



skiing
Page 15



markets
Page 10

Opinion

Oman of Haitham bin Tariq

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

ON Thursday last week, the Sultanate of Oman celebrated its 51st National Day. Throughout these 51 years, this country managed to score many achievements that were planned by a creative mind whose owner worked hard to bring it to what it is today.

Between yesterday and today, Oman triumphed in many challenges that it encountered in its long journey. When we go back to half a century ago, many scenes overlap to compose a historical novel worthy of contemplation to realize the extent of determination and persistence of man and nature.

I remember being the first journalist to visit Muscat in the year 1970, a few days after the late Sultan Qaboos assumed power. At that time, Oman was still closed in on itself as if it was centuries behind its era. At least that is what I felt when I wandered on its main street near the seashore, and met a number of Omanis who looked at me as if I was an alien. When they knew I was a Kuwaiti, they started asking about Kuwait that they knew in the 1930s and 1940s ... about the wooden boats, their trips to India and Africa, and about a number of sea captains.

My answer was that what they are describing was the Kuwait of the past, and that the current Kuwait has modern oil tankers instead of wooden boats, and new buildings and roads, and that it is becoming more modern.

On that day, I met the late Sultan Qaboos and had one of the most important press interviews with him. During that interview, he presented his aspirations and ambitions for the development of Oman after years. Since that date, I have been frequenting Muscat, and with every visit, I see a country different from what it was when I left in the previous visit.

During my conversations with the late Qaboos bin Saeed, I also discovered new ambitions, as if the man was racing against time to realize his dream of a contemporary Oman. There is no doubt that he overlooked the country he dreamed of decades ago, because he worked on building man before stone.

In one of my meetings with him several years after our first meeting, I asked him, "Isn't it time for Oman to open up to the world in terms of tourism and investment?"

He answered, "Our goal is to receive visitors from all over the world so that they can see the beauty of our nature, and contribute to strengthening our economic movement. However, that should happen in line with our culture and traditions. We are not aiming for an unchecked openness, but rather we are marketing our country in a way that suits our nature. We are studying every step in this regard".

The Sultanate of Oman today, under the custody of a man of high culture, is working diligently to complete the process of development in the same spirit that his predecessor began decades ago - with openness to others, friendliness, calm, and perseverance enjoyed by its great people.

Under the reign of Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, the country continues to advance with a steady pace towards the future, overcoming several challenges left by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Oman has many opportunities that qualify it to continue its progress. In addition to its large geographical area and the nature of its people, it has become an important player in international relations in the past two decades after its success in a series of influential regional and international mediation.

There is also a great balance that enables it to attract investors from all over the world and launch major projects. It is also able to benefit from the surrounding countries that have excellent international economic reputations, such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia, after they became a major investment workshop.

The Sultanate of Oman, under the leadership of Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, is on the verge of achieving more ambitions. It has an educated and self-reliant human force that is capable of overcoming all difficulties. It also possesses a sultan and people whose ambitions and aspirations complement each other in their pursuit of advancement both regionally and internationally.

Due to all this, we believe that we will celebrate with the Omani people not a year or two of development, but rather decades of it. We commemorate this every year for more achievements that every Omani and Gulf country would be proud of.

Email: ahmed@aljarallah.com

Follow me on:



ahmedaljarallah@gmail.com

Iraqi Shiite cleric calls on pro-Iran militias to disband

BAGHDAD, Nov 20, (AP): Iraq's influential Shiite cleric who emerged as a winner in last month's general elections on Thursday called on the country's myriad pro-Iran Shiite armed factions to disband if they want to join his upcoming government.

Muqtada al-Sadr also asked the factions to hand over their weapons to the government-sanctioned umbrella known as Popular Mobilization Forces. In turn, he also asked the PMF to "purify" its ranks from "undisciplined elements" and surrender "corrupt individuals" to the judiciary.

The militias are certain to reject the demands, which in turn could complicate al-Sadr's efforts to form a government after the vote. It could also increase tensions between Shites who support the pro-Iran factions and al-Sadr's own followers.

The pro-Iran factions lost a significant number of parliament seats in the Oct. 10 elections and have called the vote fraudulent, rejecting the results. Their supporters have held protests outside Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone, home to government offices and foreign embassies.

The protests turned deadly earlier this month, when demonstrators tried to enter the Green Zone, demanding a ballot recount. One protester affiliated with the militias was killed in an exchange of fire, for which the militias blamed Iraq's incumbent Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi.

