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GCC NOD TO KUWAITI AL-HAJRAF FOR TOP POST Riyadh Declaration gateway to future

Opinion

Road to the future starts from Riyadh

Amir returns home after summit

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation returned home Tuesday evening after heading the Kuwaiti delegation in the 40th GCC meeting in Riyadh.

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By Ahmed Al-Jarallah
Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

IN line with the saying of Allah Almighty: "Then declare what you are commanded and turn away from the polytheists ...", the voice of wisdom emanated from the blessed Riyadh yesterday, pointing the compass towards the right direction, making it compulsory for every mind in the Gulf to stay focused on challenging the falsehood in the form of real threat embedded in Iran's terrorism and its destructive policies, and stressing that we should not be distracted by any other issue.

Due to this, it is pertinent to strengthen military and security cooperation with extreme necessity to protect the Gulf security. The basis for that is to work with seriousness towards consolidating coherence and integration among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries at all levels. It starts with food security, through societal security, to rearmament and readiness to face any attack on any of the GCC countries because it would amount to an attack on the entire council.

This has made accomplishing those goals more realistic, and the alarming dangers should be approached in unison and to grapple the weak ambush. It is for this purpose that all GCC nationals experiencing the feeling of tranquility today, after the summit, which is successful by all standards.

Citizens of the region are sure that the crack in the ceiling of the GCC house has been fixed and the dark cloud is beginning to fade away.

The language with which the leaders spoke implied this fact and revealed the fruitful efforts exerted behind the scenes to end the Gulf crisis, especially since the GCC successfully overcame all previous crises in the region since inception, which were more complex than the current one. The Gulf people overcame them and are working with the spirit of creative initiative.

It is quite clear that the hostile autumn, through which the GCC passed, is on the verge of disappearing. It is a sure bet today that the future will be one voice - either in facing the regional evil or the terrorist gangs that have distorted the image of Muslims for several years in the past, as well as for international relations both economically and politically.

The summit's communiqué has drawn the future road-map. Hence, the GCC nationals should exert concerted efforts to demolish the Hercules, and consistently strive to cooperate on uprightness and piety. This should take off from the clear vision and stable conviction that the GCC was established to survive, and it will remain existing with doggedness of its citizens. The member states are all keen on solidifying its structure and protecting it from the storms and flood that are hitting the region.

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HH the Amir (second left), poses with other GCC leaders who attended the GCC Summit held in Riyadh.

KUNA photo

Positive steps to forget past: Amir

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said Tuesday Riyadh Declaration is "the gateway to our future".

Speaking during the concluding session of the 40th version of the GCC summit in Riyadh, His Highness the Amir hoped that the coming meetings would be better than previous ones.

His Highness the Amir thanked Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and the Saudi government for the declaration and sponsorship of this gathering.

The 40th GCC summit concluded here Tuesday with Secretary-General Abdulatif Al-Zayani reading the 'Riyadh Declaration'.

It emphasized necessity to protect maritime of the Arabian Gulf from any threats, as the Council notes measures taken by Saudi Arabia to protect its oil facilities, which stems from the Kingdom's keenness of a stable oil market, both for producing and consuming countries.

"Any aggression on a GCC Member State is an aggression on all Member States," the Declaration stressed.

It also underlined the importance of achieving economic unity and customs integration, which would serve the Gulf's political and security coordination in light of regional and international variables.

The vision of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, laid the foundations for the integration system among GCC countries in all fields, which requires completion of procedures needed to guarantee intactness of Member States sovereignty and safety of its territorial waters, as well as economic areas in accordance with the joint defense treaty, the Declaration pointed out.

The summit discussed a host of important issues of interest for the GCC march, in addition to reports and recommendations forwarded by the ministerial committees and action teams with regard to political, economic, social and legal aspects. It will also review a number of current regional and international issues and regional developments.

His Highness the Amir voiced satisfaction with the positive and constructive steps taken so far in the context of efforts to forget the past. Addressing the GCC gathering in Riyadh, His Highness the Amir said that the 40th GCC session, held in a favorable atmosphere, reflects resolve to adopt unified positions and commitment to Gulf unity.

He voiced optimism that Tuesday's meeting would come up with resolutions and recommendations that could undoubtedly contribute to promoting the Gulf march and fulfilling the ambitions.

He stressed that the recent Gulf sports event in Qatar and Tuesday's event are clear-cut signs of common determination to ensure Gulf unity and maintain gains and accomplishments.

In this context, His Highness the Amir congratulated Bahrain on winning the 24th Gulf Cup, wishing it more progress and success.

His Highness the Amir added that he has always called for addressing recent threats to regional security and stability in a calm and wide mode and through dialogue.

"Due to this escalation, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been hit by dreadful attacks which we condemned and denounced. We have also voiced support to our brothers in defending their security and stability," he said.

He cited Saudi Arabia's G20 presidency, the UAE's hosting of Expo 2020 and Qatar's organizing of the World Cup 2022 as a source of pride to the Gulf people, and a sign of world appreciation to and confidence in the GCC countries.

At the Arab level, His Highness the Amir said: "We took note of the agreement signed by the Yemeni government and Transitional Council under the sponsorship and with the praiseworthy effort of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia."

He hailed the Riyadh agreement as a gateway to the aspired peace process in Yemen.

Concerning Iraq, Lebanon, Libya and Algeria, His Highness the Amir hoped that they would overcome their current difficult and painful circumstances and restore security and stability.

He also congratulated the Tunisian people on their recent successful presidential elections, voicing heartfelt greetings to President Kais Saied.

