

LOCAL

Kuwait, Saudi in agreement over economic 'diversification' plans

New Kuwait 2035 working group meets

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 25, (KUNA): Kuwait's First Deputy Premier and Defence Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said that Kuwait and Saudi Arabia

see eye-to-eye on each other's economic diversification plans.

Sheikh Nasser made the remarks at a 'New Kuwait 2035' working group meeting on Sunday, attended

by Saudi Arabia's visiting Royal Court Advisor Prince Turki bin Mohammed bin Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, a Kuwait Defence Ministry statement read.

The Saudi official's attendance of the talks was a "great opportunity" to outline to Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and Crown Prince, First Deputy Premier and Defence Minister Prince Mohammed bin Salman "coordination" on the two countries' development visions, said Kuwait's deputy premier.

"The future visions adopted by both countries are ambitious plans that boost their strength and unity," he said, in reference to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's 'New Kuwait 2035' vision and the 'Saudi 2030 Vision.' After having received an invitation for an official visit to Saudi Arabia from Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Sheikh Nasser said he would be briefing Saudi officials on the matter during talks with the prince.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's National Industries Group Holding has announced that one of its 100 percent-owned subsidiaries has signed a contract with its partners in the international airport group that is managing and operating Queen Alia Airport in Jordan in order to sell its entire 24 percent stake, reports Al-Shahed daily.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the group said the final sale of the entire stake in the international airport group company to the consortium of companies led by the French Group ADB was signed following the completion of some routine



His Highness Crown Prince meets PAAET students union.



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Magical Festive Celebration at Marriott Hotels in Kuwait



The tree, the glittering decor, the fun and festive ambience all combine to make Marriott Hotels in Kuwait the perfect venues to celebrate the Christmas and New Year in style.

The festivities begin with a grand Christmas celebration, diners visiting Kuwait's best steakhouse "Terrace Grill" at the JW Marriott Kuwait City can enjoy an unforgettable holiday dining experience accompanied by the finest certified US Angus beef, wagyu beef cuts and mouth-watering seafood dishes for lunch and dinner. Meanwhile, guests visiting the Crossroads Restaurant will be treated to an elegant international buffet featuring traditional Christmas dishes such as turkey roulade with dry apricots, stuffed turkey, Christmas cake and a lot more.

Furthermore, guests visiting the Courtyard by Marriott Hotel's renowned "Soul and Spice" Restaurant on Christmas can enjoy an exceptional lunch and dinner filled with Christmas cheer. At the Atrium Restaurant, located in the heart of the hotel's stunning lobby, diners can feast on a huge selection of international Christmas dishes including roasted turkey with cranberry sauce, yorkshire pudding, special Christmas desserts and much more.

To top off the captivating Christmas mood, guests are

invited to ring in the New Year with live entertainment and a wide range of gastronomic delights at Marriott properties to Bid Adieu to 2017 in style.

The JW Marriott Kuwait City is set to be transformed into the trendiest place in town, with the lively ambience at Crossroads Restaurant complete with music and sensational décor, including party poppers, hats and horns. The Terrace Grill Steakhouse will offer mesmerizing live music and a delicious five-course menu.

In addition, guests at the Courtyard by Marriott Kuwait City will celebrate the countdown to 2018 with elegance and style as three of Kuwait's finest restaurants share their cuisine to create an extravagant evening of delicious food, live music and general merriment.

Blendz Restaurant at the Residence by Marriott Kuwait City will also be offering special a la carte menus throughout the Festive Season.

"We would like to take this opportunity to wish our guests and their families a merry Christmas and a Happy New Year." Said George Aoun, the hotels' Cluster General Manager. "This year we have upgraded our food & beverage menus to provide a high level of guest satisfaction" Aoun added.

Health insurance,

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Al-Damkhi stressed the imprisonment of MPs without legal basis affects the prestige of the nation. He stressed, he does not object the judicial rulings, but how an MP can be imprisoned without a court issuing the verdict.

