yesterday, state television reported, with huge palls of smoke seen rising into the air. The station serves the main Haramain High Speed Rail system. The route opened to the public in October last year, transporting passengers between Makkah and

Madinah, Islam's holiest sites. "Five people who sustained minor injuries because of the fire were transported to hospital," Al-Ekhabriya state television reported.

The General Directorate of Saudi Civil Defence said in an earlier tweet that it was working to extinguish the fire. A video uploaded on Twitter by the Makkah provincial government showed plumes of grey smoke rising from what looked like the inside of the complex. An AFP correspondent said security forces closed the main road linking Makkah and Jeddah and cordoned off the site.

The blaze erupted at 12:35 pm local time (0935 GMT), according to the Haramain High Speed Rail's Twitter account.

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Dubai builders wooing buyers amid downturn

DUBAI: Dubai, a city defined by its glittering towers and man-made islands, is stuck in a five-year property downturn with no end in sight, drawing warnings of an industry reckoning that will see weaker players fail. Property developers are slashing prices and offering ultra-easy financing to lure customers, while concerned authorities have stepped in with incentives and regulations to revive the crucial sector.

Ahead of the Expo 2020 global trade fair that Dubai hopes will deliver an economic windfall and some 300,000 new jobs, hundreds of mega projects have been unveiled in recent years, leading to an oversupply and a slide in prices. The government rushed to rescue the sector in 2018 with a raft of measures including easy visa terms for expatriate buyers and permanent residence permits for big investors. This month, a top-level committee was established to rebalance the oversupplied market.

The Standard and Poor's ratings agency has said the industry, which makes up 7.2 percent of Dubai's

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JEDDAH: This Sept 25, 2019 photo shows Saudi King Salman accompanied by his personal bodyguard General Abdel Aziz Al-Fagham (right). — AFP



JEDDAH: Cars drive by as thick smoke billows from the Haramain high-speed train station after a fire broke out yesterday. — AFP



BEIRUT: Lebanese protesters hold placards during a demonstration in Martyrs' Square yesterday. — AFP

Lebanese stage protests over failing economy

BEIRUT: Hundreds of people protested in Lebanon's capital yesterday over increasingly difficult living conditions, amid fears of a dollar shortage and possible price hikes. A skirmish broke out as protesters tried to break through security barriers in front of the cabinet office and anti-riot forces pushed them back with shields and batons, an AFP photographer said. Demonstrators briefly cut off several Beirut thoroughfares, some with burning tyres emitting billowing black smoke.

Around 500 people, some carrying Lebanese flags, had gathered earlier in the capital's central Martyrs' Square to march to the seats of government and parliament, the photographer said. "Revolution, revolution," cried some of the protesters. Outside parliament, dozens of men and women streamed in from a side street under the watchful eye of security forces, another AFP reporter said. "Government, parliament... Thieves, thieves!" they chanted.

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