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Kuwait probes drone sighting, PM promises tougher security

Saudi races to restore oil supply • Iraq denies links to attack • Iran refutes accusations

Activists slam Hashem over anti-expat calls

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Social media activists yesterday criticized MP Safa Al-Hashem for repeating calls that expatriates must pay for the "air they breathe" and for walking on roads. Activists went to Twitter to describe the Kuwaiti lawmaker as "racist" and "very arrogant", but some activists defended her views as a solution to resolve the demographic problem in which expatriates outnumber Kuwaiti citizens.

MP Hashem in press statements yesterday reiterated calls she repeatedly made in the past to impose charges on all services provided to expatriates including for roads, infra-

structure utilities and other public services. She said it was high time for the government to impose charges on expatriates for using roads and re-emphasized the need "to impose taxes on expat remittances", adding that "what is needed is to charge expatriates for the air they breathe" in the country. Hashem said that she is not calling for deporting expatriates who serve the country, but only marginal unskilled laborers who overburden the country's infrastructure.

Mohammad Al-Helow, writing on Twitter, said he thinks Hashem is "very arrogant" while Mahdi Hamad said the lawmaker is "acting like Trump". Ohoud accused Hashem of adopting "racist speech". Salman Al-Nasser however said these demands are not only that of Hashem "but the demands of everyone" who loves his country. MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain said the government has failed to resolve the population problem and demanded that the number of expatriates should be half of the population. Expats make up 70 percent of the population.

KUWAIT/RIYADH: Kuwait is investigating the sighting of a drone over its territory and is coordinating with Saudi Arabia and other countries after Saturday's attacks on Saudi oil plants, the Cabinet said yesterday. "The security leadership has started the necessary investigations over the sighting of a drone over the coastline of Kuwait City and what measures were taken to confront it," the Cabinet said on its Twitter account.

It said HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah directed military and security officers to tighten security at vital installations in the country and to take all necessary measures "to protect Kuwait's security", keeping in mind the well-being of citizens and residents alike. Several MPs had earlier questioned the interior ministry and the government for remaining silent over a report that claimed that a drone breached Kuwait's airspace over the coast and came close to HH the Amir's palace. The lawmakers demanded swift investigation into the issue, just before the government held a special meeting and decided to launch a probe into the issue.

MP Mohammad Hayef asked the interior minister if there were incidents in which drones violated the Kuwaiti airspace and



A satellite image provided by NASA Worldview on Saturday shows fires following drone strikes on two major oil installations owned by the state giant Aramco in eastern Saudi Arabia. — AFP

demanding to know when that happened and for how many times. MP Riyadh Al-Adasani and Osama Al-Shaheen also demanded that the government be transparent and announce details of the reported drone. Some Iraqi media outlets have said Saturday's attack on

Saudi oil facilities came from Iraq. But Baghdad denied this yesterday and vowed to punish anyone using Iraq, where Iran-backed paramilitary groups wield increasing power, as a launch pad for attacks in the region.

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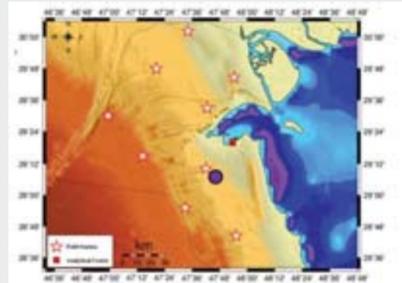
News in brief

Deaths referred to prosecution

KUWAIT: Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah has referred two cases concerning the deaths of a male child at a dentistry center and two children at a hospital to the public prosecution. Investigations into the circumstances of the child's death at the dentistry center have been concluded, a health ministry statement said, adding that death certificates of the two children had been issued, noting they died "due to miscarriage". The minister has given orders to strip doctors suspected of slacking of their work permits, banning them from practicing in the country's private and public sectors. Moreover, Sheikh Basel instructed the interior ministry to bar doctors linked to these cases from travelling. — KUNA

Tremor recorded in Kuwait

KUWAIT: A tremor of 3.1-magnitude was recorded north of Kabd and south of Jahra, Kuwait National Seismic Network said yesterday. The network's head Dr Abdullah Al-Enezi said the tremor was recorded at 06:34:43 am local time at a depth of six kilometers. Residents of Jahra felt the tremor, he indicated. — KUNA



US warship docks in Lebanon

BEIRUT: The United States navy destroyer USS Ramage docked briefly in Lebanon, the US embassy in Beirut said yesterday, amid heightened regional tensions. The Arleigh-Burke-class vessel, capable of intercepting ballistic missiles, stopped Saturday for a "one-day goodwill visit on the sidelines of its participation in ongoing efforts to ensure freedom of navigation and free-flow commerce in the eastern Mediterranean", a statement from the US embassy said. US Ambassador to Lebanon Elizabeth Richard and Vice Admiral James Malloy hosted "an on-board reception for US and Lebanese officials", it added. "This remarkable US ship, docked in this remarkable Lebanese city speaks volumes about the partnership between the US and Lebanese militaries," Richard said. — AFP

