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## HEALTH INSURANCE, FEES, JOBS ON MP AGENDA



KUNA photo  
His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace on Monday, winners of the best student project company of 2017. High school students won the prize for their project that transforms food waste into organic fertilizer. HH the Amir lauded the students on their impressive feat, wishing them the best of luck in future endeavors. Acting Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah attended the meeting.

### Military may win right to vote

By **Abubakar A. Ibrahim**  
Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 25: The Parliament will hold regular sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday to discuss a number of issues on the agenda, including further discussions on HH the Amir's inaugural speech of the second session of the fifteenth legislative term.

The Parliament is expected to begin the session by ratifying the orders, questions and letters and looking into the reports of the parliamentary committees on draft laws or bills and amendments.

One of them includes granting the military men the right to vote in the elections and pension and special bonuses for retired military personnel.

The agenda also includes a number of requests for discussion, including the housing issue, retirement, domestic workers, social assistance, unemployment and financial and economic reform and (the Abdullah Bay).

The agenda also contains requests for the formation of Commissions of Inquiry to look into violations in the appointment of prosecutors to ensure justice is done, burning (of the yacht) and the visa traders.

The sessions are also expected to look into the reports of

the parliamentary Commissions of Inquiry on the report of the Anti-Corruption Department, the death of former MP Falah Al-Sawagh, prison inmates, drug abuse, dead fish, violations of the Ministry of Information, the Capital Markets Authority, the disappearance of containers and the reasons behind the resignation of the Kuwait Airways chairman.

The agenda also includes reports submitted by various parliamentary committees on draft laws or bills, the most important of which is to prevent the payment of interest on loans of Public Institute for Social Security and health insurance of foreigners, fees and financial costs, a review of the gasoline prices and amendment to the Code of Civil and Commercial Proceedings.

Meanwhile, the Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee meeting which was scheduled to be held Monday was postponed due to lack of quorum. The committee was scheduled to look into the letter submitted by MP Adel Al-Damkhi concerning the imprisonment of MPs Waleed Al-Tabtabaei and Jama'an Al-Harbash for storming the Parliament. Those present for the meeting included MPs Riyadh Al-Adani, Omar Al-Tabtabaei, members of the committee Al-Humaidi Al-Subaie, Muhammad Al-Dalal and Muhammad Hayef.

Continued on Page 8

## Pope 'urges' dialogue for two-state solution

Pontiff laments winds of war

VATICAN CITY, Dec 25, (Agencies): Pope Francis used his Christmas message on Monday to call for a negotiated two-state solution to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, after US President Donald Trump stoked regional tensions with his recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Francis spoke of the Middle East conflict and other world flashpoints in his "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city and the world) address, four days after more than 120 countries backed a UN resolution urging the United States to reverse its decision

### Sunday, Monday declared holidays

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 25, (KUNA): The Cabinet announced Monday that next Sunday and Monday — Dec 31, 2017 and Jan 1, 2018 — would be official holidays.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh told KUNA that ministries as well as state institutes and authorities would be off due to New Year celebrations.

During its weekly meeting, the Cabinet decided that work would resume on Jan 2, 2018, affirmed Anas Al-Saleh.



Pope Francis (background center), delivers the Urbi et Orbi (Latin for 'to the city and to the world') Christmas day blessing from the main balcony of St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on Dec 25. (AP)

on Jerusalem.

"Let us pray that the will to resume dialogue may prevail between the parties and that a negotiated solution can finally be reached, one that would allow the peaceful coexistence of two states within mutually agreed and internationally recognised borders," he said, referring to the Israelis and Palestinians.

"We see Jesus in the children of the Middle East who continue to suffer because of growing tensions between Israelis and Palestinians," he said in his address, delivered from the balcony of St Peter's Basilica to tens of thousands of people.

It was the second time that the pope has spoken out publicly about Jerusalem since Trump's decision on Dec 6. On that day, Francis called for the city's "status quo" to be respected, lest new tensions in the Middle East further inflame world conflicts.

Palestinians want East Jerusalem as the capital of their future independent state, whereas Israel has declared the whole city to be its "united and eternal" capital.

Francis, leader of the world's 1.2 billion Roman Catholics, urged people to see the defenceless baby Jesus in the children who suffer the most from war, migration and natural calamities caused by man today.

"Today, as the winds of war are blowing in our world ... Christmas invites us to focus on the sign of the child and to recognise him in the faces of little children, especially those for whom, like Jesus, 'there is no place in the inn,'" he said.

Francis, celebrating the fifth Christmas of his pontificate, said he had seen Jesus in the children he met during his recent trip to Myanmar and Bangladesh, and he called for adequate protection of the dignity of minority groups in that region.

Continued on Page 8

### Guatemala follows shift to Jerusalem

GUATEMALA CITY, Dec 25, (Agencies): Guatemala is to move its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, President Jimmy Morales has announced, following US President Donald Trump's controversial lead on the holy city.

After speaking with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Morales wrote to Guatemalans on his Facebook page Sunday that "one of the most important topics was the return of Guatemala's embassy to Jerusalem," from Tel Aviv where it is currently located.

"For this reason I am informing you that I have given instructions to the foreign ministry that it start the necessary respective coordination to make this happen," Morales wrote.

Guatemala's leader made the announcement on Christmas Eve, three days after two-thirds of UN member states rejected Trump's decision to have the United States recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday hailed the decision, saying other nations would also follow Washington's controversial lead.

"Other countries will recognize Jerusalem and announce the relocation of their embassies. A second country did it and I repeat it: there will be others, it's just the start and it's important," Netanyahu said in a statement.

