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## Just solution for bedoons this summer on Amir's directives

### Ghanem: National identity, rights won't be undermined • Three bodies working on 'roadmap'

By B Izzak and A Saleh

KUWAIT: In a surprising announcement, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said yesterday that under directions from HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a comprehensive and just solution will be struck this summer to end the decades-old problem of thousands of stateless people or bedoons in a way that wouldn't "inhibit their national identity rights".

Insisting that the solution will not undermine Kuwait's national identity and will not be at the cost of Kuwaiti citizenship, Ghanem told reporters that the Assembly will be called to approve legislation either early next term starting in October or could be invited to an emergency session during the summer recess.

Ghanem declined to provide details about the solution, but said it was initiated with "clear directives by the Amir to resolve this

issue" and that it will be "comprehensive, just and durable". The speaker reiterated that political consultations involving members of parliament have been held for some time about this issue and talks are still ongoing.

Kuwait has recently come under criticism from international rights groups over what they call as "mistreatment" of bedoons after a young stateless man committed suicide two weeks ago after claiming that the central bedoons' agency refused to renew his security ID, and as a result, he lost his job. Bedoons or their forefathers have been living in the country for decades and have in recent years lost many of their basic rights in a government clampdown.

The government says that as many as 34,000 of the estimated 120,000 bedoons qualify for consideration for Kuwaiti citizenship, but the rest belong to other countries, and has put pressure on them to reveal their actual identity. Bedoons however insist that

they have full right to Kuwaiti citizenship and have been appealing and protesting to get it. Ghanem also insisted that the issue of Kuwaiti citizenship will not be involved in political bargaining, an indication that the planned solution may not stipulate naturalization of bedoons, or at least naturalization will be greatly limited.

Informed sources said the bedoon issue is being dealt with by three entities - the interior ministry, the central agency for bedoons and the National Assembly bureau - that are preparing a roadmap and implementation procedures to resolve the matter before the end of the year. They have agreed to hold continuous meetings to reach practical solutions to resolve this issue, which is distorting Kuwait's humanitarian image.

The sources said the roadmap will have two basic aspects. Those who have any official documents that indicate their presence in Kuwait before the 1965 census will be nat-

uralized unless they have security restrictions or another nationality. Permanent residency will be granted to these people, and others included in the 1970 and 1975 censuses and beyond, provided they admit to having other nationalities.

The sources said the bedoons who do not confess to having other nationalities will be confronted with their official documents and old papers kept by security authorities proving that they entered Kuwait with these, and this is proof of their nationalities. Sources expected 20,000 of those included in the 1965 census to be naturalized out of a total of 34,000, but some of them left the country a long time ago, while others have criminal restrictions, in addition to some who obtained other nationalities. The sources said priority will be for bedoons in the military, degree holders and postgraduates, old-time workers in the oil sector and Kuwaiti women's children.



Marzouq Al-Ghanem

## Britain weighing response; Saudis release Iran ship

DUBAI/LONDON: Britain was weighing its next moves in the Gulf tanker crisis yesterday, with few good options apparent as a recording emerged showing that the Iranian military defied a British warship when it boarded and seized a ship three days ago. Little clue has been given by Britain on how it plans to respond after Iranian Revolutionary Guards rappelled from helicopters and seized the Stena Impero in the Strait of Hormuz on Friday in apparent retaliation for the British capture of an Iranian tanker two weeks earlier.

The British government is expected to announce its next steps in a speech to parliament today. But experts on the region say there are few obvious steps London can take at a time when the United States has already imposed the maximum possible economic sanctions,

banning all Iranian oil exports worldwide. "We rant and rave and we shout at the ambassador and we hope it all goes away," said Tim Ripley, a British defense expert who writes about the Gulf for Jane's Defence Weekly. "I don't see at this point in time us being able to offer a concession that can resolve the crisis. Providing security and escort for future ships is a different matter."

A day after calling the Iranian action a "hostile act", top British officials kept comparatively quiet yesterday, making clear that they had yet to settle on a response. "We are going to be looking at a series of options," junior defense minister Tobias Ellwood told Sky News. "We will be speaking with our colleagues, our international allies, to see what can actually be done. Our first and most important responsibility is to make sure we get a solution to the issue to do with the current ship, make sure other British-flagged ships are safe to operate in these waters and then look at the wider picture."

The Iranian capture of the ship in the global oil trade's most important waterway was the latest escalation in three months of spiralling confrontation with the West that began when new, tighter US sanctions took

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This image grab taken from a video on Saturday shows Iranian Revolutionary Guards preparing to board the British-flagged tanker Stena Impero in the Strait of Hormuz. — AFP

## Halal sees growth in Russia economy

SHCHYOLKOVO, Russia: The manager of a sausage factory near Moscow, Arslan Gizatullin says his halal business has been feeling the pinch - not so much from Russia's sluggish economy but competitors vying for a piece of a growing Islamic market. Ever more producers are catering for the domestic Muslim community, which accounts for around 15 percent of Russia's population and is set to expand, and in some cases are also setting their sights on export.

