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# Ban hails action against N Korea workers, envoy

Former UN chief 'honored' to meet Amir



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah holds talks with visiting former United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon yesterday. — KUNA

By Ben Garcia and Agencies

KUWAIT: Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon yesterday commended HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for reducing the number of North Korean workers in the country and expelling the North Korean ambassador to Kuwait. Addressing members of the diplomatic community at the Saud Al-Nasser Diplomatic Institute in Kuwait City, Ban said the moves demonstrated Kuwait's support and commitment to UN Security Council resolutions.

"I know that by 2019, there will be no North Korean workers in Kuwait," he said. "Kuwait has already reduced the number of North Korean laborers to 1,000. Kuwait's action is a clear demonstration of its leadership and commitment, as Kuwait is poised to serve as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council from next year for the next two years," Ban added in his speech entitled "Leadership of Kuwait in the Changing World".

According to former UN chief, Kuwait is not the only country that has expelled the North Korean envoy, confirming Mexico, Peru, Spain and Italy also did so.

"It is very important to show our firm commitment that until North Korea behaves and stop its provocations threatening peace and stability in the international community, and until North Korea realizes it is defying and fighting the international order, we should be determined

in implementing sanctions," said Ban, who is a former foreign minister of South Korea. He said North Korea's continued defiant behavior and provocations are unacceptable and are very dangerous to the international community.

"North Korea has admitted to have tested a hydrogen bomb and numerous ballistic missiles, which is against UN Security Council resolutions. We all see the defiant attitude and provocations from their side, and this is very dangerous for us all," he stressed.

Ban also spoke about the advent of the fourth phase of the industrial revolution, where artificial intelligence (AI) could be more powerful than humans. "What does it mean to us, as humans? Are we going to continue to fight and compete with AI? AI can read minds and people's emotions, and this is a very serious issue. Many scientists have already become concerned on this subject," he said.

Ban referred to Google's AlphaGo, making the case that machines are now smarter than man - when it comes to games of strategy. AlphaGo made its name last year when it defeated high-profile Go player Lee Sedol 4-1, but now it has beaten the world's best player of Go, a hugely complex ancient strategy game. "I think in less than 10 years, we will have serious issues about AI and we need to use the benefit of technology to face AI, which potentially threatens the very existence of 7.5 billion humans," he said.

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## MP: New health fees should not hurt poor expats

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Islamist opposition MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei said yesterday that the government must make sure that the new hike in health fees imposed on expatriates will not hurt poor patients. The lawmaker said he is not against imposing medical fees on expatriates in the country, but he wants the government to ensure that poor patients are not hurt by establishing a fund to help them or introducing affordable health insurance.

The ministry of health began implementing at the start of October a decision to hike the cost of medical services for expatriates at public hospitals and clinics. Some of the charges have been raised several-fold, like hospital stays or hiring a private room. The new fees do not apply to Kuwaiti citizens, who continue to enjoy completely free medical services.

Former MP and ex-minister Maasouma Al-Mubarak meanwhile criticized the health ministry for imposing the hikes in medical charges and then issuing repeated decisions exempting certain categories. Mubarak, who herself was a health minister, said that after hiking the medical charges, the minister issued decisions exempting domestic workers and later spouses of Kuwaiti women and their children. She said that if this policy continues, the decision will lose its value and will only apply to a small section of people. Accordingly, she added, the issue should have been carefully studied before implementing it.

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## Khalfan: Giving up World Cup could end crisis

DUBAI: A top Emirati security official says the Qatar diplomatic crisis can end if Doha gives up hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, the first time someone from the four Arab nations boycotting the country directly linked the tournament to resolving the months-long dispute. Dubai security Lt Gen Dhahi Khalfan, known for being outspoken on Twitter, later yesterday wrote his "personal analysis" of the situation had been misunderstood.

But his remarks came as lobbying firms backed by the four nations opposing Qatar in the diplomatic dispute increasingly target the upcoming football competition in their criticism. The tournament has not come up in the

demands previously made by the boycotting countries, though losing the World Cup would represent a bitter defeat for the tiny peninsular nation that's pushed itself onto the world stage with its bid and its Al-Jazeera satellite news network. Qatari officials did not respond to requests for comment yesterday. However, the 2022 tournament's head in Qatar told AP on Friday the boycott poses "no risk" to the competition being held.

Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates all cut diplomatic ties and began a boycott of Qatar on June 5, in part over allegations that Doha supports extremists and has overly warm ties to Iran. Qatar has long denied funding extremists and restored full diplomatic ties to Iran amid the dispute. Doha shares a massive offshore natural gas field with Iran that makes its citizens incredibly wealthy. On Sunday night, Khalfan targeted the FIFA tournament in his tweets. "If the World Cup goes out of Qatar, the crisis in Qatar will end because the crisis was made to break it," he wrote.