On the cancellation of the meeting of the Legislative Committee Monday for the lack of the quorum, MP Abdul Kareem Al-Kandari said "it is clear to all that there is conspiracy to thwart this meeting. He said four members abstaining is strange.

Pope 'urges'

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More than 600,000 Muslim Rohingya people have fled mainly Buddhist Myanmar to Bangladesh in recent months. The pope had to tread a delicate diplomatic line during his visit, avoiding the word "Rohingya" while in Myanmar, which does not recognise them as a minority group, though he used the term when in Bangladesh.

"Jesus knows well the pain of not being welcomed and how hard it is not to have a place to lay one's head. May our hearts not be closed as they were in the homes of Bethlehem," he said.

He also urged the world to see Jesus in the innocent children suffering from wars in Syria and Iraq and also in Yemen, complaining that its people had been "largely forgotten, with serious humanitarian implications for its people, who suffer from hunger and the spread of diseases".

He also listed conflicts affecting children in South Sudan, Somalia, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Ukraine and Venezuela.

At his Christmas Eve Mass in St Peter's Basilica on Sunday, Francis strongly defended immigrants, comparing them to Mary and Joseph finding no place to stay in Bethlehem and saying faith demands that foreigners be welcomed.

The pontiff also mentioned other global flashpoints such as Syria, Iraq, Yemen, South Sudan and Venezuela, after stressing that the "winds of war are blowing in our world".

"Let us pray that confrontation may be overcome on the Korean peninsula and that mutual trust may increase in the interest of the world as a whole," the 81-year-old said.

Earlier, celebrating midnight mass in the ancient town, Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, apostolic administrator of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, used his homily to lambast the wars that "the Herods of today fight every day to become greater, to occupy more space".

Criticising Trump's announcement, Pizzaballa insisted "Jerusalem is a city of peace, there is not peace if someone is excluded. Jerusalem should include, not exclude," stressing the principle that Jerusalem is a city for both peoples and the three Abrahamic faiths.

Hundreds had gathered in the cold on Bethlehem's Manger Square to watch the annual scout parade towards the Church of the Nativity, built over the spot where tradition says Mary gave birth to Jesus.

But the square was noticeably quieter following the violence between Palestinian protesters and the Israeli army in the past weeks.

Twelve Palestinians have been killed since Trump's declaration, including a 19-year-old who died of his wounds on Sunday nine days after he was shot during a Gaza protest.

Israel seized east Jerusalem in the 1967 Middle East war and later annexed it, in moves never recognised by the international community.

Palestinians view east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state, and interpreted Trump's statement as rejecting their right to a capital in east Jerusalem, although the Americans deny this.

Christmas decorations have meanwhile become more visible in Christian areas of Syria's capital Damascus this year.

In the central Syrian city of Homs, Christians will celebrate Christmas with great fanfare for the first time in years after the end of battles between regime and rebel forces — with processions, shows for children and even decorations among the ruins.

In Iraq too, this year marks a positive turning point for the Christian community in the northern city of Mosul.

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II was meanwhile due to pay tribute to the cities of London and Manchester which suffered terror attacks this year.

"This Christmas, I think of London and Manchester, whose powerful identities shone through over the past 12 months in the face of appalling attacks," the 91-year-old monarch was to say in the pre-recorded televised message.

London suffered two deadly terror attacks, while 22 people — including children — were killed during an attack at Manchester Arena following a performance by US singer Ariana Grande.

Meanwhile a tragic Christmas weekend in the Philippines was compounded Monday by the deaths of 20 people killed in a bus collision while travelling to mass.

Dozens of people were feared killed in a fire Saturday in the southern city of Davao. Thousands were displaced by floods and landslides from a storm that also killed more than 200 others on Friday.

Saudis find

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Musawara district of Awamiya. Authorities said that the walled neighbourhood's labyrinth of alleyways had become a breeding ground for "terrorists".

The demolitions prompted armed clashes between militants and security forces.

