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Lawmaker to demand special debate on freedoms

Zain, Ericsson create roadmap to 5G and IoT

BARCELONA: Zain Group and Ericsson have announced they have signed a memorandum of understanding to jointly develop and test selected 5G and Internet of Things (IoT) cases. The MoU, signed during Mobile World Congress 2018 in Barcelona, demonstrates the commitment of both companies to bringing next-generation connectivity and its accompanying benefits to the Middle East and Africa.

Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO said: "Zain is committed to bringing the latest technology and cutting-edge services to its customers. 5G will open the door for new applications that will transform consumer behavior and industries." Rafiah Ibrahim, Head of Ericsson Middle East and Africa, said: "We believe next generation technology and its applications will provide tangible benefits



BARCELONA: Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi and Head of Ericsson MEA Rafiah Ibrahim sign the agreement.

in the real world." 5G technology will enable massive connectivity and open up new markets to IoT. (See Page 19)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Lawmakers and activists yesterday expressed outrage and strongly lashed out at government agencies after a stateless man set himself on fire apparently over being poverty-stricken, although the interior ministry alleged he has a criminal record. The bedoon man attempted self-immolation outside Jahra court in a bid to commit suicide, the interior ministry said in a statement. The ministry said security men rescued the man and took him to Jahra Hospital for treatment. The man, born in 1982, did not die, but he sustained serious burns.

No details about his personal life were provided, but activists said on social media he was complaining of being poor. But the interior ministry said that after investigating the man's case, it was found that he has an active criminal record with 21 crimes including a threat to kill, robbery, drinking alcohol and assault. The ministry said investigations are still ongoing to understand the motives behind the suicide attempt.

MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari called on the Assembly's human rights panel to investigate the case and summon all officials concerned with the issue of bedoons in the country, including the prime minister himself. Around 120,000 stateless people, known locally as bedoons, live in Kuwait and complain of discrimination and being deprived of basic human rights like citizenship, jobs, education, health and others.

Bedoons claim the right to Kuwaiti citizenship, but the

government insists that a majority of them have no right to Kuwaiti nationality because either they or their forefathers arrived in Kuwait and destroyed their identification documents in order to obtain Kuwaiti citizenship and enjoy generous benefits. MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei criticized the interior ministry for publishing details of the victim's criminal record, saying the ministry should be ashamed of itself for doing this. He said the ministry should be blamed for oppressing those people and failing to find a dignified solution for their plight.

Director of the Kuwait Society for Human Rights Mohammad Al-Humaidi said as long as the government does not stop the "atrocities" of the central agency for the bedoons, these incidents will continue and could become worse. "What do you expect from a group of people who are deprived of identity, health and education, which are the simplest of basic rights," he asked.

Ahmad Al-Dayeen, a senior official of the Progressive Movement, said regardless of any other details, any person burning himself reveals their ordeal. He said what happened reveals the deep agony and the suffering of "Kuwaiti bedoons", adding the suicide attempt was not the first and will not be the last.

Meanwhile, MP Omar Al-Tabtabaei said yesterday he will file a request to hold a special session to discuss the retreat of public freedoms in Kuwait in recent years, especially freedom of expression. The lawmaker warned the government against trying to prevent the session from being held.

Stranded Qatari camels heading home via Kuwait

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Hundreds of Qatari camels stranded in Saudi Arabia are being trucked to Shuwaikh Port daily to be shipped to Qatar. "Most camel owners in the smaller Gulf countries send their camels to graze in Saudi Arabia. After the political crisis erupted between the two countries, Saudi Arabia didn't allow us to retrieve our camels and refused to send them directly to Qatar. Only about a month ago, their government allowed to release them through Kuwait," Qatari camel owner Rashid Al-Marri told Kuwait Times at Shuwaikh Port yesterday.

For Marri, it is an expensive process to transport the camels back home. "I have seven trucks here at the port carrying 150 adult and 40 young camels. I had to pay

2,000 Saudi riyals (KD 160) for each camel exiting the Saudi borders. The shipping charges for one camel from Kuwait to Qatar costs KD 70, but (Qatari Emir) Sheikh Tamim decided to send ships for free for all Qataris to transport their camels to Qatar," he said.

