



Today: 27 May 2009 Time: 11:35 AM

0 dead, 260 wounded Kuwaiti stocks start day on up of 43.5 pts Brown calls for European strategy to beat recession

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General 5/26/2009 1:11:00 PM

LONDON, May 26 (KUNA) -- The number of undergraduates applying to Britain from the Arab Gulf States has doubled in only three years, according to Financial Times newspaper research Tuesday. Increasing numbers of the regions future elites have been attracted by the international reputation of UK higher education, the main business daily in Europe said.

Numbers have risen every year since 2001 in spite of big fluctuations in the oil price. Over the past decade, the figure has leapt fivefold. The jump could boost Britains influence in the region, as well as providing much needed income for universities at a time when government funding will be tighter, it commented. Because the students are from outside the European Union, they can be charged higher, unregulated fees. The thriving market is a rare success story during the credit crunch - with applicants still rising this year. Shaun Curtis, head of the international unit at Universities UK, said British institutions were benefiting from a "massive increase" in university-age Middle Eastern students. "The overall population is becoming younger, which is in stark contrast to the UK," he said. David Stevens, head of the international office at University College London, made clear that Britain holds a range of attractions for young students from the Middle East. "Many of the families have property in London in particular," he said. In addition, "British education is seen as something very valuable". But British universities emphasised that they will have to fight harder than before to increase student numbers. This is because the appeal of the US is growing again, after an absolute fall in enrolments in the years after 2001 because of tighter visa restrictions and anti-Americanism in the Islamic world. The FT research found large and fairly steady rises in both undergraduate applications and actual undergraduate numbers from the GCC, since the mid-1990s. Applicants rose 30 per cent to 3,306 in 2008, for example. (end) he.bz.

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