Guatemala follows

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is giving them \$750 million to provide better conditions at home.

Morales, like Trump, was a television entertainer with no real political experience before becoming president of Guatemala in 2016.

On Friday, Morales foreshadowed the decision he was to make regarding Jerusalem, as he defended his government's vote at the UN backing the United States.

"Guatemala is historically pro-Israeli," he told a news conference in Guatemala City.

"In 70 years of relations, Israel has been our ally," he said.

"We have a Christian way of thinking that, as well as the politics of it, has us believing that Israel is our ally and we must support it."

Morales's position has become fragile in recent months because of allegations of corruption against him being investigated by a special UN-backed body working with Guatemalan prosecutors.

The United States ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, had said her country would "take names" of the states opposing its position, and Trump threatened to cut funding to countries "that take our money and then vote against us."

Several significant US allies abstained from the UN vote, among them Australia, Canada, Mexico and Poland.

Others, such as Britain, France, Germany and South Korea were in the majority of 128 nations denouncing any unilateral decision to view Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

The eight countries on the US side of the vote were: Guatemala, Honduras, Israel, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau and Togo.

Following the US decision on Jerusalem, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas said he would "no longer accept" any peace plan proposed by the US, dealing a pre-emptive blow to a new initiative expected by Washington next year.

Trump has tasked his son-in-law Jared Kushner, who had no prior experience in government, with spearheading the complicated peace plan efforts.

The Palestinian Health Ministry in the Gaza Strip says two men have died from wounds sustained in earlier clashes with Israeli troops along the border with Israel.

It identified them as Mohammed Dahdoh, 20, who died Sunday, and Sharif Shalash, 28, who died on Saturday.

Their deaths raise to 12 the number of Palestinians killed in violence in Gaza and the West Bank since President Donald Trump's Dec 6 recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Most of the deaths have occurred in Gaza, where protesters have been clashing with Israeli forces along the border fence. Forces have used tear gas and live fire to disperse the crowds. Among the dead are two Hamas militants killed in an Israeli airstrike that was carried out in response to rocket fire from Gaza.

Israel has ordered the deportation of two of three Turks who were briefly arrested during Palestinian demonstrations last week after US President Trump recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the Interior Ministry said on Monday.

The three were detained on Friday on suspicion of assaulting Israeli police near a Al-Aqsa mosque in East Jerusalem, which Palestinians see as the capital of their own future state. An Israeli court freed them without charges on Saturday.

An Interior Ministry spokeswoman said one of the men was scheduled for deportation later on Monday and another on Saturday. She said both had entered Israel on Belgian passports.

Israeli police had described the three as Turkish tourists.

A photograph circulated on social media showed them among a group of fezz-wearing men and boys outside Al-Aqsa. One is seen wearing a Turkish flag T-shirt and waving a Palestinian flag, while two hold up pictures of Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan.

Erdogan has been vocal in opposing Trump's Jerusalem move, which reversed decades of US policy over the status of a city whose eastern sector Israel captured in the 1967 war and which is holy to Jews, Christians and Muslims.

The Interior Ministry spokeswoman said she had no information on the third Turk who had been arrested in the case.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu offered to play tour guide to Christian pilgrims on Sunday in a message relayed from Jerusalem, whose recognition as Israel's capital by US President Donald Trump has split global Christian opinion.

A Christmas Eve video on Twitter showed Netanyahu against the backdrop of East Jerusalem, an area laden with Jewish, Christian and Muslim shrines that Israel captured in a 1967 war and which Palestinians want as their own future capital.

In the message, titled "Merry Christmas from Jerusalem, the capital of Israel!" he described Israel as a haven for its 2 percent Christian minority because, he said, "We protect the rights of everyone to worship in the holy sites behind me."

Netanyahu named several Christian pilgrimage sites in Israel — including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in East Jerusalem's Old City — which would take visitors "in the footsteps of Jesus and the origin of our Judeo-Christian heritage."

