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WEATHER

It will be fair with winds northwesterly moderate, becoming brisk and dusty at times. In Aqaba, it will be hot during the day and fair at night with winds northerly moderate and seas calm.



Min./Max. temp.

Amman	17/28	Jordan Valley	22/34
Aqaba	22/34	Hilly Areas	13/23
Desert	16/32		

RIGHTS

Most Jerusalem Arab children live in poverty

Rights group blames Israel for discrimination aiming to secure majority in city | 4



HEALTH

Exercise keeps stress at bay

With the economy on everyone's mind, exercise is the common denominator that keeps people sane | 14



UEFA CUP FINAL

Shakhtar, Werder braced for 'immortality'

Germany's Werder Bremen and Ukraine's Shakhtar Donetsk meet in Istanbul tonight | 16



DEFENCE

King inaugurates special operations training centre

Top-notch facility 'first of its kind'

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — His Majesty King Abdullah on Tuesday inaugurated the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Centre (KASOTC) in Amman, a facility planned to serve as a regional centre for counter-terrorism training.

During the ceremony, Jordanian and US special forces performed a mock aeroplane hijack and infiltration into a multi-storey building to free hostages.

They also staged a counter-terrorism drill in which a military convoy was targeted by a roadside bomb.

Military representatives from countries around the world were present including Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Gulf states along with the US.

The centre, partially funded by the US government, is expected to receive trainees from Arab, African and American

forces in the near future, according to officials from the centre.

'The root causes of terrorism are a mix of special agendas of many extremist organisations, operating in environments characterised by oppression, despair, frustration...'

The US, Kuwaiti and Bahraini armies will be among the first to make use of the facility, said officials from the centre.



Continued on page 5

Special forces conduct a mock aeroplane hijack rescue operation in Amman on Tuesday

REACTION

Jewish state faces isolation — analysts

Arab states advised to open up to Iran and allies

By Mohammad Ghazal

AMMAN — Washington's renewed commitment to the two-state solution to the Middle East conflict, rejected by Israel, would isolate the Jewish state politically, local analysts said.

They stressed that Israel is the number one threat in the region vis-à-vis the perceived Iranian threat.

They agreed that Arab states still have cards to play, such as a stronger pro-peace stand on the one hand, and closer cooperation with all regional players, including Iran, which, they said, Israel is trying to depict as the main threat to regional instability. They also urged extensive efforts to bring about reconciliation between feuding Palestinian factions.

At a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday, US President Barack Obama pressed a two-state solution to the Middle East. However, Netanyahu said he supported self-governance for the Palestinians and did not mention a state, a position that highlighted a rift in US-

Fears in Israel of cooling US ties

By Charly Wegman
Agence France-Presse

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM — The deep differences exposed during Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's first meeting with US President Barack Obama on Tuesday have stoked fears in Israel of cooling ties with its main ally.

"Agreed to disagree" was the headline in the mass-circulation Yediot Aharonot a day after the key Washington talks laid bare the discord on Middle East peace-making and Iran.

In the weeks preceding the two leaders' first offi-

cial meeting, Israeli newspapers had been filled with alarmist editorials that warned of a stark change of course in US policy towards Israel under Obama.

Following the Oval Office encounter, some warned that the change of tone in Washington boded ill for the special relationship that Israel has enjoyed with its main backer over the years.

"A new era has begun in relations between Israel and the United States," said Eytan Gilboa, a political science professor at Bar-Ilan University.

Continued on page 5

Israeli ties.

"Arabs should support the US position, develop a unified and solid stance to place pressure on Israel, which is politically isolated at this stage and under US pressure," columnist at Al Arab Al Yawm daily Fahed Kheetan said in a telephone interview.

Analyst and columnist

Mohammad Abu Rumman said Arabs should have a plan B in case the US fails to pressure Israel to accept and implement the two-state solution. This alternative plan might be a reconsideration of Arab-Iranian ties through a dialogue with the Persian state.

Continued on page 5

DIPLOMACY

US vice president to visit Lebanon

BEIRUT (AFP) — US Vice President Joe Biden will visit Lebanon on Friday for talks with President Michel Sleiman two weeks ahead of a tightly contested parliamentary election, a government official said on Tuesday.

"Vice President Biden will discuss with the president the Middle East peace process as well as bilateral relations," the official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Biden's trip, set to last three hours, comes as the tiny Mediterranean country prepares for a June 7 parliamentary election in which Shiite group Hizbollah and its allies could win a majority.