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## From robocops to flying taxis, Dubai a pioneer

DUBAI: From flying taxis to Batman-style surveillance motorcycles, Dubai's GITEX expo this week showcased innovations that were symbols of the city-state's ambitions to be a metropolis of the future. Known for its futuristic skyline and artificial islands, Gulf emirate Dubai has carved out a place alongside cities like Singapore as a hub for innovative ideas. At this year's 37th Gulf Information Technology Exhibition (GITEX), which runs until Thursday, city authorities were keen to show off their remain on the cutting edge.

The undisputed star of the expo, which has more than 4,000 companies from 71

countries participating, was Dubai's flying taxi project. Videos of the craft's first "concept" flight last month - albeit without passengers - generated widespread buzz on social media. Authorities at the Dubai Road and Transport Authority (RTA) anticipate five years of testing to put in place safety procedures, infrastructure and legislation governing the system. "The air taxi is the star of our innovations, and I am confident that we will see the day it becomes reality," said Khaled Abdul Rahman Al-Awadhi, director of automated fare collection at the RTA.

Officials are keenly aware that even residents of ultra-modern Dubai may not be ready to step into a futuristic unmanned craft guided via a mobile phone application. They are already working to explain planned safety measures for the craft, which will cost 200,000 to 250,000 euros (\$235,000 to \$295,000) each. The two-seater drone is supported by 18 rotors and equipped with an emergency parachute to

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DUBAI: A drone taxi is seen at the Gitex 2017 exhibition at the Dubai World Trade Center on Sunday. — AFP

## Rohingya boat sinks, 14 dead

SHAH PORIR DWIP, Bangladesh: At least 14 Rohingya refugees, most of them children, drowned and scores more were missing yesterday after their overloaded boat capsized in the latest tragedy to strike those fleeing violence in Myanmar. Authorities in Bangladesh said the boat was carrying between 60 and 100 people when it overturned and sank in rough seas on Sunday night. The bodies of 11 children, two women and a man were washed up on Shah Porir Dwip island in Bangladesh and border guards pulled 13 survivors from the sea, but the fate of the others remains unknown.

Alif Jukhar, a Rohingya refugee who has long lived in Bangladesh, lost nine relatives

in the disaster including his mother and father. "Yesterday I spoke to my parents on the phone and they told me they they would arrive in Shah Porir Dwip tomorrow," he told AFP as he used his bare hands to bury their bodies. Shortly afterwards, overcome with grief, he collapsed screaming in the middle of the cemetery.

More than half a million Rohingya have left Myanmar since militant raids on police posts on August 25 prompted a brutal military backlash against the Muslim minority that the United Nations has said could amount to ethnic cleansing. Around 150 have drowned trying to make the journey in small and rickety fishing boats that coastguards say are woefully inadequate for the rough seas.

Survivor Sayed Hossain wept as he watched the body of his two-year-old son being taken away to the local cemetery for burial.

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A Rohingya refugee reacts while holding his dead son after crossing the Naf river from Myanmar into Bangladesh in Whaikhyang yesterday. — AFP

### News in brief

#### Tolls to develop roads

KUWAIT: Assistant Undersecretary of the Roads Department at the Public Works Ministry Ahmad Al-Hassan said yesterday that a study on imposing fees for using some roads aims at developing the road traffic system. In an interview with Al-Rai daily, Hassan noted alternative roads will be available free of charge. On the new roads projects, Hassan confirmed that the plan includes opening a number of roads and completing the west part of Jamal Abdullnasser Road, which will be delivered during the first quarter of next year. He pointed out that 26 road projects will be implemented in the near future.

#### 17 students suffocate

KUWAIT: Dozens of students at a Jahra high school for girls suffered from suffocation due to playing with a fire extinguisher yesterday, according to the Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFS). The number of suffocated students reached 17, and all of them were treated onsite, while three were taken to the hospital, KFS said in a press statement.

#### Municipal Council dissolved

KUWAIT: The Cabinet has dissolved the Municipal Council and formed an interim caretaker body to assume its duties, a minister announced yesterday. In remarks to KUNA after the Cabinet's weekly session, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri cited "lack of progress and mass resignations on the part of municipal officials" as reasons for the dissolution of the municipal council. Bearing public interest in mind, Jabri, who is also Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, added that "an interim caretaker committee comprised of various state bodies will be taking over municipal responsibilities".