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Kuwait condemns deadly Ahvaz attack, Amir sends condolences

Guards vow revenge • Iran warns UAE over 'offensive remarks'; official denies allegations

KUWAIT/TEHRAN: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Saturday sent a cable to President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Hassan Rouhani to express sincere condolences on the deadly assault on a military parade in the Iranian city of Ahvaz. In his cable, HH the Amir condemned the terrorist attack which resulted in dozens of casualties. He prayed for the victims and wished speedy recovery and wellness for the injured. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent similar cables of condolences to the Iranian president.

Kuwait's foreign ministry also condemned the deadly assault on Saturday. An official source at the ministry said Kuwait condemned the attack out of its principled stance rejecting terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The source extended Kuwait's condolences to

families of the victims and all Iranian people, wishing a speedy recovery to the wounded. National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem on Saturday sent a cable to his Iranian counterpart Ali Larijani to offer condolences on the deadly attack. Ghanem condoled with families of the victims and denounced the terrorist act. He also prayed for the dead and wished the wounded speedy recovery.

Rouhani yesterday pointed blame at Arab separatists for the deadly attack and accused an unnamed US-backed Gulf state of supporting them. Tehran also summoned diplomats from Denmark, the Netherlands and Britain for allegedly hosting members of the group suspected of links to Saturday's attack that killed 24 people, according to a revised death toll. Four militants attacked the parade commemorating the start of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war in the southwestern city of Ahvaz, capital of the border province of Khuzestan.

Officials and an eyewitness said the gunmen were clad in Iranian military uniforms and had sprayed the crowd with gunfire using weapons they had stashed in a nearby park. The Islamic State (IS) group claimed responsibility for the rare assault. But Iranian authorities see an Arab separatist movement, the Ahwazi Democratic Popular Front (ADPF) or Al-Ahwazi, as the main suspect. "One of the countries in the south of the...Gulf took care of their financial, weaponry and political needs," said President Rouhani. "All these little mercenary countries we see in this region are backed by America. It is the Americans who incite them." The United States condemned the attack, with its UN envoy saying it had happened because Rouhani has "oppressed his people for a long time". "He needs to look at his own base to figure out where that's coming from."

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TEHRAN: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani waves during a ceremony at Mehrabad airport before leaving for the UN General Assembly in New York yesterday. — AFP

News in brief

1,251 polygamous marriages

KUWAIT: Recent marriage statistics showed that 2017 witnessed 1,251 incidences of polygamous marriages, mainly by Kuwaiti men, 764 of whom already had one to three wives. Statistics issued by the Central Statistical Bureau said 1,156 men - 689 citizens and 467 expats - got married to second wives in 2017, while 80 married third wives, including 62 citizens and 18 expats. Statistics also showed that 15 men - 13 citizens and two expats - got married to fourth wives. Moreover, statistics showed that 465 Kuwaiti and 691 non-Kuwaiti women got married in 2017, of whom 35 Kuwaiti and 45 non-Kuwaiti women became their husbands' third wives, while nine Kuwaiti and six non-Kuwaiti women got married as fourth wives. — Al-Qabas

Bank robbery suspect arrested

KUWAIT: A Jordanian in his 20s was arrested over an armed robbery at a Gulf Bank branch a few days ago. Police sources said detectives found the gloves the suspect had worn, adding he had stashed a large part of the KD 4,500 he stole in his Filipina girlfriend's apartment in Salmiya. Detectives said the suspect had spent KD 250 from the stolen money. Police said he had discarded the abaya and niqab he had worn during the heist in a dumpster, adding the pistol he had used was a toy. — Al-Anbaa

No green cards eyed for those on US benefits

WASHINGTON: US immigrants who get public benefits like food stamps or housing vouchers could be denied green cards, under a new proposal from President Donald Trump's administration. Trump came to power pledging to make immigration to the United States more difficult, and reduce the number of people allowed to stay in the country. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said Saturday that under the proposed rule change, being a current or previous recipient of certain public aid would be seen as a "heavily weighed negative factor" in considering an application for lawful permanent residency.

"This proposed rule will implement a law passed by Congress intended to promote immigrant self-sufficiency and protect finite resources by ensuring that they are not likely to become burdens on American taxpayers," Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said. Immigrants applying for green cards are already required to prove they will not become a so-called "public charge", with receipt of cash benefits considered.

But the latest rules set out a wide range of non-cash public benefits that could be disqualifying, including food stamps, housing vouchers and the Medicare Part D Low Income Subsidy which helps with prescription costs. DHS estimated the rule would affect just over 382,200 immigrants applying to adjust their status to lawful permanent residents each year. The rule would primarily affect legal immigrants or people seeking to come to the US legally, as undocumented immigrants are already ineligible for most means-tested public benefits. — Agencies

India launches world's biggest health scheme

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday launched the world's biggest health insurance scheme, promising free coverage for half a billion of India's poorest citizens ahead of national elections next year. The bottom 40 percent of India's 1.25 billion people will be covered under the flagship program, dubbed "Modicare", unveiled in the federal budget earlier this year. The 100 million lowest-income families will be provided 500,000 rupees (\$6,900) - a sizeable sum in India

OPEC, Russia rebuff Trump call for boost to oil output

ALGIERS: OPEC's leader Saudi Arabia and its biggest oil-producer ally outside the group, Russia, ruled out yesterday any immediate, additional increase in crude output, effectively rebuffing US President Donald Trump's calls for action to cool the market. "I do not influence prices," Saudi Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih told reporters as OPEC and non-OPEC energy ministers gathered in Algiers for a meeting that ended with no formal recommendation for any additional supply boost.

