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Cold, windy weather to follow a warm Thursday

Depression to deepen Saturday, bringing non-accumulative snow

By Hana Namrouqa

AMMAN — Dusty and warm weather conditions are expected to prevail today, as the country will be affected by an air mass originating from the Arabian peninsula, the Jordan Meteorological Department (JMD) said Wednesday.

The air mass is forecast to cause temperatures in the capital to rise 8 to 9 degrees above their annual average of 14°C Thursday, meteorologist Hassan Momani told The Jordan Times.

It will be warm during the day, with moderate to brisk winds raising dust, and the air mass will bring dry weather to different parts of the country, according to the weatherman.

Temperatures today will range between a high of 22°C during the day dropping to 7°C overnight in Amman, and winds will be southwesterly, Momani said.

But as of tomorrow, temperatures are forecast to drop drastically to 12°C during the day and 2°C at night in the capital as a result of a cold air mass accompanied by a de-

Min. /Max. temp.

Amman	07/22
Aqaba	10/26
Deserts	03/21
Jordan Valley	12/26
Hilly Areas	02/15

pression expected to last until Monday.

The weather will become cold, cloudy and windy on Friday, giving way to rainfall in the northern areas in the afternoon hours and gradually moving into the central parts of the country.

As the depression advances Saturday, another drop in temperatures is forecast, bringing heavy rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms and strong winds of 60 kilometres/hour.

"Snowfall in hilly areas in the northern parts of the country is expected on Saturday, though not accumulative," Momani noted, adding that temperatures on Saturday will drop to 8°C during the day and 1°C overnight in Amman.

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ARAB WORLD

'Solidarity shield against dangers'

King reviews investment opportunities at meeting with key businessmen in Bahrain

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah and Bahraini Monarch Hamad Ben Isa Al Khalifa underlined the need to achieve Arab solidarity to reach a unified Arab position in the face of dangers and challenges threatening the nation.

During talks in Manama yesterday, the two leaders said it was important to settle inter-Arab differences and foster coordination between Arab states to realise the aspirations of their peoples to live in security and peace. They also called for addressing disputes and tensions in the region and curb external interferences. On the Palestinian issue, the two leaders underscored the urgency to achieve Palestinian national concord.

They emphasised that the two-state solution, which envisages an independent Palestinian state, along with relevant international legitimacy resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative are the correct approach to end the Middle East conflict and bring about security and stability in the region.

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His Majesty King Abdullah is received by Bahraini King Hamad Ben Isa Al Khalifa in Manama on Wednesday

LABOUR

Ministry following up on QIZ 'abandoned' workers

By Hani Hazaimeh

AMMAN — An Israeli owner of a Qualifying Industrial Zone (QIZ) factory left the Kingdom for Israel last month abandoning 17 Jordanian and 151 Bangladeshi workers without paying their salaries, as the Labour Ministry vowed to follow up on the case and do its best to ensure the workers their financial rights.

The story started when a supervisor at the DK Textiles Company in Al Hassan Industrial Estate in Irbid beat up a fellow worker at the company on January 22 amid a dispute over financial demands and vacations due, according to President of the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile Industries (GTUWTI) Fathallah Emrani.

He said the attack against the worker spurred the other 93 Bangladeshi employees to stage a work stoppage in protest on the same day.

When the 17 Jordanian workers went back to work on Saturday, the unionist said, they found the company's gates closed and were told that its owner Sergio Domovisky, an Israeli, had fled the country leaving all 168 workers with two-month salaries and other rights unpaid.

The local workers reported to the union's office in the industrial estate, Emrani said.

Since the company shut down its business, the workers have been relying on themselves in regard to food, water and shelter, Emrani said, adding that the GTUWTI informed the Labour Ministry immediately after it learned of the development.

The union chief said the ministry has been taking care of the workers' food and shelter for the past three days. The ministry's inspection director, Amin Wreidat, said the assistance is "out of the ministry's humanitarian duty". The official checked personally on their situation on Tuesday.

Emrani noted that a total of 85 Bangladeshis informed the ministry of their wish to leave the country. The work permits of 56 of these expired last Saturday.

The union leader charged that the entire episode of the clash between the workers and the company's supervisor was "fabricated in order to push the workers into a strike, which is not legal in the eye of the law and so the employer would not be required to pay their rights". The conspiracy, he said, started when the investor sold his furniture two months ago, "which indicates he was making plans to leave the country". The company's general manager, Majida Ammoura, resigned on February 15. She was not available for comment when contacted by The Jordan Times.

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MIDEAST



A Palestinian man reacts as he inspects the rubble of a mosque, which was destroyed in an Israeli strike, in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, on Wednesday

Israel Cabinet links Gaza truce to soldier release

Palestinian unity talks delayed — Egypt

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel's Security Cabinet voted on Wednesday to make a Gaza truce conditional on the release of a captive soldier, a move that risked complicating Egyptian efforts to broker a lasting ceasefire.

