



Kuwait '20 GDP shrinks 8.9 percent

Opinion

When 'Sheikh Zenki' becomes a righteous ruler, donkeys bray: 'O nation whose ignorance other nations laugh at!'

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

BECAUSE an Arab does not admit to a mistake, is arrogant, and refuses to take responsibility, he tosses everything at others or at fate, and may fabricate stories to support his imagination.

In politics, we have known many such models in the past decades. They fantasize about their position, irrespective of whether they are a group, an organization or a sect. They fight for them to the extent of eliminating other compatriots who belong to the same land and have the right to exist.

The best proof of this is the story narrated by a cleric in his Friday Prayer sermon.

The cleric said, "Three thieves burgled a palace, looted everything they had seized on the back of a donkey, and fled. On their way, two of them agreed to kill the third so they could take over more shares of their loot. Their plot succeeded... but not long after, one of them thought it would be better to get rid of the other so that he could keep the entire treasure. At night, he killed his partner.

In the morning the last man standing was on his way to his destination and was going down a slope when his foot slipped, his neck broke and he died. The donkey returned to the palace with the stolen treasure."

One of the worshippers then asked loudly, "If the three thieves died, who told this story, O Sheikh? Was it the donkey?"

The cleric left the pulpit and the mosque, and then the city.

This story reminds me of the things some clerics say in mosques or churches in an attempt to convince people of their point of view, and brainwash them with such poor narratives. The same applies to all Arab politicians except for a blessed few.

This is what the Muslim Brotherhood Group did in Egypt when they wanted to market Muhammad Morsi as the president. One of them gave a sermon in Rabaa al-Adawiya Square, claiming that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) visited him in a dream, and said to him, "May the blessed Morsi lead you in prayer". Another said, "The Messenger (PBUH) was present at one of the congregational prayers, and he asked Morsi to lead the worshippers."

These individuals are no better than other political orators who try to support their idea with heresies of their own, which are many, including the issue of "divine victories" that Iran's agents in the region talk a lot about after every battle.

However, if one of them is put on the spot, he flees to silence. One among such people is Yousef Al-Qaradawi, who was the theorist of the so-called "Arab Spring". He made Hamad bin Jassem a savior who deserved all support, obliterating the reality of the scheme that was intended to arbitrate the Muslim Brotherhood Group in the Arab countries with national instruments and salvation. The issue of the "savior" was just "business", which increased his wealth by capitalizing in it, as he generously spent about \$137 billion on this destructive scheme and got about \$30 billion.

When the uprising of the Egyptian people against the rule of the Brotherhood overthrew this scheme on June 30, 2013, Hamad bin Jassim said his famous phrase, "Lost prey", which is what the Brotherhood considered as the sacred project of the Islamic state.

After this major transformation, the scandals of the planners and implementers began to unfold. They began to blame each other for the failure. If someone tried to evade, they rushed to confront him with the popular Arab adage, "We all buried him."

This proverb has an interesting story. Drought struck some areas of the Levant, which depended on rain for three years in a row. People became hungry, and the livestock perished. Two people from one of the affected villages met and pondered about what they could do to get out of this crisis?"

One of them said to the other, "I have a donkey which we can ride until it leads us to a place where we can get food."

After a two-day journey, the donkey died. One of the individuals had the idea to bury him, render his grave a shrine, and tell people that he is a righteous saint.

When men from a neighboring village came to them and asked them who the new grave is for, one of them answered, "This is Sheikh Zenki, a righteous man. He commanded us to bury him here so that people from villages could visit and acquire blessings".

After people started visiting the shrine, the two started collecting donations from the visitors on behalf of Sheikh Zenki.

After a while, one of the two "monks" thought of his children, and so he traveled to them taking money and food. He stayed with them for a long time, after which he returned to his partner, where he asked for his share of the money.

His partner gave him a small amount, which resulted in an argument between them. His partner told him, "I swear to you by Sheikh Zenki, what I gave you is your share".

The other said, "Do you swear to me by Sheikh Zenki? Remember that we buried him together, for he is a donkey... So are you swearing to me by a donkey?"

