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KERRY, LAVROV REACH PROVISIONAL DEAL AMID RAGING VIOLENCE



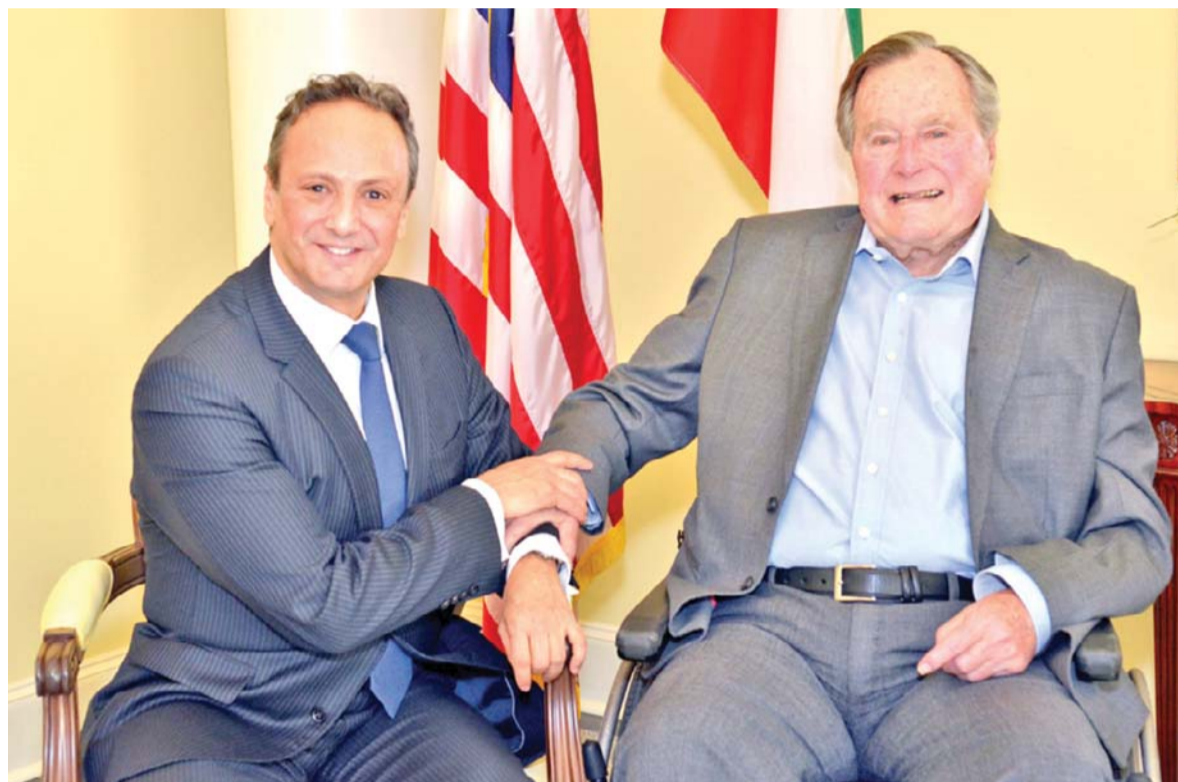
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KUWAITI ENVOY MEETS BUSH SR

WASHINGTON: Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met former US president George H W Bush in College Station, Texas, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Kuwait's liberation from the Iraqi invasion.

Sheikh Salem said in a statement to KUNA on Saturday that he conveyed to the former president on Thursday the greetings and best wishes of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. "While celebrating the liberation day, Kuwait's leadership, government and people remember the bold and high-principled stance adopted by Bush the Elder to stand by Kuwait against the brutal Iraqi invasion," he stressed.

The great US leader was able to win the support of the then Congress over the US-led military coalition to liberate Kuwait, Sheikh Salem said, affirming that Kuwait will remain grateful for the US' help. Sheikh Salem quoted Bush as saying that he made the right decision in support of the legitimate struggle of the Kuwaiti people against the brutal invasion. Sheikh Salem and Bush later joined a symposium on the liberation of Kuwait, hosted by the Bush School of Government and Public Service of Texas A and M University. The Kuwaiti ambassador and former US ambassador to Kuwait Ryan Clark Crocker were among the key speakers at the symposium. — KUNA



COLLEGE STATION, Texas: Kuwait Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets former US president George H W Bush. — KUNA

SAYYIDA ZEINAB, Syria: A string of suicide bombings near a shrine outside Syria's capital and in Homs claimed by jihadists killed at least 142 people yesterday, as Washington and Moscow worked to secure a ceasefire. US Secretary of State John Kerry said a provisional deal had been reached on the terms of a truce in Syria's brutal five-year conflict, only for the bloodshed to intensify on the ground.

Near Damascus, the attacks, including a car bombing, ripped through the area of the shrine of Sayyida Zeinab and killed 83 people, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. And two car bombs killed at least 59 people and wounded dozens in the pro-regime district of Al-Zahraa in the central city of Homs, said the Britain-based monitoring group. The Islamic State jihadist group said it was behind the day's carnage. State television footage from Homs showed emergency workers carrying a charred body on a stretcher past devastated shops and mangled cars and minibuses.