"In the last few years in general, halal's become something of a trend in Russia," said Gizatullin, who has been at the Halal-Ash

plant in the city of Shchyolkovo for seven years. The factory was among the first of its kind when it opened two decades ago, recreating Soviet-style sausages in accordance with Islamic law, among other products. "Now I go to shop displays and I see sausage from one, two, three producers... I see that competition is growing," he adds from the factory, which employs 35 people and puts out up to 1.5 tonnes of produce a day.

The halal economy, worth more than \$2.1 trillion globally, is far from limited to meat. Cosmetics firms and services such as halal hotels have received licenses from the body that oversees Islamic production in Russia, while state-owned Sberbank is looking into creating an Islamic finance entity. The Centre for Halal Standardization and Certification, under the authority of the Russian Council of

Muftis, has approved more than 200 companies since it opened in 2007. The center says that number is growing by five to seven companies a year - from a standing start at the collapse of the anti-religious Soviet Union.

Rushan Abbyasov, the deputy head of the Council of Muftis, told AFP the Russian agriculture ministry was supporting the center in its efforts to increase exports to the Arab world and Muslim-majority ex-Soviet republics. "We've looked at international experience in the Arab world, in Malaysia, and we've developed our Russian (halal certification) standard following that model," Abbyasov said in an interview at Moscow's central mosque. "We're doing it in a way that matches international halal standards as well as the laws of the Russian Federation."

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MOSCOW: Rushan Abbyasov, the deputy head of the Council of Muftis, is seen at Moscow's central mosque on May 23, 2019. — AFP

## Israel boasts of 'killing Iranians'; will host Iraqi, Saudi journalists

JERUSALEM: An Israeli minister boasted yesterday that his country was the only one that "has been killing Iranians", after tensions between Britain and Iran rose in the Gulf. Regional Cooperation Minister Tzachi Hanegbi's comments to public radio were a reference to Israeli strikes in neighboring Syria against Iranian and Hezbollah military targets. But they came after Iran seized a British-flagged tanker on Friday, adding to tensions between Washington and Tehran linked to a 2015 nuclear deal.

Hanegbi accused Iran, Israel's main enemy, of seeking to create "chaos" and "harm freedom of navigation".

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## Philippines goes wild for 'force at 40' Pacquiao

MANILA: Fans in the Philippines roared their approval and rose to their feet yesterday, imitating the punches of Manny Pacquiao, as they declared that their idol was still a boxing force at the age of 40 with his stunning victory over American Keith Thurman. Filipinos from street vendors to lawmakers went wild, pumping their fists in the air during the first round of the welterweight fight as Pacquiao floored the WBA champion 10 years his junior, and went on to win by split decision.

Despite Thurman's threat to send Pacquiao into retirement in the Las Vegas showdown, fans of the eight-division world champion were thrilled to see him eat his words as they packed into gyms, military camps and movie theatres all over the country to watch the fight. "It was wow, wow, wow! He is amazing. He showed himself a true Filipino, a hero," 51-year-old Raquel Sanders told AFP after watching the bout in a Manila sports complex.

The excitement also lit up the online world with



MANILA: Filipino fans watch Philippines' Manny Pacquiao fight against Keith Thurman from the US at a covered basketball court yesterday. — AFP (See Page 28)

fans in the social media-obsessed nation using the hashtag #StillA40rce. "Senator Pacquiao proved that age is just a number and (he) still can make another legend," said Twitter user @rinrin\_irene. However, tragedy dampened the mood in Manila's Marikina suburb where a 68-year-old fan collapsed as he was watching the bout in a gym. He was rushed to the hospital but declared dead on arrival, police said.

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## Pakistanis irked by new baggage wrapping policy

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's civil aviation watchdog has ordered all air travellers to have their checked baggage shrink-wrapped, drawing scorn and criticism from frequent flyers and environmentalists. Shahrugh Nusrat, director general of Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), said yesterday that wrapping baggage was now "mandatory", and it was being done for "safety" purposes. Passengers would have to pay 50 rupees (about \$0.31) per bag for the wrapping, Nusrat said in a statement. "For this purpose, new plastic-wrapping machines are being installed on an urgent basis," he added.

Pakistan's frequent flyers cast scorn on the edict, suggesting it had been introduced to enrich an unnamed company tasked with doing the wrapping. "What is the logic for this requirement ...if this isn't legalized corruption," one angry traveller tweeted. Asif Nawaz Shah, another social media critic, called the new policy a "corrupt profit-making endeavor". — AFP