Given that all the partners in the Arab coups and uprisings "did the burial together", corruption, ignorance, and lack of accountability permeate the Arab world. However, when sectarian and partisan instincts are mobilized, they return to taking cover through generalization and ignorance, and engage in blame games.

The self-esteem of the Arabs refuses to accept when they commit a mistake. Hence the famous Arab poet Al-Mutanabbi was right when he said, "O nation whose ignorance other nations laugh at."

Email: ahmed@aljarallah.com

Follow me on:



ahmedaljarallah@gmail.com

Sunday new at 1,297

Kuwait signs for Moderna, J&J



Riot police stand guard during a demonstration against the political leadership the protesters blame for the economic and financial crisis, in front of the Ministry of Economy, in downtown Beirut, Lebanon, June 6. (AP)

KUWAIT CITY, June 7, (KUNA): Kuwait has contracted with US pharmaceutical companies Moderna and Johnson & Johnson to supply it with their coronavirus vaccines, Minister of Health Dr Sheikh Bassel Al-Sabah said on Sunday.

In an interview with the Kuwait TV, Dr Bassel expected the delivery of Moderna and Johnson and Johnson vaccines in the last quarter of this year.

Commenting on the delay in the delivery of vaccine doses from certain producers, the minister argued that about 75 percent of produced vaccines are given to 10 countries, while the residue goes to other world countries, he added.

He went on to say that the delay in receiving vaccines is not a problem facing Kuwait only but also all Gulf and many other countries.

He assured those waiting for the second jab of the AstraZeneca vaccine that the vaccine doses arrived and stored in the country.

The producer, however, recommended pre-usage tests, he said, noting the AstraZeneca is expected to deliver test results on June 8.

If the results came positive, vaccination will start directly, he stressed, pointing out that the ministry has a plan to vaccinate the 200,000 people who are waiting for the second dose in 10 days.

Newswatch

Demand

But if AstraZeneca demanded more time to send the results, beneficiaries will have the choice of getting a second dose from Pfizer vaccine, he said.

"We are approaching the herd immunity, but there are challenges, including the lack of vaccines," he made clear.

Controlling this pandemic needs a fair distribution of vaccines to all countries to stop the mutation of the virus, he explained.

The minister affirmed that the country's pandemic situation is stable, despite registering new infections on a daily basis as other world's countries do.

He noted that the ministry records all positive cases either with or without symptoms unlike many other countries which register only those who have symptoms.

He lauded the implementation of the preventive measures across the country, hoping for continued abidance by these measures until the end of the pandemic.

Cooperation of citizens and expats helped the ministry implement preventive and precautionary measures and protected the medical system over the past 16 months, he stated.

At least 1,297 people have tested positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19) over the past 24 hours, raising the caseload to 317,197, Spokesman for the Ministry of Health Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said Sunday.

Up to 1,342 people were cured of the virus pandemic in the same period, increasing overall recoveries to 301,137, he told KUNA.

The death toll from the disease rose to 1,795 after registering one death in the corresponding period, Al-Sanad noted.

He stated that 14,265 patients are being hospitalized, in addition to 153 cases at intensive care units.

Total medical swabs have climbed to 2.671 million after conducting 10,011 in the same period, he stated. The ratio between recoveries and swabs is 12.96 percent today.

Al-Sanad renewed call for both citizens and residents to abide by health precautions and physical distancing, as well as avoid gatherings.

He also appealed to the public to follow up official accounts of the ministry and the state's bodies to be briefed on guidelines and recommendations in order to control the spread of the virus.

Nod to direct UK flights

Moody's rates Aramco sukuk

LONDON, June 7: Moody's Investors Service ("Moody's") has assigned a (P)A1 rating to Saudi Arabian Oil Company's ("Saudi Aramco") new trust certificate issuance programme. This sukuk programme is established under SA Global Sukuk Limited, a special purpose company incorporated in the Cayman Islands. SA Global Sukuk Limited has been assigned a negative outlook in line with the negative outlook on existing ratings of Saudi Aramco.