The 12-member Security Cabinet voted unanimously to back outgoing Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's insistence that Gilad Shalit should be released as part of a truce with Hamas, a stance that the Islamists rejected.

"The Security Cabinet unanimously decided that the release of the soldier Shalit is a condition to any agreement with Hamas and the opening of border crossings," Interior Minister Meir Sheerit told journalists after the meeting.

"It would be unthinkable for anybody to reach an accord with Hamas, whether through Egypt or not, without the release of Gilad Shalit," he said.

Hamas rejected the Cabinet's decision and stuck to

its position that Shalit's release be negotiated separately as part of a prisoner exchange involving hundreds of Palestinians currently held in Israeli jails.

'This Zionist position imposes new conditions at the last minute. This completely contradicts the Egyptian and Palestinian positions'

"This Zionist position imposes new conditions at the last minute. This completely contradicts the Egyptian and Palestinian positions," Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhum said in a statement

in which he accused Israel of "blackmail". Olmert first made the demand that Shalit — a now 22-year-old soldier seized by Gaza fighters in a deadly cross-border raid in June 2006 — be released as part of a truce deal at the weekend, drawing furious criticism from Hamas.

Hamas has said any truce must include the opening of Gaza's border crossings, which Israel has closed to all but humanitarian aid since the Islamist movement seized power in June 2007.

But the decision reached by the Security Cabinet said Shalit's release was Israel's top priority" and that officials would begin formulating a list of Palestinian prisoners while keeping the crossings mostly closed.

Egypt, which has been acting as intermediary in separate negotiations for a Gaza truce and for the prisoner exchange, has also said that the two issues should be kept separate.

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COOPERATION

France to lend Jordan 200m euros for Disi

By Khalid Neimat

AMMAN — France will extend a 200-million-euro loan to Jordan "under special terms" to help the Kingdom implement the multi-million Disi Water Conveyance Project, a visiting senior French official announced.

The French Development Agency will sign the loan agreement in few weeks with Jordan, French Secretary of State for Foreign Trade Anne-Marie Idrac told reporters at a press conference on Wednesday. She did not elaborate on the deal but said that this loan is part of the French government's assistance to Jordan to face the growing water challenges.

Also yesterday, the National Electric Power Company signed an agreement

with the French studies firm, Elec-Promotion. The deal includes a 500,000-euro grant from the French government to finance the study which aims to evaluate whether the national power grid has a capacity fit for a planned 1,000-megawatt nuclear power plant.

At the start of the three-day visit, Idrac met with Prime Minister Nader Dahabi and discussed ties between the two countries including means to boost economic cooperation and French private sector investments in the Kingdom. Accompanied by several businessmen and investors, the minister met separately with Minister of Industry and Trade Amer Hadidi on bilateral ties.

The two sides discussed a proposal to encourage



French Secretary of State for Foreign Trade Anne-Marie Idrac (2nd left) is seen during a ceremony on Wednesday to sign a deal between the National Electric Power Company and Elec-Promotion

French companies planning to join efforts in rebuilding Iraq, Idrac indicated.

She met also with Minister of Water and Irrigation Raed Abu Saud and Chairman of the Jordan Atomic

Energy Commission Khaled Toukan to review Jordanian-French cooperation. France ranks first among foreign investors in Jordan with its direct investments totalling 1.3 billion euros.

ANALYSIS



A Shiite cleric holds prayer beads as he stands at the shrine of Hazrat-e Massoumeh, granddaughter of the Prophet Mohammad, during a ritual mourning for Imam Hussein as he marks Arbain in Qom, about 120km south of Tehran, on Monday

Gulf Arabs fear US-Iran diplomacy at their expense

By Lin Noueihed

Reuters

DUBAI — Gulf Arab states are beginning to worry that any US rapprochement with Iran could ultimately lead to their worst nightmare — a nuclear-armed, non-Arab, Shiite Muslim superpower in their neighbourhood.

The US-allied Sunni Gulf Arab states had little enthusiasm for former president George W. Bush's hardline stance on Iran, fearing it could spill into a war that would engulf the region.

But equally they worry the offer of an improvement in US-Iran ties held out by President Barack Obama could go too far by offering concessions to a powerful regional player they have long regarded with a mix of suspicion and hostility.

"We have no objection to Iranian-American negotia-

tions. On the contrary, we encourage this kind of dialogue as a way of avoiding taking the region into military action," said Mustafa Alami, at the Dubai-based Gulf Research Centre.

"At the same time we have huge concerns that the Americans could give concessions to the Iranians which would undermine our security and be unacceptable to us," he said.

Obama won the White House on a promise of change, naming a Middle East peace envoy in his first week in office and offering dialogue with Iran in a public effort to reach out to Muslims.

"Our basic demand is that America should not give concessions on the Iranian nuclear programme and its interventions in Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine..." Alami said.

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