Al-Zahraa - whose residents are mostly from the same Alawite sect of Shia Islam as Syria's ruling clan - has been regularly targeted. IS said in an online statement that two jihadists drove explosive-laden cars into crowds of local residents. Two more of its suicide bombers carried out the Sayyida Zeinab bombings, the extremist group said. State television said a car bombing and two suicide attacks hit the area, killing 30 and wounding dozens in a preliminary toll, whereas the Observatory gave a death toll of 68 in four attacks. An AFP reporter said the blasts struck about 400 m from the shrine. At least 60 shops were damaged and cars

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FINANCE PANEL APPROVES KEY AMENDMENTS TO TENDERS LAW

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee yesterday introduced key amendments to the tenders law which require forming technical committees for the purchase of arms for the army, police and national guard. Head of the committee MP Faisal Al-Shayeh said the amendment was proposed by the Audit Bureau to regulate the purchase of arms and military equipment. The Cabinet will issue the necessary decisions to form such committees and will determine the mechanism of their operations, Shayeh said.

Other amendments to the law obliges the Central Tenders Committee, which awards state projects, to accept the decision of the petitions committee whose decisions currently are consultative, he said. Under

the new amendments, which still need to be approved by the Assembly, priority in awarding state projects is given to companies listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange. No new projects will be awarded to companies that are having problems with other projects underway until they solve the problems and complete the projects, Shayeh said. MP Ahmad Al-Azemi said the committee discussed his proposal to award projects worth KD 20 million and more to listed companies only. The tenders law is one of the most important legislations that governs billions of dinars in state projects every year.

Rapporteur of the Assembly's priorities committee MP Ahmad Lari said yesterday the panel discussed with the acting electricity and water minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah the ministry's implementation of projects.

He said under the 2015/2016 plan, the ministry has 38 projects worth KD 368 million, of which KD 218 million has been spent so far.

Meanwhile, National Assembly Speaker Marzouk Al-Ghanem yesterday congratulated the newly-elected MP Ali Al-Khamees, who won the by-election seat to replace late MP Nabil Al-Fadhli. The liberal National Democratic Forum however strongly criticized what it called sectarian practices that marred the by-election and accused Islamist movements of all sects of spoiling the election. The NDF said in a statement that raising Sunni-Shiite sectarian divisions has become an effective means of winning Assembly elections. The forum said that the single-vote system has proven once more it is the best environment for sectarian-motivated elections in the country.

News

in brief

Missing radioactive material found in Iraq

BAGHDAD: Radioactive material that went missing in Iraq has been found dumped near a petrol station in the southern town of Zubair, officials said yesterday, ending speculation it could be acquired by Islamic State and used as a weapon. The officials told Reuters the material, stored in a protective case the size of a laptop computer, was undamaged and there were no concerns about radiation. It was not immediately clear how the device, owned by Swiss inspections group SGS, ended up in Zubair, around 15 km southwest of Basra. The material, which uses gamma rays to test flaws in materials used for oil and gas pipelines in a process called industrial gamma radiography, is owned by Istanbul-based SGS Turkey, according to the document and officials.

Bahrain adopts steps to counter Iran 'interference'

DUBAI: Bahrain said yesterday it has adopted measures including travel curbs and monitoring of money transfers to counter Iran's "interference" in the Sunni-ruled kingdom shaken by Shiite-led unrest since 2011. Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Al-Khalifa spoke of the "dangers of Iran's interference in the internal security" of Bahrain during a meeting with clerics, MPs and newspaper chiefs, said the official BNA news agency. "We have taken a series of measures to confront the dangers of terrorism," Sheikh Rashid said. These include forming a committee to monitor money transfers and donations to combat the "financing of terrorism" and imposing travel restrictions on citizens, especially aged between 14 and 18, to "unsafe countries", he said.

UK LAUNCHES E-VISA SYSTEM FOR KUWAITIS

KUWAIT: The UK embassy in Kuwait has announced a new electronic visa waiver (EVW) system for Kuwaiti passport holders to travel to the UK for business and tourism. The EVW will allow Kuwaiti passport holders to travel to the UK for a visit of up to six months by filling in an online form at least 48 hours before they travel to the UK, the British Embassy in Kuwait said in a press release yesterday.

The scheme removes the need to give biometrics, attend a visa application center or hand in passports in advance of travel. Passengers will be asked to upload a copy of their passport's biographic data page so that details can be checked for accuracy and security purposes prior to travel. To cover the costs of the new system, a fee of 15 (around KD 7) will be introduced early next year, it said.

UK Ambassador to Kuwait Mathew Lodge said the new visa system is a sign of deep and permanent relations between the UK and Kuwait, according to the press release. He added that in light of the historic ties between both countries, the UK is committed to introducing an electronic visa waiver system to facilitate the travel of Kuwaiti nationals to the UK. The ambassador hoped that when the scheme is rolled out early next year, many Kuwaitis would seize the opportunity to visit the UK, the press release noted.

"I am incredibly pleased to announce that the electronic visa waiver system has today been fully implemented in Kuwait. I hope this will mean an increase in the numbers of Kuwaitis visiting the UK and thereby further strengthening the people to people links between our two countries," said Tobias Ellwood, Minister for Middle East and North Africa.

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