



5 Discoveries prove Failaka was inhabited in Abbasid period



22 Bollywood stars test taboos with hip-hop blockbuster



24 'Heavy clashes' as US-backed forces in final push against IS



28 Manchester City thrash Chelsea 6-0 to go top of Premier League



Kuwait sets new world record for longest flag

More than 4,000 students carry Kuwaiti flag measuring 2019 meters



KUWAIT: Students carry a Kuwaiti flag, the longest in the world, during an event to set a world record yesterday. — KUNA

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Kuwait registered a world record yesterday for the longest flag, after over 4,000 students paraded with a 2019-meter-long Kuwaiti flag along a road that was blocked to traffic. The feat was recognized by the Guinness World Records. The event coincided with the national celebrations and the 13th anniversary of HHH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's ascen-

sion to power. The celebration was held under the patronage of Education Minister Hamed Al-Azmi.

Various state bodies participated in the event, including the defense ministry, interior ministry, fire department, Municipality, ministry of public works, information ministry and other institutions. The celebration also included a parade by mounted police officers on horses and camels and vehicles of the

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Organizers hold aloft a certificate by Guinness World Records endorsing the record. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 2)

Taxes in Kuwait 'only possible' with proper laws

DUBAI: In the event a tax law is introduced in Kuwait, it would be "no different" than other legislation, requiring it to pass through parliament as stipulated by the constitution, the finance minister said yesterday. "A prospective tax law in Kuwait has been a recurring topic of discussion among our partners in the region," Nayef Al-Hajraf told

KUNA in an interview on the sidelines of an Arab financial forum. He said the constitutional law in Kuwait should be respected, meaning that taxes will only be levied under legislation that "follows proper procedure".

The minister added that any discussion over taxes in Kuwait is merely conjecture at this point, emphasizing that proper laws need to be enacted in the first place. On the types of taxes currently under discussion, he mentioned a value-added tax (VAT) agreement between Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, which has become the subject of heated debate in the National Assembly.

In response to a question on an increase in wages and more monetary bonuses, Hajraf said

the situation is assessed on an "individual basis", citing efforts to remedy any irregularities in the payment of salaries, "which could take a while to materialize". The spate of financial reforms seen in Kuwait aims to ensure steady economic development, he explained, pinpointing more job opportunities and anti-corruption efforts as among the measures taken.

Hajraf also touched on Kuwait's newly-unveiled budget for the fiscal year 2019-2020, which sees government spending slashed by 26 percent as part of a tighter expenditure policy. The minister highlighted the forum as a valuable opportunity for Kuwait to gain some insight into the experiences of some of its neighbors in dealing with financial reforms. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf and Central Bank Governor Mohammad Al-Hashel attend an Arab financial forum yesterday. — KUNA

News in brief

Highest daily garbage collection

KUWAIT: Municipality Director Ahmed Al-Manfouhi yesterday said Kuwait removes 4,000 tons of garbage daily, the highest daily garbage collection rate in the world. Responding to an inquiry about cleaning services in various areas, Manfouhi said the total value of current cleaning contracts has surpassed KD 285 million. — A Saleh

Turkey slams treatment of Uighurs

ANKARA: Turkey on Saturday condemned China's treatment of its Muslim ethnic Uighur people. "The systematic assimilation policy of Chinese authorities towards Uighur Turks is a great embarrassment for humanity," Turkish foreign ministry spokesman Hami Aksoy said in a statement. "It is no longer a secret that more than one million Uighur Turks - who are exposed to arbitrary arrests - are subjected to torture and political brainwashing in concentration centers and prisons," he said. Aksoy also said Turkey had learned of the "tragic" death in custody Saturday of Uighur poet and musician Abdurehim Heyit. — AFP

Bouteflika to seek fifth term

LGIERS: Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika is to seek a fifth term in April elections, state media announced yesterday, despite health issues that have kept him largely out of the public eye for years. The 81-year-old head of state, in power since 1999, declared his widely expected candidacy in a message to the nation. The president said he would set up an "inclusive national conference" to address "political, economic and social" issues and "propose an enrichment of the constitution", Algeria's official APS news agency reported. — AFP

Muslim lawmakers' criticism of Israel pressures US Dems

WASHINGTON: The support for a boycott of Israel by the first two Muslim women in the US Congress has opened a breach in the Democratic Party and threatens to create a fissure in the ironclad US-Israeli alliance. Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib made their debut in the House of Representatives in January openly declaring their support for the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement, or BDS.

The movement, launched more than a decade ago and modeled on the 1960s movement to pressure South Africa over apartheid, calls for people and groups to sever economic, cultural and academic ties to Israel,

and to support sanctions against the Jewish state. But for Israel partisans - including many Democrats and Republicans in Congress - BDS smacks of anti-Semitism and poses a threat to Israel.

Tlaib, 42, has Palestinian roots and represents a district of suburban Detroit, Michigan that is home to thousands of Muslims. She argues that BDS can draw a focus on "issues like the racism and the international human rights violations by Israel right now". Omar, 37, is the daughter of Somali refugees who was elected to represent a Minneapolis, Minnesota district with a large Somali population. She accuses Israel of discrimination against Palestinians akin to apartheid, but denies that she is anti-Semitic.

Her remarks in January to Yahoo News however sparked anger among the large pro-Israel contingent in Congress, the powerful, largely Democratic US Jewish community, and Israel itself, where BDS is seen as a national threat.

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WASHINGTON: US Representatives Ilhan Omar (left) and Rashida Tlaib are seen at the US Capitol. — AFP

Kagame steps down as Sisi takes AU helm

ADDIS ABABA: Rwandan President Paul Kagame, who led an active, reformist tenure as African Union chair, yesterday passed the baton to Egypt, seen as more likely to focus on security issues than expanding the body's powers. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi officially took over the rotating post of ceremonial head of the AU at the start of a two-day summit in Addis Ababa. The meeting highlighted the "links between the Mediterranean and Lake Victoria", as a metaphor for sub-Saharan Africa.

"Egypt has an interest in Africa, they

want to strengthen their position on the African continent and they don't want to be seen as a country only focused on the Arab world," said Liesl Louw-Vaudran, an analyst at the Institute for Security Studies. Kagame's leadership of the AU focused on institutional and administrative reforms. Sisi however is expected to focus more on security, peacekeeping and post-war reconstruction, issues closely tied to the AU's 2019 theme of "Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons".

"The road is still long" in terms of reaching the AU's goal of "silencing the guns" by 2020, Sisi told delegates yesterday. He announced he would hold a "forum for peace and development" in the town of Aswan, southern Egypt, in 2019. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Saturday that

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ADDIS ABABA: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (right) speaks with outgoing African Union Chairman and Rwandan President Paul Kagame after Sisi was elected the new chairman during the 32nd AU summit yesterday. — AFP