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Photo shows the Al-Jahra Gate. Al-Jahra is a town located 32 kilometers west of Kuwait City. — KUNA

AFC CANDIDATES CLEARED FOR FIFA COUNCIL ELECTIONS

MANAMA: Candidates vying for the four available Asian Football Confederation (AFC) seats on the FIFA council have been cleared to stand for election by the world governing body, the AFC said yesterday. The four successful candidates at May's AFC congress in Bahrain will represent Asia on the body along with Bahraini vice president Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al-Khalifa, also the head of the AFC, and members from Japan and Malaysia. The four spots include one reserved for women.

Australian Moya Dodd, formerly a co-opted member of the old FIFA Executive Committee, will take on Mahfuza Ahkter of Bangladesh, Han Un-gyong of North Korea and Susan RA Shalabi of Palestine. Chinese Football Association general secretary Zhang Jian, South Korea's Mong Gyu Chung, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah of Kuwait and Mariano V Araneta Jr of Philippines will contest for the other three spots.

Olympic Council of Asia President Sheikh Ahmad, who heads the Association of National Olympic committees and is an influential International Olympic Committee (IOC) member, has a FIFA Council seat currently, the term of which ends in May. The FIFA Council replaced the largely discredited Executive Committee as FIFA's decision-making body under reforms instituted in the wake of the 2015 corruption scandal in soccer's world governing body. Last September, the AFC extraordinary congress, called to conduct the elections for the FIFA Council, was postponed over the disqualification of a Qatari candidate.—Reuters

KUWAIT, S KOREA AGREE TO ENHANCING COOPERATION

KUWAIT: Kuwait and South Korea yesterday discussed means of cementing their bilateral relations at the political, economic, and academic and health levels. The Kuwaiti embassy in Seoul said in a statement the Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs ambassador Ali Suleiman Al-Saeed headed the Kuwaiti delegation that engaged in talks with Korean officials topped by the Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs, Lee Jeong-Kyu. The meeting was held in the South Korean capital. Ambassador Al-Saeed in remarks, expressed deep satisfaction at outcome of the discussions that dealt with cooperation and bilateral relations in the political, economic, and academic and health sectors.— KUNA

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL AGREES DRAFT AGENDA FOR THE ARAB SUMMIT

DEAD SEA: The Arab Economic and Social Council concluded its senior-level meeting here on Thursday after working out draft resolutions for the 28th Arab Summit, due on Wednesday, March 29. The draft economic and social agenda of the summit will be submitted to the Council's minister-level meeting next Sunday for preliminary endorsement ahead of final approval by the summit, said the Arab League's Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs Kamal Hussein.

"On top of this agenda are the report of League's Secretary General on socio-economic joint action and review of the implementation of the relevant resolutions adopted by the Nouakchott summit last July," he told reporters this evening. "The Secretary General's report deals with joint mega projects in the areas of socio-economic development and economic integration, as well as the progress towards launching the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) and the Arab Customs Union," Kamal revealed. Under a draft resolution, the report tasks the Council with developing a framework strategy for maximizing industrial contributions to the GDPs of the Arab League member countries and increasing the inter-GAFTA trade exchanges. The planned strategy ensures sufficient financing by Arab financial institutions for trade in products of Arab origin, and facilitating and regulating trade exchanges, he went on.

Another draft stipulates working out a strategy to implement the Arab Customs Union, upgrading the customs outlets, cementing the security of trade amid the current security threats and increasing support to the least-developing Arab countries, particularly Palestine, Yemen and Sudan. The Council approved a draft resolution for the development of fisheries under a recommendation of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development

with a view to augment food security.

It also approved a draft on the second stage of the framework executive plan for Arab food security (2017-2021), Kamal noted. In this connection, the Council reviewed the initiative of Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir for Arab investment in his country to enhance Arab food security and approved a draft resolution on setting up a mechanism to implement and finance this initiative. The Council also debated impacts of the large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons in the Arab region on the economies of host countries and agreed to support the affected countries, he added.

Regarding the social dossier, the League's Assistant Secretary General for

Social Affairs Badr-Eddin Al-Alali said the Council highlighted commitment to cooperation to combat poverty, women empowerment and youth, and enhance health and education. "A draft has been developed approving the outcomes of the ministerial meeting on 'terrorism and social development - causes and remedies,' hosted by Sharm El-Sheikh last February. "The draft approves the Arab declaration on terrorism and development," Al-Alali said. The Council also reviewed the Arab strategy for scientific and technological research, which was developed by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), and the women development agenda 2030, he added.—KUNA

KFAED, IVORY COAST SIGN KD 5 M LOAN AGREEMENT

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) and Ivory Coast have signed a loan agreement worth KD five million (\$17 million) to finance building a vocational school so as to improve education. The project aims to support social and economic development, as well as human resources in Ivory Coast through improving and expanding vocational education, the Fund said in a press statement late Thursday.

It will meet needs of national labor qualified for commercial and industrial markets, it added. The project also seeks to improve education and training vocationally and this will positively affect indications of economic and social development across the country, it noted. It includes constructing new buildings, and

providing furniture, equipment and tools of workshops and training staff of school.

The loan was inked in implementation of the initiative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah declared during the Arab-African Summit hosted by Kuwait in 2013, in which one billion dollars was allocated to fund projects in African countries within five years, the statement said. It is the fifth loan provided by KFAED to the country; the previous ones were estimated at KD 19 million (\$64.9 million) for financing projects in different sectors. It also provided technical loans and grants worth KD 250,000 (\$850,000). The loan was inked Minister of Finance Adama Kone of Ivory Coast and KFAED's deputy director general Ghanem Al-Ghunaiman.—KUNA