All other ratings for Saudi Aramco are unchanged, including its A1 long-term issuer rating, its Aaa.sa long-term issuer national scale rating, its (P)A1 Global Medium Term Note (GMTN) programme rating and A1 ratings on existing senior unsecured bond issuances.

Ratings Rationale

The decision to assign a (P) A1 rating to the sukuk programme reflects Moody's view that certificate holders will effectively be exposed to Saudi Aramco's senior unsecured credit risk. This is because certificate holders (1) only have rights against Saudi Aramco under the transaction documents, and these rights rank pari passu with other senior unsecured obligations of the company; (2) are not exposed to the performance risk of the asset portfolio relating to the certificates; and (3) will not have any preferential claim or recourse over the relevant trust assets.

The sukuk structure is a combination of an Ijara (asset sale and lease back transaction) and Murabaha (commodity purchased and sold on a deferred payment basis). Moody's rating of the sukuk programme does not express an opinion on the sukuk structure's compliance with Shari'ah law.

Saudi Aramco's A1 rating reflects (1) a very large operational scale as the world's largest oil producer with access to one of the world's largest hydrocarbon reserves; (2) proven execution track record of implementing large scale upstream and downstream projects with significant focus on downstream integration; and (3) a strong financial profile with very low production costs and modest debt in its capital structure as evidenced by a Moody's-adjusted debt/book capitalization of 32.5% for YE2020.

KUWAIT CITY, June 7, (KUNA): The Cabinet decided on Monday to stage direct air flight to the United Kingdom as of Sunday (June 13) with adherence to health precautions against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

The Cabinet tasked the Directorate General of Civil Aviation to organize the direct flights to the UK (Kuwait-London-Kuwait) at a rate of one per week for each airways company, according to a statement posted by the Government Communication Center on Twitter.



KUNA photo HH the Prime Minister chairs Monday's Cabinet meeting.

MP queries expat 'aged'

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, June 7: MP Adnan Abdulsamad has forwarded queries to Minister of Commerce and Industry Abdullah Essa Al-Salman about the renewal of work permits for expatriates who are 60 years and above holding a secondary school certificate or lower.

He wants to know if a decision has been taken to amend Administrative Resolution number 250/2020 regarding conditions for the renewal of work permits for the abovementioned expatriates. If yes, he requested for a copy of the decision including the categories that are covered and those exempted if any.

He inquired if the decision stipulates new fees for the renewal of work permits; if health insurance covering fees in private hospitals is required; if highly qualified expatriates above 60 years old are covered by the decision; if differences in salaries were considered as some expatriates are receiving a salary of KD 300 while others are receiving KD 1,000; if the decision is applicable to those who own companies registered at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in partnership with citizens; and if the concerned institutions have conducted studies to assess the impact of a such decision on the labor market and salaries.

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has addressed a cable to Pakistani President Arif Alvi expressing deep condolences on victims of the two trains' accident in Sindh southern Pakistan.

His Highness the Amir prayed for His Almighty's mercy for the victims, wished their next of kin patience and the injured speedy recovery.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of identical content to the Pakistani president. (KUNA)

GHOTKI: An express train barreled into another that had derailed in Pakistan before dawn Monday, killing at least 51 people, authorities said. More than 100 were injured, and rescuers and villagers worked throughout the day to search crumpled cars for survivors and the dead.

Cries for help pierced the night as passengers climbed out of overturned or crushed rail cars, and continued to echo throughout the day at the scene in the district of Ghotki, in the southern province of Sindh. (AP)

WASHINGTON: Government health officials on Monday approved the first new drug for Alzheimer's disease in nearly 20 years, disregarding warnings from independent advisers that the much-debated treatment hasn't been shown to help slow the brain-destroying disease.

The Food and Drug Administration said it granted approval to the drug developed by Biogen for patients with Alzheimer's disease.

It's the only drug that US regulators have said can likely treat the underlying disease, rather than manage symptoms like anxiety and insomnia. (AP)

VIENNA: Iran has failed to answer questions about the discovery of uranium particles at former undeclared sites in the country, the head of the UN nuclear watchdog said Monday, calling on Tehran to provide information "without further delay."

