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Amir: Cooperation key to confront Gulf challenges

Sheikh Sabah warns challenges mounting in region

KUWAIT: The 11th meeting of chairpersons and speakers of shura, representative councils and national assemblies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was inaugurated yesterday under the patronage and attendance of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Sheraton Hotel. During the opening speech, the Amir stressed on the need of cooperation between the Gulf states to face the mounting challenges, hailing the initiative of National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, who called for holding this meeting.

Sheikh Sabah spoke of the important decisions taken at the 38th Gulf Cooperation Council summit held in Kuwait in December, regarding joint GCC efforts and cooperation. HH the Amir also expressed his joy over hosting the 23rd football Gulf Cup, which concluded on Friday. He noted that such events bring GCC citizens closer.

The Amir said that it is the GCC leaders' responsibility to meet the needs and hopes of their people by cooperating with each other to set a roadmap for development, amidst different growing challenges in the region. He added the Gulf states had seen prominent achievements in the past four decades in representing the Gulf region at the international level. — KUNA



KUWAIT: HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah pose for a photograph with the heads of shura, parliament and national councils in the Gulf Cooperation Council yesterday. — AFP (See Page 2)

News in brief

Kuwait Energy in merger talks

DUBAI: SOCO International, an oil and gas exploration and production company listed on the London Stock Exchange, said yesterday it was evaluating a merger with oil and gas firm Kuwait Energy. SOCO, which has a market capitalization of about \$500 million, said discussions with Kuwait Energy's newly constituted board were preliminary and no deal terms had been agreed. "SOCO confirms that, in the context of its stated objective to strategically reshape its business and grow its portfolio, it is evaluating a potential merger of equals with Kuwait Energy," the company said in a statement.

Saudi stadiums open to women

RIYADH: Sports stadiums in Saudi Arabia will open their doors to women to attend football matches for the first time ever on Friday, the government has announced. "The first match that women will be allowed to watch will be Al-Ahli versus Al-Batin on Friday January 12," the ministry of information said in a statement yesterday. It said women would also be able to attend a second match on the following day and a third one on Jan 18. Women from across the vast Gulf kingdom may be able to take advantage of this new freedom as the first match will be held in the capital Riyadh, the second in Jeddah on the Red Sea and the third in the eastern city of Dammam.

US police killed 987 in 2017

WASHINGTON: Police officers shot and killed nearly 1,000 people in the United States in 2017, slightly more than the previous year, according to a tally published yesterday by The Washington Post. A total of 987 people were fatally shot by US police last year, up from 963 in 2016 and down from 995 in 2015, the Post said. Nineteen unarmed black men were killed by US police in 2017, up from 17 in 2016 but down from 36 in 2015. Black men, both armed and unarmed, accounted for 22 percent of all people shot and killed by US police last year but make up just six percent of the total US population. Overall, police shot and killed 68 unarmed people in 2017, up from 51 in 2016 but down from 94 in 2015.

Jordan foils IS attack plot

AMMAN: Jordan said yesterday it had foiled an Islamic State plot that included plans for a series of attacks last November on security installations, shopping malls and moderate religious figures, state media reported. State news agency Petra said the country's intelligence department had arrested 17 members of the cell and confiscated weapons and explosives that the militant group had planned to use in several operations. The detainees were being interrogated before being put on trial in a military court, the authorities said.

Syrian regime pounds rebels; drones attack Russian bases

BEIRUT: Regime forces upped the pressure on two of the last rebel bastions in Syria yesterday, pounding the Eastern Ghouta enclave near Damascus and the northern province of Idlib. Shelling and air strikes on Ghouta, which government forces have besieged for four years, killed at least 20 civilians, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. The semi-rural area east of the Syrian capital is home to around 400,000 inhabitants and is targeted almost daily by regime forces trying to flush out rebel groups.

Yesterday, a woman and her three children were killed in regime strikes on Douma, which is the main town in Eastern Ghouta. Rami Abdel Rahman, the head of the Britain-based Observatory, said. In the town's morgue, medics were wrapping the children's shredded bodies in shrouds amid the shrieks of bereaved parents, an AFP correspondent reported. Chaos engulfed the rudimentary facility as rescuers kept rushing in more wounded, some of whom died before they could receive life-saving treatment.

"I was at the market with my father, selling mint, parsley and onions. The next thing I knew, my foot was bleeding and my dad had a head injury," said Ahmed Hatem, an 11-year-old boy, as he sat on the floor wincing in pain. A child and two other civilians were also killed in strikes on the small town of Madira, the Observatory said. The violence also left



MADERA, Syria: The body of a child lies on the ground at a makeshift hospital following air strikes in this rebel-controlled town in the eastern Ghouta region yesterday. — AFP

another 13 civilians dead across Eastern Ghouta. The area, which had been designated as a "de-escalation zone" as part of an international deal last year to bring down violence levels, has witnessed major bloodshed in recent weeks. Syrian forces also managed overnight to pin back rebels who had surrounded a regime base there.

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Bacteria makes blue jeans green

PARIS: They can be tight, flared, ripped at the knee. Jeans come in all styles and colors these days, but one hue will always be synonymous with the world's favorite garment: indigo blue. To satisfy the world's seemingly insatiable demand for blue denim, more than 45,000 tonnes of indigo dye are produced every year, with much of the waste making its way into rivers and streams, conservationists say. Yesterday, scientists announced they had developed a greener method to produce the coveted tint — using lab-grown bacteria.

While not yet commercially viable, the technique holds promise for a "much-needed update to the historic, but unsustainable, indigo dyeing process," researchers wrote in the journal *Nature Chemical Biology*. "Demand for the dye is higher than ever before, making its ecological consequences unsustainable," they warned.

Originally extracted from plants, indigo is one of the oldest dyes, with evidence of its use in textile coloring going back some 6,000 years. It is prized for being vibrant and long-lasting, and was an important cash crop until humans started making synthetic indigo in the early 1900s. Indigo crystals cling easily to the cotton fibers used in jeans and are resistant to laundry detergents, yet flake

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PHUC SEN, Vietnam: This file photo taken on Oct 22, 2015 shows indigo leaves used to dye materials by Nung ethnic women in this village in the northern province of Cao Bang. — AFP

Conjoined Gaza twins separated in Saudi operation

RIYADH: Conjoined twin girls born in the blockaded Palestinian enclave of the Gaza Strip were separated in "successful" surgery in Riyadh yesterday, the state-run Saudi Press Agency said in a statement. Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Rabiah, who headed the team that operated on Farah and Haneen at the King Abdullah Specialist Children's Hospital, "affirmed the success of the separation surgery", SPA said.

The operation began yesterday morning, and involved nine stages of anesthesia and the separation of multiple organs, including the liver, as well as restoring organs in Haneen. The news comes months after a doctor and family member of the twins pleaded from Gaza that they be allowed to go abroad for the complex surgery.

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GAZA CITY: This file photo taken on Oct 22, 2017 shows then one-day-old Palestinian conjoined twins in an incubator at the nursery at the Al-Shifa Hospital. — AFP