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Panel approves KD 3,000 grant law for pensioners

Experts, oil executives deny drillings link to earthquakes

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A joint committee comprising of the National Assembly's financial and economic affairs and legal and legislative panels approved on Sunday a draft law allowing the government to offer a grant of KD 3,000 to every retired Kuwaiti, the head of the financial committee said. MP Ahmad Al-Hamad said that only one member objected to the bill, which also stipulates to increase the salaries of pensioners by KD 30 in August this year and by KD 20 every year from next year.

The cost of the grant is estimated at KD 590 million and will benefit close to 200,000 Kuwaiti pensioners. The bill also allows the government to withdraw KD 500 million a year from the budget in favor of the Public Institution for Public Security, the agency that manages the fund for pensioners.

The government says the amount is needed to cover what is called the actuarial deficit faced by the agency. Hamad said the joint committee will send its report to the Assembly, which is scheduled to hold an emergency session on Tuesday called by Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.

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12th grade students sit for final exams



KUWAIT: 12th grade students are screened as they arrive for their final exams for the 2021-2022 scholastic year on Sunday. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh (More pics on Page 2)

Kuwait seeks UN help to deport 450 long-term patients

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The health and foreign ministries are moving to involve the UN in deporting around 450 expat patients who refuse to leave government hospitals, with some remaining hospitalized for more than three years.

The health ministry has placed the issue of expat patients who remain in public hospitals although their treatment is complete on its priorities list, and asked the foreign ministry to take practical steps to deport them, after being frustrated due to a lack of action by their embassies in Kuwait and a lack of response for demands to take them, especially after some of their family members abandoned them, while others do not have relatives in Kuwait.

Official sources said such patients number around 450 of various nationalities and are a burden on health ministry services, as they occupy beds without a need that can be used by other patients waiting to be admitted.

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News in brief

Norway to label settlement products

OSLO: The Zionist entity on Saturday condemned Norway's decision to label products from Zionist settlements with their place of origin. The measure mainly concerns imports of wine, olive oil, fruits and vegetables, and will apply to products from the occupied West Bank "including East Jerusalem" and occupied areas of the Golan Heights, Oslo said. — AFP (See Page 4)

Limited US gun proposals

WASHINGTON: A bipartisan group of US senators on Sunday announced measures aimed at curbing rampant gun violence plaguing the country, but the limited proposals fall far short of changes called for by the president. The proposals include tougher background checks for gun buyers under 21 and increasing resources for states to keep weapons out of the hands of people who are dangerous to others or themselves. — AFP (See Page 6)

Sonia Gandhi hospitalized with COVID

NEW DELHI: Sonia Gandhi, president of India's main opposition Congress party, has been admitted to hospital with "COVID-related issues," a party spokesman said Sunday. Gandhi was admitted to the Ganga Ram Hospital in the capital New Delhi, Congress general secretary Randeep Surjewala said in a tweet. The 75-year-old had tested positive for COVID-19 on June 2. — AFP

Lanka announces weekly fuel quotas

COLOMBO: Crisis-hit Sri Lanka announced weekly fuel quotas for motorists on Sunday, as an acute shortage worsened and longer queues formed outside the few pumping stations still operating. Energy minister Kanchana Wijesekera said the state-run Ceylon Petroleum Corporation was struggling to finance oil imports, while consumption had shot up due to shortages of electricity and liquefied petroleum gas. — AFP (See Page 8)

Total takes \$2bn foothold in Qatar gas expansion

DOHA: Qatar on Sunday named France's TotalEnergies as its first foreign partner to expand the world's largest natural gas field and eventually help ease Europe's energy fears. The French energy major will spend an estimated \$2 billion for a 6.25-percent share of the giant North Field East project that will help Qatar increase its liquefied natural gas (LNG) production by more than 60 percent by 2027, TotalEnergies chief executive Patrick Pouyannic told AFP.

Qatar's Energy Minister Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi called the joint venture "a marriage more than an engagement" as it will last until 2054. Other foreign firms will also take stakes in North Field with state-owned QatarEnergy (QE) but none will be bigger than TotalEnergies, said Kaabi, who did not reveal names. Industry sources say ExxonMobil, Shell and ConocoPhillips are all in line to take part in the giant \$28-billion expansion, that Qatar had originally wanted to finance alone.

"We have finished the selection process and we have signed the agreements," Kaabi said, adding that names would be announced in the "near future". With European nations scrambling to find alternatives to Russian oil and gas, LNG from North Field is expected to start coming on line in 2026. Pouyannic said the company's biggest deal with Qatar would help make up for the company's withdrawal from Russia in the wake of the Ukraine invasion. — AFP (See Page 8)



SUAKIN, Sudan: Sheep are rescued after the ship Badr 1, crammed with thousands of animals, sank in this Red Sea port on June 12, 2022. — AFP

Thousands of sheep drown as Sudan ship sinks

KHARTOUM: An overladen ship crammed with thousands of sheep sank Sunday in Sudan's Red Sea port of Suakin drowning most animals on board but with all crew surviving, port officials said. The live-

stock vessel was exporting the animals from Sudan to Saudi Arabia when it sank after several thousand more animals were loaded on board than it was meant to carry. "The ship, Badr 1, sank during the early hours of Sunday morning," a senior Sudanese port official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "It was carrying 15,800 sheep, which was beyond its load limits."

The official said the ship was supposed to carry only 9,000 sheep. Another official, who said that all crew were rescued, raised concerns over the economic and environmental impact of the accident.

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DOHA: Qatar's Minister of State for Energy Affairs and President and CEO of QatarEnergy Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi (R) and French energy group TotalEnergies CEO Patrick Pouyannic attend a signing ceremony at the QatarEnergy headquarters on June 12, 2022. — AFP

Saudi offers \$10m to prevent oil spill disaster off Yemen

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia on Sunday pledged \$10 million to help prevent an ageing Yemeni oil tanker from unleashing a potentially catastrophic spill in the Red Sea bordering its waters. The decaying 45-year-old oil tanker known as the FSO Safer, long used as a floating storage platform and now abandoned off the rebel-held Yemeni port of Hodeida, has not been serviced since Yemen was plunged into civil war.

A Saudi-led military coalition intervened in Yemen in 2015 after Houthi rebels seized the capital Sanaa the previous year. The tanker, which lies some 150 km south of the border with Saudi Arabia, is in "imminent" danger of breaking up, the United Nations warned last month. The Safer contains four times the amount of oil that was spilled by the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster, one of the world's worst ecological catastrophes, according to the UN.

Last week environmental campaign group Greenpeace urged the Arab League to drum up funds for an operation that would transfer its 1.1 million barrels of oil to a different vessel. A UN pledging conference last month fell far short of its \$80 million target, bringing in just \$33 million. Environmentalists warn the cost of the operation is a pittance compared to the estimated \$20 billion it would cost to clean up a spill.

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