Rafael Grossi, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, has been pushing Iran for answers on three sites dating back many years where inspections had revealed traces of uranium of man-made origin, suggesting they were once connected to Iran's nuclear program. (AP)

Non-oil cut 2.5%

KUWAIT CITY, June 7, (KUNA): The Central Statistical Bureau in a report released on Monday declared that Kuwait's gross domestic product declined by 8.9 percent in 2020 in contrast to 2019, where the estimated value with constant prices amounted to KD 36 billion (USD 118.8 billion).

By comparison, the value in 2019 was estimated at KD 39.5 billion (USD 130 billion).

The Kuwaiti economy shrank by 11.2 percent in Q4 2020 against Q3 with constant rates, while decline in current prices amounted to 20.2 percent in Q4 2020 compared to the same quarter of the previous year.

Contribution of the oil sector in the GDP with current prices in Q4 amounted to KD 2.8 billion (USD 15 billion), 33.4 percent, while this value increased to KD 4.6 billion (USD 15 billion), with a contribution proportion amounting to 51.1 percent with fixed prices.

Value of the oil sector in Q4 2020 with current prices rose by 3.4 percent in contrast to Q3 while the contribution value reached 2.1 percent with constant prices -- vis a vis the Q3.

GDP of the non-oil sector with current prices in the last quarter of 2020 showed decline by 2.5 percent compared to the same quarter of the previous year and growth by 13.2 percent for Q3 2020.

COVID 'claims' Hezbollah brain

DUBAI, June 7, (AP): Ali Akbar Mohtashampour, a Shiite cleric who as Iran's ambassador to Syria helped found the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and lost his right hand to a book bombing reportedly carried out by Israel, died Monday of the coronavirus. He was 74.

A close ally of Iran's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Mohtashampour in the 1970s formed alliances with Muslim militant groups across the Mideast. After the Islamic Revolution, he helped found the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard in Iran and as ambassador to Syria brought the force into the region to help form Hezbollah.

In his later years, he slowly joined the cause of reformists in Iran, hoping to change the Islamic Republic's theocracy from the inside. He backed the opposition leaders Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mahdi Karroubi in Iran's Green Movement protests that followed the disputed 2009 re-election of then-President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

"If the whole people become aware, avoid violent measures and continue their civil confrontation with that, they will win," Mohtashampour said at the time, though Ahmadinejad ultimately would remain in office. "No power can stand up to people's will."

Disputed Mohtashampour died at a hospital in northern Tehran after contracting the virus, the state-run IRNA news agency reported. The cleric, who wore a black turban that identified him in Shiite tradition as a direct descendant of Islam's Prophet Muhammad, had been living in the Shiite holy city of Najaf, Iraq, over the last 10 years after the disputed election in Iran.

Iran's current Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei praised Mohtashampour for his "revolutionary services," while President Hassan Rouhani said the cleric "devoted his life to promote Islamic movement and realization of the revolution's ideals."

Hard-line judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi, now considered the leading candidate in Iran's presidential election next week, also offered condolences to Mohtashampour's family.

"The deceased was one of the holy warriors on the way to the liberation of Jerusalem and one of the pioneers in the fight against the usurping Zionist regime," Raisi said, according to IRNA.

Born in Tehran in 1947, Mohtashampour met Khomeini as the cleric was in exile in Najaf after being expelled from Iran by Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. In the 1970s, he crisscrossed the Mideast speaking to militants groups at the time, helping form an alliance between the future Islamic Republic and the Palestinian Liberation Organization as it battled Israel.

Once arrested by Iraq, Mohtashampour found his way to Khomeini's residence in exile outside of Paris. They returned triumphant to Iran amid the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

In 1982, Khomeini deployed Mohtashampour to Syria, then under the rule of dictator Hafez Assad. While ostensibly a diplomat, Mohtashampour oversaw the millions that poured in to fund the Guard's operations in the region.