His Highness the Amir concluded his speech by thanking the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for organizing the gathering and for proper reception and hospitality.

Kuwaiti Nayef Al-Hajraf has been confirmed as the incoming GCC Secretary-General earlier Tuesday, he is the second Kuwaiti to take the post since the bloc's inception in 1981.

Al-Hajraf has a vast experience in public and private sector management, education, and financial consulting.

Prior to his appointment, he served as Kuwait's chief regulator of marketable securities in his capacity as the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners and Managing Director of the Kuwait Capital Markets Authority (CMA) from 2014 to 2017.

MP proposes 'global' plates

By Ahmed Al-Naqeeb and Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: MP Osama Al-Shaheen has submitted a parliamentary proposal to the government for the provision of special license plates, which are recognized globally and the GCC countries in particular, for the vehicles used by senior citizens and people with disabilities.

The MP explained that people with disabilities as well as senior citizens often face traffic-related difficulties when travelling to neighboring countries in their vehicles especially when they want to park in areas allocated for the elderly and the disabled. This problem can be solved if they have accredited number plates.

He therefore recommends both Ministry of Social Affairs and Public Authority for Disabled Affairs to issue special license plates to those under their responsibility, and ensure that their validity is supported by the General Traffic Department of Ministry of Interior and approved in the neighboring GCC countries.

In another development, MP Mohammed Al-Shaheen submitted a proposal to the National Assembly, asking Ministry of Social Affairs and Civil Service Commission (CSC) to expedite procedures for launching their services in Sabah Al-Ahmad Area.

He said the social development services under these two governmental authorities are currently operational in Blocks A and B of Sabah Al-Ahmad Area, but considering the area is one of the biggest cities in the country with a steady growth of residents, the MP urged an expedited completion of such centers in Blocks C, D and E.

Meanwhile, MP Mohammed Hussein Al-Dalal submitted a parliamentary question to the State Minister for Economic Affairs and Acting Minister of Finance, asking for information about the procedures taken from

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NewsWatch

RIYADH: Kuwait's State Audit Bureau (SAB) and the Saudi General Auditing Bureau (GAB) have long been engaged in cooperation and coordination, GAB president **Hussam Al-Anqari** said on Tuesday.

Al-Anqari gave these remarks during a meeting held at the GAB in Riyadh between Al-Anqari and Kuwait's State Audit Bureau (SAB) Faisal Al-Shayaa, Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported.

GAB is always seeking to boost the cooperation at all levels with SAB, especially in the fields of personnel training, as well as in the regional and international organizations' participations.

They tackled during the meeting a number of issues of common interest, while Al-Shayaa was briefed on the work procedures at SAB in the financial assessment and performance monitoring sectors. (KUNA)

BEIRUT: Lebanon's political impasse has deepened after a tentative deal on a new prime minister unravelled, leaving the country rudderless as it grapples with the worst economic crisis since the 1975-90 civil war.

Six weeks since **Saad al-Hariri** resigned as prime minister, prompted by protests against the ruling elite, the financial crisis is generating concerns for Lebanon's stability: banks are enforcing capital controls, dollars are scarce, and the Lebanese pound has lost a third of its value on a black market.

France confirmed it would host an international conference in support of Lebanon on Wednesday, saying this aimed to press Beirut to quickly form a government to restore the economic situation.

But analysts saw little prospect of a quick end to a standoff that reflects an old power struggle between Hariri, who is aligned with Western and Sunni Muslim Gulf Arab states, and adversaries including the Iran-backed Shi'ite group Hezbollah. (RTRS)

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia will reduce spending in 2020 as the budget deficit widens to \$49 billion amid sluggish oil prices and deeper curbs on oil production by the heavyweight producer.

King Salman announced Monday expenditures will reach \$272 billion next year, a nearly 8 percent decrease from last year's record-high spending estimate of \$295 billion.

Saudi Arabia anticipates \$222 billion in revenue next year, down 14.6 percent from the \$260 billion estimated for 2019.

The Kingdom has been grappling with a deficit since oil prices first plunged in 2014. It has increased spending during that time, though, by drawing from its robust fiscal reserves to cushion the impact of austerity measures like new taxes and subsidy cuts, and to expand citizen welfare programs and monthly allowances for civil servants, students and soldiers. (AP)

TEHRAN: Iran said on Tuesday that American authorities are holding about 20 Iranian nationals in jail, its official news agency reported, a day after Tehran said it was ready for more prisoner swaps with the US.

A prisoner exchange over the weekend saw Iran free a Chinese-American scholar from Princeton who had been held for three years on widely criticized espionage charges. It was seen as a rare diplomatic breakthrough between Tehran and Washington after months of tensions.

"We told the American side that our figure is more or less 20 but this is not final," IRNA quoted as saying **Mohsen Baharvand**, an aide to Iran's foreign minister. The report didn't provide further details on the claim.

According to Baharvand, US authorities say that Iran is holding one American national and five dual US-Iranian nationals. (AP)

TALLAHASSEE, Florida: The FBI said Monday it has found no signs of any link between a cyberattack on computer systems of a Florida Panhandle city and last week's attack at the naval air station there in which a Saudi flight student killed three sailors and wounded eight others.

Officials in the city of Pensacola became aware of the cyberattack early Saturday, hours after Friday's shooting at the Pensacola Naval Air Station. Much of the city's computer system remained offline Monday morning, and federal authorities were alerted to the cyberattack as a precaution.

The FBI tweeted in a brief statement that its initial investigation has not identified any connection between the cyberattack and the shooting. "Our preliminary investigation continues," the FBI statement said without elaboration. (AP)

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