Tensions were further ratcheted up after a failed assassination attempt against al-Kadhimi at his residence the next day. The prime minister suffered a light cut and several of his guards were injured in the Nov. 7 attack by armed drones on his Green Zone residence. There was no responsibility claim for the attack, although

suspicion immediately fell on the armed factions.

"Your losses can't be a pretext for ruining the democratic process," al-Sadr said at a rare press conference Thursday, addressing the factions.

Political analyst Ihsan al-Shammari, who heads the Iraqi Political Thinking Center in Baghdad, said al-Sadr's comments underscored "clear and deep Shiite divisions," which will not help speed up the formation of a new government. Shiite armed factions serve as Iran's arms in Iraq, he said, and are being used to pressure political leaders.

As the winner in the elections, al-Sadr's bloc will seek coalition partners and name the next prime minister. The protests staged by supporters of hard-line Iran-aligned militias appeared to be aimed at pressuring al-Sadr to ensure that they are part of the next Cabinet.

But al-Sadr's call on Thursday practically ruled that out, instead asking the armed factions who function outside the PMF to disband.

The PMF is an umbrella group of mostly Shiite groups officially under the prime minister's command. It was created during the war against the Sunni extremist Islamic State group, which in 2014 seized large swaths of western and northern Iraq. IS was eventually defeated but the thousands of mainly Shiite paramilitary fighters who fought against it never disbanded or surrendered their arms.

Some of the most Iran-friendly militias under the PMF have shown signs of splintering into new, previously unknown groups, allowing them to claim attacks targeting U.S. interests under different names to mask the extent of their involvement.

Crown Prince tells Saudi King Amir in good health

Distinguished bilateral ties hailed

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 20, (KUNA): His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in a telephone call on Thursday to Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

He also assured the King that His Highness the Amir is in good health, during the call, and touched upon the two countries' distinguished bilateral relations alongside recent developments on the regional and international spectrums.

For his part, the King expressed his gratitude over the gesture, wishing His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince good health and well-being.

Also:

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Thursday to Morocco's King Mohamed VI on the occasion of the kingdom's Independence Day.

His Highness the Amir in the cable sent his good wishes to the King and his country. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah both sent similar cables.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations Friday to Monaco's President Prince Albert II on the occasion of his country's National Day.



Participants seen at the starting point of the race.

KUNA photo

Thousands participate in Gulf Bank marathon

Kuwait's Gulf Bank 7th marathon (642) kicked off Saturday with the participation of more than 7,000 participants.

The marathon aims at promoting mental and physical health, as part of the bank's keenness on social sustainabil-

ity. The marathon, called (642) in reference to the number of muscles in the human body and this year's competition was limited to those vaccinated against the coronavirus. (KUNA)

NewsWatch

US vows to counter Iran

DUBAI, Nov 20, (Agencies): America's top defense official vowed Saturday to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and to counter its "dangerous use" of suicide drones in the wider Mideast, a pledge coming as negotiations remain stalled over Tehran's tattered atomic deal with world powers.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's comments in Bahrain at the annual Manama Dialogue appeared aimed at reassuring America's Gulf Arab allies as the Biden administration tries to revive the nuclear deal, which limited Iran's enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

His remarks also come after Gulf sheikhdoms saw the U.S.' chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan, raising concerns about America's commitment to the region as defense officials say they want to pivot forces to counter perceived challenges from China and Russia.

"The United States remains committed to preventing Iran from gaining a nuclear weapon. And we remain committed to a diplomatic outcome of the nuclear issue," Austin told an event put on by the International Institute for Strategic Studies. "But if Iran isn't willing to engage seriously, then we will look at all of the options necessary to keep the United States secure."

Iran long has maintained its nuclear program is peaceful, though U.S. intelligence agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency say Tehran had an organized weapons program until 2003. Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment Saturday.

Since then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018, a series of escalating incidents have struck the wider Mideast. That includes drone and mine attacks targeting vessels at sea, as well as assaults blamed on Iran and its proxies in Iraq and Syria. The U.S. also killed a top Iranian general in Baghdad in early 2020, which saw Iran target American troops in Iraq with ballistic missiles.

MP queries refusal of Lebanon bank to return Kuwait deposits

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 20: MP Mehalhal Al-Mudaf forwarded queries to Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs Khalifa Hamada about the refusal of France Bank in Beirut, Lebanon to return the two fixed deposits of the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) amounting to \$226.97 million and \$120.1 million. He asked why these deposits were renewed despite the refusal of the bank to return them to PIFSS, if the ministry questioned the officials who are responsible for the renewal, and strategy of the ministry in handling public money deposited in Lebanese banks.

