



5 'We're going to war, bro': 82nd Airborne deploys to Mideast



9 Philippines prepares to evacuate workers in Mideast over tensions



11 Samsung unveils AI-powered digital avatar; Hyundai to make flying cars



28 Kuwait beat Al-Arabi to lift Crown Prince Cup



At least 56 mourners killed in stampede at Soleimani funeral

Zarif denied US visa • US Iraq pullout letter a 'mistake' • Pompeo calls Kuwait FM



KERMAN, Iran: Iranian mourners gather around a vehicle carrying the coffin of slain top general Qasem Soleimani during the final stage of funeral processions in his hometown yesterday. — AFP

KERMAN/BAGHDAD: At least 56 people were killed in a stampede as tens of thousands of mourners packed streets for the funeral of a slain Iranian military commander in his hometown yesterday, forcing his burial to be delayed by several hours, state media said. General Qasem Soleimani's burial began in the early evening in the southeastern Iranian city of Kerman, four days after his killing in a US drone strike in Iraq that plunged the region into a new crisis and raised fears of broader conflict.

"A few minutes ago his body was transferred to the martyrs section of Kerman cemetery," the semi-official news agency ISNA reported, adding that Soleimani's interment had begun. Soleimani, who commanded the elite Quds Force, was responsible for building up Tehran's network of proxy armies across the Middle East. He was a pivotal figure in orchestrating Iran's long-standing campaign to drive US forces out of Iraq.

A senior Iranian official said Tehran was considering several scenarios to avenge his death. Other senior figures have said the Islamic Republic would match the scale of the killing when it responds, but that it would choose the time and place. Yesterday's stampede broke out amid the crush of mourners, killing 56 people, state television said, raising the toll from 50 previously. More than 210 people were

injured, an emergency services official told the semi-official Fars news agency.

"Today because of the heavy congestion of the crowd unfortunately a number of our fellow citizens who were mourning were injured and a number were killed," emergency medical services chief Pirhossein Kolivand told state television. The streets of Kerman overflowed with mourners, while others took refuge on hillsides around the city, where the general was to be buried at the martyrs' cemetery.

"The enemy killed him unjustly," the Revolutionary Guards' top commander, Major General Hossein Salami said, adding that the process of "expelling the United States from the region has begun". "Our will is firm. We also tell our enemies that we will take revenge, and that if they (strike again) we will set fire to what they love," he told the sea of black-clad mourners. Schoolgirls joined chants of "Death to Trump" from the crowd.

Soleimani was a national hero to many Iranians, whether supporters of the clerical leadership or not. Ali Shamkhani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, said 13 "revenge scenarios" were being considered, Fars news agency reported. Even the weakest option would prove "a historic nightmare for the Americans", he said.

Continued on Page 24

Assembly delays grilling of Aseeri for two weeks

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly yesterday agreed to delay the debate of the grilling against Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Ghadeer Al-Aseeri for two weeks after the minister requested the postponement. Islamist MP Adel Al-Damkhi, who filed the grilling, accused the minister of undermining lawmakers and their voters by ridiculing their statements.

The minister had already demanded an explanation over a part of the grilling, saying it was not clear. MPs have accused the minister, who is in the Cabinet for the first time, of tweeting support for anti-government protests in Bahrain in 2011. The grilling is expected to be debated at the next session on Jan 21.

During the session, HHI the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah demanded that statements

made in the last session by opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri should be deleted. The lawmaker insisted that he only criticized the ruling family like other Kuwaitis, adding that the Assembly should not allow anyone, including ruling family members, to undermine the rights of the Kuwaiti people. The Assembly however agreed to remove the statements from its minutes.

MPs later accepted a government proposal to allocate two hours every month to debate issues concerning citizens despite the rejection of some lawmakers, who argued that this is not a proper way of resolving problems. The Assembly also approved a letter by MP Riyadh Al-Adasani calling on the government to refer the case of a former MP, who acknowledged receiving money from the government, to the Anti-Corruption Authority for investigation.

Adasani said the former MP had publicly admitted receiving the money and saying that other lawmakers had also taken it, and accordingly should be referred to the authority. MP Saleh Ashour said referring the case to the Anti-Corruption Authority would amount to interfering in the case, which is being investigated by the public prosecution, but Adasani denied it had been referred to the prosecution.

Continued on Page 24

Putin in surprise visit to Assad as Mideast boils

DAMASCUS: Russian President Vladimir Putin met Syria's Bashar Al-Assad yesterday during an unprecedented visit to Damascus as the prospect of war between Iran and the United States loomed over the region. In one of the highest-profile assassinations in the troubled Middle East's recent history, Washington killed top Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani Friday, triggering vows of bloody revenge from Tehran and its allies.

On his first visit to the capital since the start of the Syrian conflict nearly nine years ago, Putin greeted the Russian forces stationed there on the occasion of the Orthodox Christmas. Russia's 2015 military intervention was decisive in saving Assad's regime and Putin hailed the latest advances made by Syrian government forces during his visit.

"In his conversation with Assad, Putin noted that we can now say with confidence that a huge distance has been travelled towards restoring Syrian statehood and the country's territorial integrity," Russian news agencies



DAMASCUS: A handout picture released yesterday shows Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad and Russian President Vladimir Putin visiting the historical Umayyad Mosque in the Old City of the Syrian capital. — AFP

quoted Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov as saying. Government and allied forces barely controlled a fifth of the country before Moscow stepped in but have now clawed back most of the territory lost at the beginning of

Continued on Page 24

India suffers hottest decade on record

NEW DELHI: The past decade was India's hottest on record, with extreme heat directly killing about 350 people last year, the national meteorological department's chief said yesterday. India has faced some of the fastest-rising threats from climate change, environmentalists say, with increases in blistering heat, powerful cyclones, drought and flooding. Between 2010 and 2019, temperatures were 0.36 degrees Celsius above the 1981-2010 average, making it the hottest decade

since records began in 1901, according to the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD).

Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, IMD's director general of meteorology, said it was difficult to pinpoint a definite cause for any single incident of record-breaking temperatures, but global warming and climate change were definitely "factors to consider". "The reasons are climate change, global warming but I cannot say specifically because there is no such study to attribute that 'X' occurred due to 'Y,'" Mohapatra told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Such "attribution science", which can help link specific extreme events to climate change, is on the rise

Continued on Page 24

RASALSALMIYA KIDS GYM

FROM 3 - 15 YEARS

2020 NEW YEAR Offer

NOW OPEN

ONE MONTH MEMBERSHIP

49 KD

~~70 KD~~

CLUB GOALS

- ★ Enjoy Productive & Amusing Time.
- ★ Personalized Kids Training.
- ★ Make New Friends.
- ★ Improve Fitness & Physical Strength.
- ★ Proper Nutrition Plan for Children.
- ★ Enhance Memory & Increase Concentration.

DESIGN & MADE IN ITALY

25711178 - 25711179 @NINJAWARRIORQ8 @RASALSALMIYA_KIDS