

Kuwait's privatization efforts advance

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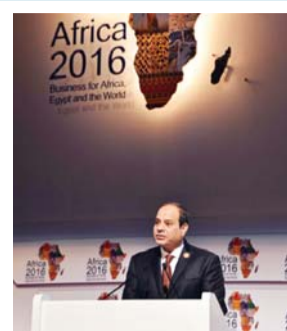
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NEWCOMER ALI AL-KHAMEES WINS PARLIAMENTARY SEAT

AMIR CONGRATULATES CITIZENS ON SUCCESS OF BY-ELECTIONS



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BORDER ALERT OVER FEARS OF 'DIRTY BOMB'

KUWAIT: Kuwait General Administration of Customs (KGAC) announced tightening inspection measures at all border centers after warnings that deadly radioactive material went missing in Basra province in southern Iraq. A radiography device using iridium-192 was reportedly stolen from an oil service company in November.

The material could be combined with traditional explosives to produce a dirty bomb, KGAC Director-General Khaled Al-Saif told reporters on Friday. "The state of Kuwait and other neighbors of Iraq have been notified of the ongoing investigations into the whereabouts of the material in order to take the necessary precautions," Saif pointed out.

"Therefore, customs centers at all border crossings, particularly Abdaly crossing between Kuwait and Iraq, have been put on alert. Six portable devices for detecting radioactive materials have been mounted to monitor vehicles and individuals crossing into Kuwait," he revealed. The KGAC emergency plan is being implemented in collaboration with the ministries of interior and health and the National Guard, Saif added. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Ali Al-Khamees celebrates at his election headquarters after he won the third constituency by-elections yesterday. (Inset) Khamees is congratulated by National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Independent newcomer Ali Abdullah Al-Khamees yesterday became a member of parliament after winning the only seat in the by-election that became vacant with the death of late MP Nabil Al-Fadhli. Khamees won 7,281 votes, beating his nearest rival Abdullah Ahmad Al-Kandari, who received 4,836 votes. Osama Al-Tahus, who was a member of parliament before the constitutional court annulled the result and declared Fadhli as winner, was in third place with 3,647 votes.

Hisham Al-Baghli, who was a member of the 2012 National Assembly which was dissolved by court, came in fourth place with 2,686 votes. Ahmad Al-Fadhli, a son of the late MP Fadhli, came in fifth place with 1,314 votes. Thirty-four candidates,

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including two women, contested the election for the single seat. The two women came in the 26th and 27th places, receiving around 20 votes each. Khamees, the brother of well-known journalist Madhi Al-Khamees, will take the oath as the 50th member of parliament when the Assembly holds its next session on March 1. Turnout was reported to be at around 30 percent after more than 24,000 of the 81,000 eligible voters cast their votes.

Late yesterday, HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated citizens on the success of the by-elections in the third constituency, lauding the great role of judiciary, interior ministry and ministry of information in this regard. The Amir also lauded the great cooperation shown by voters, which contributed to championing the electoral process in a manner that reflected the homeland's civil and democratic image.

GOVT SUBMITS SUBSIDY STUDY TO MPs OVERSEAS TREATMENT CUT DECISION 'FROZEN'

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The government yesterday submitted to the National Assembly a study on economic reforms including proposals to cut subsidies on petrol, electricity and water, but no decision was taken as more meetings have been set for further details. Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh said yesterday's meeting between MPs and ministers was comprehensive and focused on measures that would reform the path of the national economy.

The government's paper consists of six main issues and the study prepared by foreign consultants on subsidies, especially on electricity, the minister said. Saleh said that it was agreed to hold another meeting on Tuesday with a team from the ministry of

electricity and water to provide answers to queries by lawmakers. Another meeting will be held on Feb 28 in which the government will submit its comprehensive short-term measures for economic reforms, the minister said. Saleh said that he sensed understanding on part of MPs for the need to forge ahead with economic reforms, adding that reforms have a cost and if they are delayed, the cost will be much higher.

MP Abdullah Al-Tameemi however said that the government's presentation yesterday was very confusing, adding there can be no reforms amid rife corruption and weak government administration. He also said that there were some mistakes in statistics provided by the government on electricity consumption.

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BRUSSELS: British Prime Minister David Cameron addresses a press conference at end of an European Union (EU) summit late Friday. — AFP

UK SETS JUNE DATE FOR EU REFERENDUM

LONDON: Britain will vote on its membership of the European Union on June 23, Prime Minister David Cameron said yesterday as he began the daunting challenge of persuading the country to stay. He announced the date for the referendum after a two-hour cabinet meeting where he briefed ministers on the deal he struck in Brussels on Friday, that he said will give Britain "special status" in the EU. "We are approaching one of the biggest decisions this country will face in our lifetimes," Cameron said, addressing the nation outside his 10 Downing Street residence.