"For those of you who come to Israel, I'm going to take a guided tour. In fact, I'll be your guide on this guided tour," Netanyahu said. This would happen Christmas next year he said, without going into the logistics.

Trump's Dec 6 announcement on Jerusalem reversed decades of US policy on leaving the city's status to Israeli-Palestinian negotiation. The move angered Muslims and was rejected by most world powers.

NewsWatch

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station the UAE should apologize for the travel ban, which he said its authorities had not informed Tunisia about. (RTRS)

DUBAI: A Bahraini military court sentenced six Shi'ite Muslim men to death and revoked their citizenship after they were convicted on charges of forming a terrorist cell and plotting to assassinate a military official, Bahrain news agency BNA reported on Monday.

The men, including one soldier, were accused of several militant attacks and of attempting to assassinate a commander of the Bahraini army, BNA said.

The court sentenced seven other people linked to the case to seven years in jail and revoked their citizenship, while five others were acquitted. BNA added, quoting a state prosecution statement.

BNA said the 18 men involved in the case include eight who were convicted in absentia, having fled to Iraq and Iran. It was not clear which of the absent eight were sentenced to death and which to jail. (RTRS)

DUBAI: Iran's Supreme Court has upheld a death sentence against a Sweden-based Iranian academic convicted of spying for Israel, the Tehran prosecutor was quoted as saying on Monday, confirming reports by Amnesty International and his family.

Ahmadreza Djalali, a medical doctor and lecturer at the Karolinska Institute, a Stockholm medical university, was accused of providing information to Israel to help it assassinate several senior nuclear scientists.

Djalali was arrested in Iran in April 2016 and later convicted of espionage. He has denied the charges, Amnesty said.

At least four scientists were killed between 2010 and 2012 in what Tehran said were assassinations meant to sabotage its efforts to develop nuclear energy. Western powers and Israel said Iran aimed to build a nuclear bomb. Tehran denied this.

The Islamic Republic hanged a man in 2012 over the killings, saying he was an agent for Israeli intelligence agency Mossad.

On Monday, Tehran prosecutor Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi said the Supreme Court recently upheld the death sentence against Djalali, the news site of Iran's judiciary, Mizan, reported. (RTRS)

ANKARA: Two soldiers were killed and another was wounded in an attack by Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants which took place as the troops were carrying out security operations in the southeastern province of Hakkari, the military said on Monday.

Separately, one soldier was killed and two others were wounded on Sunday in northern Iraq when a grenade detonated by accident, the military said. The wounded soldiers were not in critical condition, it added.

The PKK, considered a terrorist organisation by the United States, Turkey and the European Union, has waged an insurgency against the state since the 1980s. Violence in the largely Kurdish southeast has escalated since the collapse of a ceasefire in 2015. (RTRS)

GAZA: The Red Cross said on Monday Israel has a duty to guarantee the safety and dignity of Palestinian families visiting prisoners, after a right-wing lawmaker was filmed shouting abuse aboard a bus taking relatives to a family visit in an Israeli jail.

The legislator, Oren Hazan, boarded the bus at the Gaza border with video crews in tow. He said on Twitter he told the relatives that the prisoners were "terrorists who belong in the ground". In a video clip on social media, he shouted at one prisoner's mother that her son was an "insect" and a "dog".

"An insect?" she yelled back. "My son is the best of men. A dog is whoever calls him a dog."

Hazan has a record of staging publicity stunts, including crashing a welcoming ceremony for visiting US President Donald Trump. He once agreed to stage a fistfight at the border with a member of Jordan's parliament, only to cancel it on the orders of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The families on the bus were on their way to Nafha prison in southern Israel from the Gaza Strip in a convoy escorted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). In a statement, the ICRC said it "takes very seriously what happened today".

"Families have the right to visit their loved ones in a dignified manner," Suhair Zakkout, Gaza spokeswoman for the ICRC, said in the statement. "It is the responsibility of the competent authorities to ensure that the visits take place safely and without interference." (RTRS)