

Economic summit must tackle Arab Spring – Saudi minister

Kuwait's Al-Shimali says focus on youth issues

RIYADH, Jan 19, (Agencies): A two-day economic summit that opens Monday in Saudi Arabia must break with tradition and tackle people's aspirations in the wake of the Arab Spring uprisings, the Saudi foreign minister said.

"Our meeting should not be mired in routine," Prince Saud Al-Faisal said at a meeting Saturday to prepare for the third Arab Economic and Social Development Summit.

"The Arab world has faced these past two years upheavals of a political dimension... but we cannot ignore their economic dimension," he added.

The minister stressed that the summit must tackle "the problems and issues that concern the lives of our people. We must meet the aspirations of the people."

Poverty, unemployment and social inequalities were among the causes that triggered a Tunisian uprising in late 2010 that later spread to Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria.

Experts have warned the Arab world risks losing the fragile gains made by the uprisings, which brought to an end decades of iron-fisted rule by leaders in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen.

A recent economic report noted that unemployment in 2011 stood at 16 percent in



A general view shows the meeting hall of the Arab Foreign Ministers on the eve of the third session of the Arab Economic, Social and Development Summit held in Riyadh on Jan 19. Saudi Arabia is due to host the Arab Economic summit for the leaders on Jan 21 and 22. (AFP)

Arab countries where 17 million people out of 300 million are jobless.

At the same time inter-Arab investments stood at a mere 25 billion dollars across the region.

The summit in oil-rich Saudi Arabia is expected to discuss the amendment of an Arab convention on investments in a bid to bolster the role of the private sector, the minister said.

The meeting would also examine means of drawing up new financial resources to support impoverished Arab states, he added.

IMF first deputy managing director David Lipton told

Tunisian businessmen in November that Arab countries in transition should push for reforms, encourage investment, boost productivity and create jobs.

A World Bank-Gallup poll survey published on November 27 stressed the regime was in dire need of "social safety nets" to satisfy the socio-economic demands of the Arab Spring.

Meanwhile, the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit due to open here on Monday will focus among other things on youth issues, a senior Kuwaiti government official said on Saturday.

Mustafa Al-Shimali, Deputy Premier and Finance Minister, told reporters following the joint meeting of Arab foreign and finance ministers that supporting youth springs from several aspects, mainly Kuwait's USD two-billion initiative launched in 2009 by HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

He said that the fund, which Kuwait launched with a USD 500-million contribution, is being run by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and has already started financing various projects in many Arab states.

This means that "the fund

is on the right track," he said. Al-Shimali, who left here earlier after attending the meeting, said youth are main lifeline of any society and should be supported in every way, especially when it comes to financing their small and medium projects.

On establishing an Arab stock market, the Kuwaiti minister praised the proposal but said that its sources of financing is unclear.

On another matter, Al-Shimali said that some countries have honored their financial commitments to the Palestinian Authority while others didn't, calling on all to commit.



Photos by Samer Shiqr

Top: Webster being taken around the museum by Dashti and Fadel. (Center): A section of the attendees, and (above) one of the photos taken by Webster.

Historic, Vintage Car Museum hosts Webster

Ace US photographer shares his ideas with young Kuwaitis

By Iddris Seidu
Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 19: There were plenty of idea exchanges and fun with the people I met with much less the photos. It's an exercise that has changed me forever; I'm very happy that I've had a chance to come and visit and share and I'm looking forward to come and visit again, said American photographer Bret Webster, as he interacted with young photographers at a photography workshop organized by the Historic, Vintage & Classic Car Museum in coordination with the US Embassy late Thursday evening.

The photography workshop titled "Photography Conversation" held in the Classic car show room of the Car Museum was meant to showcase Bret Webster's works as well as give the ace American photographer a platform to share ideas with young Kuwaiti photographers to conclude his 5-day visit to Kuwait where he mounted an exhibition of his photos at the Dar-el-Funoon Art Gallery.

His trip to Kuwait was at the invitation of the US Embassy after his stunning photos were selected and utilized in the US Embassy under the "Art in Embassies" Program.

A slide show of Webster's photos was run for the tens of photographers and media personnel as well as the Museum's photography team who had gathered for the photography interaction. Some of the photos were taken using the night skies of the national parks of his home state of Utah in the United States as his canvas. Webster has created stunning images that highlight the relative insignificance of the Earth in the cosmos.

Explaining the nature of some of the photos, Webster said most of the photos were taken in the Grand Canyon area of Utah which is very dark at night and the camera amplifies the light available from the Milky Way. He added that he uses very wide and very fast lenses, sometimes even a 15mm fisheye, which helps capture the full Milky Way with 180-degree panorama.

Expertise

Mustafa Makhseed, director of committees of the car museum expressed his happiness with this collaboration, saying that the cooperation to share international expertise on photography makes available to the museum's photography team as well as other photographers some new and never-before-known techniques in the trade which will go a long way to enhance their knowledge.

Such sessions and workshops serve the objectives of the museum which is sponsored and supported by His Highness Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and reinforces the museum's efforts to provide new skills to its members under the instructions of Abdulaziz Ishaq, member of the Board of Trustees.

The workshop, said Fadel Al-Oreyer — Director of the Library and Photography at the museum, is a great way to interact with international photographers to gain experience and learn new and different ways and tips in pho-

tography which keeps changing very fast with the shifting technological landscape.

Eng Zakaria Dashti, Director of Communication said the workshop couldn't have come at a better time as the museum is preparing to reveal a new surprise facility that could be an amazing addition to its list of facilities; the first Automotive Photography and Videography Studio in Kuwait, fully equipped with the state-of-the-art devices for photographing and filming cars in Kuwait. "We would like to thank the US Embassy team that helped in making this event a great success and hope to work with them in more projects in the future", he said.

After the workshop, the impression of international photographer Bret Webster was expressed in these words: "There is as much beauty in the people of Kuwait as in the land of Kuwait, and you can hunt down all that creativity everywhere around you".

Gift

Webster whose mantra has always been "It's a privilege and a joy to share in the adoration of our universe and the beauty of our existence" said it's a gift that mankind, given the chance to exist, has been placed in this garden of beauty and is swimming in it. "It doesn't seem like an accident to me at all", he reiterated.

On the reason for his visit, Webster said he's lucky to be living in a beautiful area like Utah where he took some photos some of which were placed in the US Embassy in Kuwait under the "Art in Embassies Program". The photos, he said got utilized well and fostered good communication which earned him the privilege to come to Kuwait and interact with people and share the photos.

"I want to tell you, it's an incredible honor and a privilege for me. I couldn't tell you how happy and touched I am. I had plenty of fun with the people I met with much less the photos. It's an exercise that has changed me forever; I'm very happy that I've had a chance to come and visit and share and I'm looking forward to come and visit again", said the 51-year-old, who has worked for 27 years as a rocket engineer and solid-fuel propellant specialist for US defense firm Northrop Grumman.

Working with a Canon 5D MK2 on a tripod pointed at the sky and using a 30-60 second exposure, Webster's images have become globally popular, particularly in the American Southwest because of his unique angles and ability to press advanced equipment to the very edge of its capability in gathering the light of natural beauty. He has been featured on television and print in many publications across the United States and around the world.

"Digital cameras have become so advanced that it is now possible to take these pictures from the surface of the Earth and use their sensors to capture thousands of stars in the night sky. As he has to shoot in temperatures of -12 degree C and hike for hours to elevations of 6,000ft or more to take his pictures, his passion for photography is evident.

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