

Political tensions rising in Kuwait

Kuwait has so far escaped the mass protests that have swept the Arab world thanks to a generous welfare system. But opposition groups are escalating pressure on the Gulf state's leadership over claims of corruption and perceived attempts to roll back political freedoms



Wednesday: Dozens of protesters storm parliament as hundreds more demonstrate outside, demanding that Prime Minister step down

■ Prime Minister
***Sheik Nasser
Mohammed
Al Ahmed
Al Sabah***, 71.

Under pressure from opposition MPs over claims that government officials illegally transferred money to accounts outside Kuwait



■ Premier targeted by opposition criticism since his appointment in 2006, forcing him to resign six times

■ Kuwait's key affairs run by ruling Al Sabah family, but parliament has most powers of any elected body in Gulf

■ A key Western ally, Kuwait could host thousands more U.S. troops under Pentagon proposal to strengthen Gulf forces following withdrawal from Iraq

Population: 2.92 million

Life expectancy: 76 (m), 80 (w)

Ethnicity: Arab 80%, South Asian 9%

Main religion: Muslim 85%
(Sunni 70%, Shia 30%)

GNI per capita: \$59,874 (2008)

Oil production: 2.45 million bbl/day
(2010) – ranked 11th in world