Benchmark Brent oil reached \$80 a barrel this month, prompting Trump to reiterate on Thursday his demand that the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries lower prices. The price rally mainly stemmed from a decline in oil exports from OPEC member Iran due to fresh US sanctions. "We protect the countries of the Middle East, they would not be safe for very long without us, and yet they continue to push for higher and higher oil prices! We will remember. The OPEC monopoly must get prices down now!" Trump wrote on Twitter. Falih said Saudi Arabia had spare

Lamjarred case reopens Morocco violence against women debate

RABAT: Still adored at home despite three separate rape charges in France, Moroccan pop star Saad Lamjarred's latest arrest has reignited a debate on violence against women in the North African kingdom. Following similar accusations in Oct 2016 and April 2017, Lamjarred was re-arrested last week in southern France on charges he had raped a woman in a Riviera hotel. The superstar's detention comes just days after Morocco was rocked by claims from a teenage girl, Khadija Okkarou, that she had been kidnapped and gang-raped by a group of men from her village.

Lamjarred's detention has sparked a social media campaign seeking to ban his songs from Morocco's airwaves using the hashtags #masaktach ("we will not be silenced") and #LamjarredOut.

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- in annual health insurance to treat serious ailments.

Modi handed medical cards out at the launch in Ranchi, capital of the eastern state of Jharkhand, calling it a historic day for India. "We want to strengthen the hands of the poor and stand shoulder to shoulder with them in pursuit of good health," he posted on Twitter. The scheme is expected to cost the central and 29 state governments \$1.6 billion per year in total. Funding will be increased gradually according to demand.

India's overburdened public health system is plagued by a shortage of facilities and doctors and most people use private clinics and hospitals if they can afford to. But a private consultation can cost 1,000 rupees (\$15), a huge sum for millions living on less than \$2 a day. More than 60 percent of the average family's spending goes on medicines and healthcare, the government estimates. Many of the poorest just go without

capacity to increase oil output but no such move was needed at the moment. "My information is that the markets are adequately supplied. I don't know of any refiner in the world who is looking for oil and is not able to get it," Falih said. However, he signaled Saudi Arabia stood ready to increase supply if Iran's output fell: "Whatever takes place between now and the end of the year in terms of supply changes will be addressed."

The statement from Trump, meanwhile, was not his first criticism of OPEC. Higher gasoline prices for US consumers could create a political headache for Republican Trump before midterm congressional elections in November. Iran, OPEC's third-largest producer, has accused Trump of orchestrating the oil price rally by imposing sanctions on Tehran and accused its regional archrival Saudi Arabia of bowing to US pressure. Yesterday, Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh said Trump's tweet "was the biggest insult to Washington's allies in the Middle East".

Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said no immediate output increase was necessary, although he believed a trade war between China and the United States as well as US sanctions on Iran were creating new challenges for oil markets. "Oil demand will be declining in the fourth quarter of this year and the first quarter of next year. So far, we have decided to stick to our June agreements," Novak said.

Seeking to reverse a downturn in oil prices that

care. A report published this month by The Lancet medical journal found substandard healthcare was responsible for an estimated 1.6 million deaths a year in India - the highest anywhere in the world.

Critics have questioned how the government plans to fund such an enormous safety net, and suggested it was little more than a sop ahead of elections next May. Modi will be seeking a second term on a platform of pro-poor policies and "Modicare" is a key plank of his pitch to low-income Indians. "This is going to be another scam. It will benefit only private insurance companies. The citizen of the country will realize later that it is nothing but an election gimmick," said Sanjay Nirupam from India's main opposition Congress Party. But K K Aggarwal, a cardiologist and former president of the Indian Medical Association, said "politicizing over the scheme should stop".

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ALGIERS: Khalid Al-Falih, Saudi Energy and Oil Minister and Chairman of OPEC's Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMCC), speaks to journalists during the 10th JMCC meeting yesterday. — AFP

began in 2014, OPEC, Russia and other allies decided in late 2016 to reduce supply by some 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd). In June this year, however, after months of cutting by more than their pact had called for, largely due to involuntary reductions from Venezuela and other producers, they agreed to boost output by returning to 100 percent compliance.

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Saad Lamjarred

Russia 'misled' by Israel over jet downing in Syria

MOSCOW: Russia's military yesterday blamed "misleading" information from the Israeli air force for the downing of one of its planes in Syria last week, and denounced the "adventurism" of Israeli pilots. Israel strongly disputed the assertion and vowed it will continue to act against Iranian targets in neighboring Syria. A Syrian air defense missile downed the Russian Ilyushin Il-20 military plane on Sept 17, killing all 15 soldiers aboard and threatening to damage relations between Russia and Israel, which three years ago set up a hotline to avoid accidental clashes in Syria.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared to seek to move past the incident in spite of strong statements from the Russian military.

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