"The choice goes to the kind of country we want to be," he said, warning that proponents of leaving were offering "a risk at a time of uncertainty, a leap in the dark". Britain would be "safer, stronger and better off" in the 28-member bloc, he said, calling the concessions negotiated with other EU leaders "the best of both worlds". The referendum campaign will be bitterly contested in a country with a long tradition of euroscepticism and a hostile rightwing press, with opinion polls showing Britons are almost evenly divided.

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LITERARY GIANT UMBERTO ECO DIES AGED 84

ROME: Italy was in mourning yesterday following the death of Umberto Eco, the literary and intellectual phenomenon who wrote "The Name of the Rose" and was cherished as one of his country's favorite sons. Eco, who had been suffering from cancer, passed away at his Milan home late on Friday, his family told Italian media. He was 84. Italian Prime Minister Matteo led tributes to the philosopher and semiotics lecturer who once famously described writing best-selling, heavyweight novels as "something I do at the weekends".

"He was an extraordinary example of European intellectualism, uniting a unique intelligence of the past with an inexhaustible capacity to anticipate the future," Renzi was quoted as saying by the Italian news agency Ansa.



Umberto Eco

Friends remembered a gentle man who enjoyed whisky and wordplay in equal measure and had a nice line in self-deprecating humor: In recent years he had taken to joking after receiving prizes: "From now on, it's the Nobel or nothing." The Nobel never came but Eco was revered around the world, largely thanks to "The Name of the Rose", the blockbuster novel

that became a hit film starring Sean Connery in the then-unlikely role of a medieval monk with the detective brilliance of Sherlock Holmes.

Flags flew at half-mast in Alessandria, the town in the northern region of Piedmont where Eco was born on Jan 5, 1932. He leaves a wife, Renate Ramge Eco, a German art teacher whom he married in 1962 and with whom he had a son and a daughter.

The young Umberto had a Roman Catholic upbringing, and was educated at one of the Salesian institution's schools. His father was keen for him to read law, but instead he took up medieval philosophy and literature at the University of Turin. After taking his doctorate in 1954, Eco started working for the recently established national broadcasting network RAI preparing cultural programs and gaining a lasting interest in mass communication.

In the late 1950s, he started to develop ideas on semiotics - the study of signs, communicated either as spoken, written, scientific or artistic language. He was appointed professor of semiotics at Bologna University in the 1970s and was to spend 40 years teaching at the ancient academic institution. His move from academia to international fame came in 1980 with the success of "The Name of the Rose", which has since been translated into 43 languages and sold more than ten million copies. — Agencies (See Page 38)



BERLIN: Italian director Gianfranco Rosi reacts after receiving the Golden Bear for Best Film for 'Fuocoammare' (Fire at Sea) during the awards ceremony of the 66th Berlinale yesterday. — AFP

REFUGEE DOCU 'FIRE AT SEA' WINS BERLIN FEST TOP PRIZE

BERLIN: "Fire at Sea", a harrowing documentary about Europe's refugee crisis, clinched the Berlin film festival's Golden Bear top prize yesterday from a jury led by Meryl Streep. Italian director Gianfranco Rosi's picture offers an unflinching look at life on the Mediterranean island of Lampedusa, where thousands of migrants have arrived trying to reach the European Union over the last two decades and thousands more have died trying. The Eritrean-born Rosi dedicated the prize to the people of Lampedusa "who open their hearts to other peoples".

"I hope to bring awareness," he said as

he accepted the golden trophy from Streep. "It is not acceptable that people die crossing the sea trying to escape from tragedies." France's Mia Hansen-Love won the Silver Bear for best director for her drama "Things to Come" starring Isabelle Huppert. Huppert wowed audiences with her dignified, soulful turn in "Things to Come" as a philosophy teacher whose marriage falls apart just as her elderly mother dies.

Tunisia's Majd Mastoura won the Silver Bear for best actor for his role in "Hedi", a love story set in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, which also won best debut feature.

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IRAN SEEKS \$45BN IN FOREIGN INVESTMENT

TEHRAN: Iran's economy minister said his country is seeking \$45 billion in foreign investment following the implementation of a landmark nuclear deal with world powers last month. Ali Tayebnia told reporters yesterday that Iran expects \$15 billion in direct foreign investment alone in the next Iranian calendar year, which begins March 20. The historic agreement brought about the lifting of international sanctions last month after the UN certified that Iran has met all its commitments to curb its nuclear activities under last summer's accord. Iran expects an economic breakthrough after the lifting of



Ali Tayebnia

sanctions, which has allowed it to access overseas assets and sell crude oil more freely.

Iran already has access to more than \$100 billion worth of frozen overseas assets and Iranian banks earlier this month were reconnected to SWIFT, a Belgian-based cooperative that handles wire transfers between financial institutions.

Tayebnia said Iran's strategic location, political stability and population of 80 million has made the energy-rich Persian state into an attractive place for foreign investment. "All these factors have led to a capacity to attract more than \$45 billion in foreign financial

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