Iraq signs deal to plug into Gulf power grid

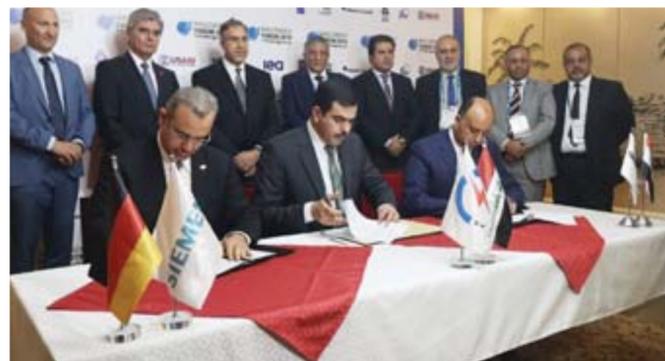
BAGHDAD: Iraq yesterday signed a landmark deal with the Gulf Cooperation Council for a transmission line that would import 500 megawatts of electricity to its overstretched grid by 2020. The 300-km transmission line would run from Kuwait to Iraq's southern port of Faw and be financed by the GCC, according to the electricity ministry. It is the second deal the ministry signed in as many days to boost electricity supply in Iraq, where generation falls about 9 gigawatts below estimated demand of

some 24 GW.

Electricity Minister Luay Al-Khatteeb signed the agreement with the GCC Interconnection Authority (GCC IA) head Ahmad Ibrahim on the sidelines of an energy conference in Baghdad. "This is the first deal of its kind with the GCC," Khatteeb told journalists, adding that Iraq was also in separate talks with neighbors Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Turkey to import electricity. The line from the GCC could be developed further to contribute as much as 2 GW to the grid, he said. The GCC IA said building the line would cost some \$220 million, and a separate agreement would need to be signed on the actual imports.

"This is the first type of linkage outside of the GCC. This is part of our vision," Ibrahim told AFP.

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BAGHDAD: (From left) CEO of Siemens Power Generation Karim Amin, Director General of general state company for electricity production north region Waleed Khaled Hassan, and Orascom CEO Osama Bishai sign a contract in the Iraqi capital yesterday. — zAFP

Idlib chaos forces displaced into strange dwellings

BIRAT ARMANAZ, Syria: Inside a rusty, abandoned bus in northwestern Syria, Umm Joumaa washes a silver tray and glass teacups, light pouring into her makeshift kitchen through broken windows. Around her, towels, bed sheets, clothes and plastic bags hang from wires that stretch across the smashed-out vehicle where the 44-year-old widow lives with her six children. "We used to live in Al-Shariaa", a village in the northwestern province of Hama, she said, a brown veil wrapped

around her head.

"My home was hit once, and then hit a second time, while we were living there," she added, saying this forced her to flee to olive groves in the neighboring province of Idlib. Now, she lives in the village of Birat Armanaz in western Idlib, in a bus riddled with holes, its interior cleared of all furnishings. "We cleaned the bus and I settled here with my children," said Umm Joumaa, whose husband was killed seven months ago by artillery fire from the Syrian regime.

Her set-up is rudimentary: Foam mattresses and thick blankets are arranged at the rear, while a kettle and basic utensils are stored inside a plastic crate. Water containers and firewood are propped against the mangled front bumper. More than 400,000 Syrians have been displaced by violence in the jihadist-run

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KUWAIT: Stacks of confiscated counterfeit T-shirts are seen.



BIRAT ARMANAZ, Syria: The children of Umm Joumaa, a Syrian displaced from Hama, pose for a picture inside an abandoned bus in this village in Idlib on Sept 4, 2019. — AFP

10,000 clothing items with fake logos seized

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The ministry of commerce and industry's trade control and consumer protection department raided a warehouse in Hawally used to store thousands of T-shirts and sportswear on which logos of international brands were being printed, which is deemed as commercial fraud under local laws. A statement issued by the ministry explained that on monitoring the sale of counterfeit goods in the local market, investigations led to the warehouse, where 7,300 T-shirts with logos of international brands printed on them and 2,083 others ready for printing were stored.

The ministry last week gave merchants selling counterfeit goods three weeks' notice to remove such products off the market and take advantage of the deadline set by the ministry to avoid legal violations and expropriation of goods. The move is part of the ministry's extensive campaign to eliminate fake goods in Kuwait.