Al-Mudaf asked Minister of Oil and Higher Education Dr Muhammad Al-Fares to provide him with a list of students expelled from Kuwait University since its establishment up to the end of the academic year 2020/2021. He said ministerial decision number 195 allows these students, who were expelled for repeatedly obtaining low marks, to re-enroll at the university at their own expense after paying the fees stipulated in the executive regulations of the Public Universities Law.

He wants to know how many of these students have applied for re-admission on their own expense, if the concerned department at the university rejected any of such applications, and reasons behind the rejection.

Al-Mudaf also asked the minister about the criteria for participating in tender number CB/1465 for loading and unloading the catalyst at Abdullah Port refinery. He pointed out some violations such as allowing the winner of the contract to render the same service at Ahmadi Port refinery. He inquired why the period for receiving offers for tender number CA/4192

was set from Oct 28 to Nov 14, 2021; and why the manufacturing year requirement for the equipment supplied for the two tenders are different -- 2018 for tender number CB/1465 and 2021 for tender number CA/4192.

MP Hamad Al-Mattar strongly criticized the steps taken by the State Security General Department to investigate Kuwait Society for Information Security Chairperson Dr Safaa Al-Zaman regarding the statements she made on television that the information in some public institutions, including the State Audit Bureau (SAB), is linked to servers operated in other countries.

He pointed out this attitude is unacceptable in a free country like Kuwait, asserting Al-Zaman should be rewarded rather than being threatened and summoned in a harsh manner. He said he is sure that Al-Zaman's statements are true and he can prove this. He called on the concerned authorities to hurl accusations at him, similar that of Al-Zaman and he will then submit a proposal for his parliamentary immunity to be lifted so he could be investigated to prove that information in some public institutions are connected to servers controlled from outside the country. He urged members of Kuwait Lawyers Society to attend the investigations with Al-Zaman.

The lawmaker asked Minister of Health Dr Basel Al-Sabah about the number of blood clot cases recorded since the launching of the Covid-19 vaccination campaign compared to previous years, number of patients suffering from heart problems in 2021 compared to previous years, number of patients who underwent treatment in the country and those sent for overseas treatment because of Covid-19 complications, number blood poisoning cases in 2021 compared to previous years.



Bank customers write Arabic words that read 'Riad is a thief. Thieves' (Riad Salameh, the governor of Lebanon's Central Bank) on a facade of bank in Beirut, Nov. 19. Dozens of Lebanese gathered outside a bank in Beirut's downtown demanding that they be allowed to withdraw their deposits that have been blocked amid Lebanon's severe financial and economic crisis. (AP)

KUWAIT CITY: The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Friday recommend booster doses of Pfizer/BioNTech's and Moderna's Covid-19 vaccine for all adults (18 and above) in the United States of America after advisors to CDC unanimously voted in favor of the vaccine.

The 11 members who are on the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices agreed everyone 18 and above can take the booster doses six months after taking the first two doses. They also voted on a second question, strengthening the recommendation to say that people 50 and older should get a booster dose of vaccine. (KUNA)

ISTANBUL: Turkey's eastern Erzurum province was hit by a magnitude 5.1 earthquake, the country's disaster authority reported on Friday. The quake occurred at a depth of 5.18 kilometers below the surface, it added.

Erzurum Governor Okay Memis told Turkish Anadolu Agency that they received a report that there was destruction in several villages due to the earthquake, adding that no casualties had been reported so far. (KUNA)

RIYADH: The Saudi-led Arab coalition to support the legitimate Yemeni government said its air defense forces shot down three explosives-laden drones flown by "the terrorist Houthi militias" from Yemen towards the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In response to the threats, the coalition forces started a qualitative operation to tackle the sources of threats, the Saudi Press Agency tweeted on Friday, citing a statement from the coalition command. (KUNA)

Day by Day

THERE is a popular saying which goes like this, 'Where there is a will, there is a way'. This literally means if there is a desire, anything is possible and this is applicable to those in power.

Nonetheless, those in power must have the abilities, sense of understanding, good management and expertise in the area of law.

Of course, courage and bravery are added advantages in such situations especially when dealing with public issues, which if not managed distinctively can create chaotic situations and bring the State to a standstill.

... Yet, tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar