

Pipeline leak kills contractor



Riyadh
A contractor was killed and three other workers were injured in a pipeline leak in Saudi Arabia, state-owned oil giant Aramco said yesterday.

“Saudi Aramco regrets to inform the death of one contractor, and three other injuries involving one employee and two contractors,” Aramco said in a statement.

An emergency response team contained the “limited” leak, the company added in the statement

Aramco tweeted that the leak occurred at the Abqaiq facility, located 60 kilometres (37 miles) southwest of the company’s main Dhahran compound.

The two contractors have since been discharged from hospital. -(AFP)

Kuwait MPs fight proposed fuel price hike



Kuwaiti MPs vote on legislation during a session

Kuwait City
A parliamentary panel in Kuwait yesterday approved draft legislation calling for the scrapping of government plans to raise petrol and power prices to combat a budget deficit.

The financial and economic affairs committee said in its decision that “no increases in public charges and commodity prices” can be applied without a law being passed in parliament, its secretary Safa al-Hashem told reporters.

The decision will now

go before the Gulf state’s parliament for a vote that is expected to pass because a majority of lawmakers supports preventing the government from raising such charges.

Under Kuwaiti law, the government has the power to reject parliamentary decisions -- but MPs can also override such a rejection by a two-thirds majority in a fresh vote.

In a series of measures aimed at financing a budget shortfall resulting from low oil prices, the government

increased fuel prices and also plans to apply sharp rises in power and water prices in May.

Kuwait posted its first budget deficit of \$15 billion in the 2015-2016 fiscal year after 16 years of healthy surpluses.

It expects a higher deficit in the year ending March 31, and has also projected a shortfall for the next fiscal year.

The International Monetary Fund urged Kuwait that month to enact further subsidy reforms to trim its budget deficit. -(AFP)

Kuwait jails senior official for joining IS group



Representational image

Kuwait City
Kuwait’s supreme court yesterday sentenced a top bureaucrat to 10 years in jail for joining and fighting with the Islamic State jihadist group in Syria and Iraq.

The court also fined the unnamed Kuwaiti national, who was a top official at the Kuwait municipality, \$30,000 and convicted him of calling other people to join IS.

The ruling is final and cannot be challenged.

Kuwaiti courts have sentenced a number of IS members, sympathisers and financiers to various jail terms.

Authorities in July said they had dismantled three IS cells plotting attacks, including a suicide bombing against a mosque and against an interior ministry target.

Netanyahu held secret Arab peace meeting

Jerusalem
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met secretly with Arab rulers last year to hear then US secretary of state John Kerry pitch a regional peace plan, an Israeli newspaper reported.

It said Kerry wanted the sides to endorse six principles. They included a call for Israel to vacate territory it occupied during the 1967 Six-Day War, subject to land swaps agreed between the two sides.

Kerry’s parameters envisioned a Palestinian state and both would share Jerusalem as the “internationally recognised capital of the two states”.

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