Washington considers Hizbollah a terrorist organisation and has been a staunch backer of the current Western-backed majority in parliament headed by Saad Hariri, son and political heir of slain ex-premier Rafiq Hariri.

Hizbollah chief Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah on Monday vowed his party stands ready to fight a new war



Joe Biden

with Israel, as the Jewish state readies large-scale military exercises later this month.

"There is a possibility, albeit small, that Israel may be preparing to launch a new surprise war and is readying its people for such an eventuality," Nasrallah said in a televised address.

"If Israel plans on pulling anything during the manoeuvres (May 31 to June 4), we're sending it a

message that we stand ready and they will fail," he added. "We will not bury our heads in the sand."

"We must take preventive measures for the duration of the manoeuvres." The Hizbollah chief said the military exercises, which Israel has described as one of its largest ever, may be a "psychological message" aimed at restoring the Israeli people's faith in their state and defence forces in the wake of the 2006 war between the Jewish state and his Shiite party.

The speech also came amid a crackdown in Lebanon on Israeli espionage networks that has led to the arrest of more than a dozen people, including a retired security official.

Nasrallah said he would address the issue of the elections and spy rings in another televised speech on Friday, when Beirut marks the ninth anniversary of the withdrawal of Israeli troops from south Lebanon after a 22-year presence.

MIDEAST

Fayyad heads reshuffled Palestinian government

US ups pressure for halt to Jewish settlements

Agencies

WESTERN-BACKED technocrat Salam Fayyad was sworn in as Palestinian prime minister on Tuesday at the head of a Cabinet that now includes members of the president's long-dominant Fateh faction.

Fayyad, a former World Bank economist who has been premier in a caretaker role for the past two years, maintains effective control of security and finance, although Fateh members will replace political independents in some Cabinet posts.

One analyst called it a "transitional" arrangement unlikely to make any major moves as long as Palestinian ranks remain deeply split. That is notably the case between the West Bank, where President Mahmoud Abbas, the Fateh leader, holds sway, and the Gaza Strip, which is run by his Hamas Islamist rivals.



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas (left) watches as Salam Fayyad is sworn in during a ceremony in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Tuesday

Continued on page 5

DAILY LIFE



In this photo taken Sunday, May 10, 2009, a man lifts weights at a gym in central Baghdad

Iraqis do not jog or spin, but fitness clubs are in

By Hamza Hendawi
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Across a mirrored room from stationary bikes and an occasional treadmill, men in tank tops knock back protein shakes and pump iron to loud hip hop.

It's a common scene in America — and the latest craze in Baghdad.

In a city of few diversions and long cut off from the outside world, the boom in health clubs represents another sign that Iraq is slowly emerging from

decades of dictatorship and war.

At least 300 gyms and fitness centres are believed to be operating in Baghdad, compared with about 30 before the 2003 US-led invasion, according to people who work in the industry.

The invasion toppled Saddam Hussein and opened Iraq to the world after a quarter of a century of political and cultural isolation. With that exposure came the Internet, satellite TV, cell phones, trendy tattoos, imported consumer goods and a

desire to look like a different type of strongman: Arnold Schwarzenegger in his prime.

"The arrival of satellite television in Iraq opened our eyes to many things, including the need to be fit," Haidar Mouwaffak, a 28-year-old auto parts salesman, said between reps at the Hummer Gym in Karradah, a central district that has become Baghdad's trend setter neighborhood.

"I want to look good, be physically strong and live in style," Mouwaffak said.

The popularity of health

clubs reflects slowly changing attitudes in a country where healthy living has never been a priority.

Taking up smoking is virtually a rite of passage for many young men. The meat-based Iraqi diet is rich in saturated fat, and huge bellies on men as young as 20 are not uncommon. Although young Iraqi males play plenty of football, the solitary pursuit of fitness is so far an indoors-only affair.

Iraqis don't jog. Nor do they bike. Most Baghdad gyms are for

men only, although some have designated women-only hours. And at least for men, it's the macho stuff, mostly.

There's a much longer wait at peak hours for the weight racks than for the cardio equipment. Care to enroll in a spinning, yoga or aerobic dance class? Consider moving to neighbouring Jordan.

One gym owner even bemoans what he says is the wide use of muscle growth hormones and steroids smuggled from Iran.

Continued on page 5