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# Indebted Kuwaitis call on Amir to cancel their loans

## Debtors gather in Irada Square to highlight their plight

### Kuwait against normalization of ties with Israel

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah on Friday affirmed that the stance of Kuwait is clearly and firmly opposed to normalization of relations with Israel. "Kuwait will be the last country to normalize relations with Israel," he said, noting "anybody would be mistaken if they imagine that the group picture taken at the Warsaw conference signals a change in Kuwait's firm stand on this issue".

"Kuwait took part in the Warsaw peace and security conference under a joint invitation from the United States and Poland, with which Kuwait has close relations and has allied itself in some issues. Besides, the issues on the agenda of the conference had to do with the future of security and peace in the Middle East, of which we are a part," Jarallah said in response to speculations on social media.

"It would be illogical that these topics, including the Palestine question and the developments of the Middle East peace process, are discussed in our absence.

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By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Around 400 people gathered in Irada Square opposite the National Assembly yesterday to call upon HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to cancel their loans. The gathering was organized by attorney Yousef Al-Gharabally through his account on Twitter. He said the gathering was held to deliver a message to the Amir to cancel the loans of over 400,000 Kuwaitis. In a previous statement, Executive Director of the supervision sector at the Central Bank Waleed Al-Awadhi, had said there are 429,000 Kuwaiti debtors, who represent 90 percent of the workforce under the age of 50.

Gharabally mentioned different articles of the Kuwait constitution that set the rights of every citizen. "Under article 23 of the constitution, the government has failed to control violations by banks. Both the Central Bank and ministry of commerce have neglected their supervision duties. Also, article 25 speaks about crises and disasters, based on which the late Amir Sheikh Jaber canceled all loans after the Iraqi invasion. Our present situation is considered a crisis, as there are over 400,000 debtors," he noted. "Kuwaiti families are suffering greatly from the loans. The debtors want to send a message neither to the parliament nor the Cabinet, but to HH the Amir to save Kuwaiti families, saying 'you are the Amir of Humanity'," Gharabally added.

Some Kuwaitis are living in poor conditions, according to the attendees. "I only receive KD 260 out of my salary every month - the bank deducts KD 300 for the

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KUWAIT: People sign a banner urging HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to cancel their loans during a gathering in Irada Square opposite the National Assembly yesterday. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shalkh (See Page 3)

### India mourns soldiers amid calls for revenge

NEW DELHI: Thousands of mourners across India attended funerals yesterday for some of the 41 soldiers killed in a suicide bombing in Indian-administered Kashmir as a round-the-clock curfew remained in force in part of the restive region. The paramilitary troops were killed on Thursday as explosives packed in a van ripped through a convoy transporting 2,500 soldiers in the disputed Himalayan region, the deadliest attack in a three-decade-old armed conflict.

TV stations showed coffins wrapped in Indian flags being carried by thousands of people across their hometowns, such as Gaya in the east and Unnao in the

north, after the bodies were flown to New Delhi late Friday where Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid a wreath. India has accused Pakistan of harboring the militants behind the attack, which has sparked nationwide outrage and some public calls for war against the nuclear-armed archrival to avenge the killings.

Kashmir has been split between India and Pakistan since independence from Britain in 1947, with both countries, which have fought three wars, claiming it in its entirety.

Two buses of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in the 78-vehicle convoy were targeted by the bomber on a key highway in the Pulwama district, just outside the main city of Srinagar. The Pakistan-based Islamist group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) claimed responsibility, and the vehicle was driven by a known local militant named Aadil Ahmad, alias Waqas Commando. The powerful blast reduced one of the buses to a heap of mangled debris. Pictures showed bodies and body parts strewn all over the highway.

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JABALPUR, India: Mourners gather to attend the funeral of Indian Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) trooper Ashwini Kumar Kacchi yesterday. — AFP

### Trump border wall 'emergency' faces tough legal hurdles



NEW YORK: People affiliated with the protest group Rise and Resist block the street in front of Trump International Hotel on Friday. — AFP

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's declaration of an emergency Friday to build a border wall immediately drew legal challenges that could easily escalate into a landmark test of the balance of power between the White House and Congress. Legal experts said it was "unprecedented" for a president to use his emergency powers to overcome Congress's refusal to fund his wishes, in this case a barrier on the US-Mexican border to keep out illegal immigrants. They also questioned Trump's categorization of the immigration issue as a national emergency and his tapping military funds for a non-military project.

Hours after the announcement, the Trump administration faced an investigation by the House Judiciary committee and lawsuits from

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### Iranians cry for revenge at guards' funeral

ISFAHAN: Tens of thousands of Iranians called for "revenge" yesterday at the funeral of 27 Revolutionary Guards killed in a suicide attack perpetrated by militants that Tehran accuses Pakistan of supporting. "The government of Pakistan must pay the price of harboring these terrorist groups and this price will undoubtedly be very high," said Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari, referring to jihadist outfit Jaish al-Adl ("Army of Justice"). "The Islamic Republic of Iran will no longer observe the previous reservations and will directly act to

counter such acts," Jafari told mourners gathered at the city of Isfahan's Bozorgmehr Square.

The comments by Jafari, commander of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards, came a day ahead of a planned two-day visit to Pakistan by Mohammed bin Salman, the crown prince of Iran's regional archrival Saudi Arabia. Jafari blamed Pakistan's army and Inter-Services Intelligence agency, saying that "sheltering and silence" amounts to supporting the perpetrators. As he left the podium, people shouted "Commander of Sepah (Farsi for Revolutionary Guards) - Revenge! Revenge!".

The Wednesday bombing targeted a busload of Revolutionary Guards in the volatile southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchistan, which straddles the border with Pakistan.

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ISFAHAN, Iran: Mourners gather around the coffins of slain Revolutionary Guards during their funeral yesterday. — AFP

### India's fastest new train hits cattle hurdle

NEW DELHI: India's first semi-high speed train broke down yesterday after colliding with a cow on the tracks, a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the new passenger service. The Vande Bharat Express, touted as India's fastest train and built under the Modi government's flagship "Make in India" program, made its first journey

Friday from New Delhi to the Hindu holy city of Varanasi. But on its return to the capital the next day a collision with a cow disrupted electricity supply to four carriages and damaged the brake system, according to Indian Railways.

"The train later experienced technical issues and was stranded on the way to Delhi," Indian Railways spokeswoman Smita Vats Sharma told AFP. The train reached the capital "safely" ahead of its first commercial journey on Sunday, she added. Cattle obstructions on roads and rail tracks are common in India, particularly in Uttar Pradesh state where yesterday's collision happened.

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NEW DELHI: In this photo taken on Friday, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi flags off India's first semi-high speed express train Vande Bharat Express at New Delhi Railway Station. — AFP