In all, 128 nations voted to maintain the international consensus that Jerusalem's status can only be decided through peace negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

Only eight countries stood with the United States in voting no to the resolution held in the UN General Assembly, among them Guatemala and fellow Central American country Honduras.

Guatemala and Honduras are both reliant on US funding to improve security in their gang-ridden territories.

The two nations are, along with El Salvador, in what is known as the Northern Triangle of Central America. Violence, corruption and poverty have made them the main source of illegal migration to the United States, which

Continued on Page 8



KUNA photo  
His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace on Monday, Reach Out To Asia's (ROTA) Goodwill Ambassador of Qatar, Ghanim Al-Muftah. Al-Muftah, 15, said that he was honored to meet again with HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, affirming that the Kuwaiti leader is an exemplary father figure.

### NBK largest contributor to society

— Details Page 26 —

### Policeman, militant killed in shootout

## Saudis find body of judge

RIYADH, Dec 25, (AFP): Saudi police have recovered the body of a kidnapped pro-government Shiite judge after a shootout in which a policeman and a suspected militant were killed, the interior ministry said Monday.

The remains of Judge Mohammed al-Jirani were found on a farm in the town of Awamiya in the kingdom's Eastern Province, which has been a hotbed of protests among the Shiite minority for years.

The raid took place last Tuesday and subsequent DNA tests confirmed that a body recovered was that of Sheikh Jirani, a ministry spokesman told the official Saudi Press Agency.

The ministry named the slain suspected militant as Salman al-Faraj, adding that he was wanted on suspicion of terrorism offences.

Sheikh Jirani was kidnapped in December 2016 in front of his Awamiya home. The authorities said at the time that they had arrested three suspects.

Considered close to the authorities, the judge had been the target of several attacks before his abduction.

In a press conference Monday, interior ministry spokesman General Mansour al-Turki accused the judge's kidnapers and murderers of forming "an organised terrorist group that has relations with Iran

and benefits from its support".

Saudi Arabia's council of senior scholars — comprised of only Sunni clerics — has decried the murder.

"This is a crime that must be condemned in the strongest terms and which reveals the threats posed by these terrorists," the committee said in a statement. Sheikh Jirani was critical of the protest movement among his fellow Shiites and accused leading clerics in the community of being too close to Iran and neighbouring Iraq.

In 2011, his house and car were set on fire and members of his family barely escaped the flames. In 2012, his house was attacked again by armed men who failed to capture him.

Awamiya, a town of around 25,000 people, has seen bouts of unrest since 2011 when protesters emboldened by that year's Arab Spring uprisings took to the streets demanding an end to alleged discrimination by the Sunni-dominated government.

The Shiite community makes up between 10 and 15 percent of Saudi Arabia's population of 32 million.

A latest wave of unrest erupted in the summer when authorities began tearing down the historic

Continued on Page 8

### NewsWatch

**TUNIS:** The United Arab Emirates has information that Tunisian women or women travelling on Tunisian passports might commit "terrorist acts" in the Gulf country, Tunisia's state news agency TAP said.

Tunisia late on Sunday suspended flights from Dubai carrier Emirates to Tunis, with officials saying the airline was refusing to carry female Tunisian travellers.

Emirates has given no reason for not allowing female Tunisians to board its flights since Friday.

A spokesman for Tunisia's presidency did not elaborate on the security threat in a brief TAP article.

Emirates had stopped its Dubai-Tunis connection on Monday.

In Tunisia, anger has been building after women said they had been banned at Tunis airport from boarding Emirates flights to Dubai.

Tunisian civil organizations and political parties called on the government to respond. Foreign Minister Khemais Jhianoui told a local radio

Continued on Page 8

US\$/KD	0.30185/95
Euro/KD	0.3567
Yen/KD	0.0026
British £/KD	0.4036
KSE	+2.11 pts at closing Dec 25 See Page 29
DOW	-28.23 pts at closing Dec 22
Nasdaq	-5.40 pts at closing Dec 22
FTSE	-11.32 pts at closing Dec 22
Nikkei	+36.42 pts at closing Dec 25
Gold	\$1,264.55 per oz (London)
NYMEX crude	\$58.27 per barrel
Brent crude	\$65.25 per barrel
3-month \$ LIBOR rate	1.6857%



Photo by Rizalde Cayanano, courtesy of DAI  
Japanese bamboo flute performer Shizuki Muraoka enchants the audience at Yarmouk Cultural Centre's Music Night titled 'Harmony ... Japanese Sword and Bamboo Flute' on Sunday evening. — See Page 17

## Syrian forces advance

AMMAN, Dec 25, (RTRS): Syrian army forces backed by Iranian-backed militias pushed deeper into the last rebel-held enclave near a strategic border area with Israel and Lebanon in a new expansion of Tehran's influence in the war-torn country.

The army and the Shi'ite forces advanced east and south of the Sunni-rebel held bastion of Beit Jin backed by some of the heaviest aerial bombing and heavy artillery shelling since a major assault began over two months ago to seize the area, rebels said.

The Syrian army said it had encircled the village of

Mughal Meer at the foothills of Mount Hermon as troops moved towards Beit Jin amid fierce clashes.

The enclave is the last rebel bastion left in the south west of Damascus known as the Western Ghouta that had since last year fallen under government control after months of heavy bombing on civilian areas and years of siege tactics that forced rebels to surrender.

A western intelligence source confirmed rebel reports that Iranian-backed militias including the powerful Lebanese Hezbollah Shi'ite group were

Continued on Page 6