Thousands of camels have reached the port. "The camels reached Kuwait a month ago. We are here at the port since yesterday and hopefully the ship will carry the camels tonight. I don't know about the exact number of Qatari camels in Saudi Arabia, but I assume it's around 10,000. Some of them have already left and others will leave in the next few days," said Marri.

It's a tough journey for the camels, especially for baby camels that are still suckling. One of the camels has also died at the port. "Qatari ships come to the port daily to ferry the camels. Depending on the size of the ships, they can carry 200 to 400 camels. It's very bad for the camels' health to stay in the trucks for such a long period, as they can't move," he said. Marri was feeling upset as the ship's arrival was delayed yesterday. "I wonder why the Qatari committee in charge of transporting our camels gave me an appointment to come to the port if the ship hasn't arrived and I can't leave. I hope we will be able to leave soon," he fretted.



KUWAIT: Qatari camel owner Rashid Al-Marri stands next to a truck carrying camels at Shuwaikh Port yesterday.— Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

MBS says reforms aimed at 'cancer' of corruption; Hariri meets king

RIYADH/BEIRUT: Saudi Arabia's crown prince says the anti-corruption drive launched late last year is the "shock therapy" his kingdom needs to root out widespread graft. "You have a body that has cancer everywhere, the cancer of corruption. You need to have chemo, the shock of chemo, or the cancer will eat the body," Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman told the Washington Post in an interview published Tuesday night. "The kingdom couldn't meet budget targets without halting this looting," he said.

In the latest move for change, a dramatic shake-up announced in royal decrees late Monday saw top brass, including the chief of staff and heads of the ground forces and air defense, replaced and a broad defense reform plan approved. The government bureaucracy is also to be overhauled. The crown prince said the shake-up announced by his father, King Salman, was aimed at installing "high energy" people who could achieve modernization targets. "We want to work with believers," the crown prince told the US paper.

Authorities rounded up dozens of princes, top officials and businessmen in November on Prince Mohammed's orders, with many confined and interrogated at Riyadh's glitzy Ritz-Carlton Hotel. "The corrupted princes were a minority, but the bad actors got more attention. It harmed the energy of the royal family," he said.



RIYADH: King Salman bin Abdulaziz (right) receives Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri at the royal palace in the Saudi capital yesterday.— AFP

Prince Mohammed said in the interview he maintains support from the royal family despite internal divisions that have occasionally spilled into public, such as when 11 princes were arrested last month for allegedly protesting against the government cutting payment of their utility bills. His ambitious reform agenda, which is popular with much of Saudi Arabia's burgeoning youth population, faces resistance from some of the old guard more comfortable with the kingdom's traditions of incremental change and rule by consensus.

Meanwhile, Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri met Saudi King Salman yesterday, in his first visit back to the country since his resignation in the kingdom sparked a crisis between the longtime allies. Hariri announced on

November 4 that he was stepping down in a televised address from Riyadh, only to rescind it the following month after France intervened. The shock resignation had stirred tensions between Riyadh and Beirut, amid suspicions he had been placed under house arrest.

Saudi Arabia's state news agency SPA said Hariri and King Salman discussed "bilateral relations and recent developments in Lebanon". It published pictures of the two leaders locked in a firm handshake, smiling and drinking coffee. The meeting was attended by Saudi Minister of Interior Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Nayef and Foreign Minister Adel Jubeir, amongst others, SPA reported. It did not say if Prince Mohammed was present.

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Egyptians check the damage following a train crash in Egypt's northern Beheira province yesterday.— AFP

Egypt train collision kills at least 12

CAIRO: Two trains collided yesterday in northern Egypt killing at least 12 people and injuring dozens of others, the health ministry said, the latest in a string of deadly rail accidents in the country. Twelve people died and 39 were injured in the crash between a freight train and a passenger train at Kom Hamada in Beheira province, health ministry spokesman Khaled Mehaged told state television, updating an earlier casualty toll.

Footage aired by the state television showed at least two carriages had derailed in a rural stretch of land. Civilians and medics were seen removing injured passengers and carrying them to ambulances. Health ministry official Alaa Othman told state television that all casualties had been removed from the scene of the accident. The provincial governor Nadia Abdou told AFP that the crash happened at around 1045 GMT and that its cause was "unknown".

She pointed out that the ministry of transport and the national railways were in charge of the rail facilities in the region. The state prosecutor announced that a team of investigators had been dispatched to probe the accident.— AFP