

Amir accepts resignation of interim government

• First legislative session set for February 15 • Amir to consult with former Parliament speakers on Premier appointment • Parliamentary blocs to meet and decide on speakership position



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah receiving the resignation of Cabinet from Premier Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. (KUNA)

Staff Writers & Agencies

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Sunday accepted the resignation of the interim government and of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The cabinet stepped down to clear the way for a new government after parliamentary elections were dominated by hard-line Islamists and other opposition groups.

Under the constitution, a new cabinet must be formed before the new parliament's first session, which is held two weeks after the vote.

The Amir is expected to start today customary constitutional consultations ahead of the formation of a new Cabinet. Accordingly, His Highness will meet former speakers of Parliament including former parliament speakers Jassem Al-Kharafi, Ahmad Al-Saadoun, Mohammad Al-Adsani and Ahmad Al-Sarhan to consult them on the appointment of a prime minister. A decree is due on this appointment

today or tomorrow in order for the Cabinet formation process to start.

Meanwhile, the Amir issued a decree accepting the resignation of the outgoing Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah along with his Cabinet ministers. However, the outgoing Cabinet will carry on as a caretaker until a new lineup is set.

The Amir expressed sincere gratitude to the outgoing Cabinet for their efforts during their tenure in serving the country and its citizens.

Earlier, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah tendered Cabinet's resignation to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. He asserted in the letter of resignation the government is determined to press ahead with its development plans under the instructions of His Highness the Amir, while acknowledging the magnitude of challenges and difficulties facing the country. He also mentioned that the recent elections were free and fair.

Additionally, the Cabinet has agreed dur-

ing its meeting Sunday on a decree convening the new Parliament to a new legislative session on Feb. 15.

In another development, political forces and parliamentary blocs have held meetings to decide on the next speaker of Parliament as well as the other positions.

The Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM) and the Islamic Salafi Alliance held separate meetings during which discussions were made on the shape of the new Cabinet and what is expected of it. They also deliberated over the speakership position and other leading parliamentary posts.

An informed source within the ICM asserted that the movement is still adamant that fundamental changes should be done to the mechanism through which the Cabinet is formed and that the premier should do away with power sharing arrangements so that right people can be placed in the right posts.

The source added that the ICM looks forward to a Cabinet that consists of competent, sturdy and trustworthy members, stressing

that the new government should come up with a development agenda in the first legislative term so that it gets the approval of the Parliament.

In the same vein, MP Osama Al-Shaheen told Al-Watan that the issue of reform and the finalization of numerous draft laws will be on top of his priorities. He lamented that the previous Parliament focused on oversight at the expense of legislation. Al-Shaheen said his other priority will be the improvement of political discourse in the country.

Correspondingly, MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri asserted the need for a strong Cabinet that will hold law violators accountable and will not subscribe to compromises. Stressing that the new Cabinet should foster national unity, the MP backed the idea of amending Article 2 of the Constitution, which stipulates that the religion of the State is Islam, and the Islamic Sharia shall be a main source of legislation." But he hastened to note that the amendment of this article faces hurdles at the current time.

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HRW criticizes Kuwait's lack of action on citizenship claims

KUWAIT: Kuwait's government should follow through on promises to address citizenship claims of stateless residents, known as Bedoun, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said Sunday in a statement to the press on issuing its World Report 2012. The government should also amend its national laws to protect domestic workers following its approval, in June 2011, of a new international treaty on decent work for domestic workers.

Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at HRW said that he requested meetings during his visit with the government to discuss how the recommendations by the human rights bodies can be implemented. "We make every effort to make the government take the recommendation into account," he said.

Addressing reporters, Stork said that starting February, hundreds of stateless people in Kuwait held numerous demonstrations demanding citizenship. The Interior Ministry warned Bedoun not to demonstrate and violently dispersed protest

on several occasions with water cannons, tear gas, smoke bombs, and sound bombs. Stork said that Security forces beat protesters, detained dozens, and threatened to deny their citizenship applications. A committee set up in November 2010 promised some rights to Bedoun, such as identification papers and access to public education. However only 16,000 citizenship applications have been approved in the past 20 years, recent news reports said, citing a statement by the head of the committee. "Following decades of broken promises, Kuwait needs to act now to address the plight of the Bedoun," said Stork. "Punishing Bedoun for protesting while refusing to act on their citizenship claims shows how little respect the government has for their rights." In its 676-page World Report 2012, Human Rights Watch assessed progress on human rights during the past year in more than 90 countries, including popular uprisings in the Arab world that few would have imagined.

More on 3

Activists gather for second day of protests at Syrian embassy

Arab League to pursue Syria efforts after UN setback



Activists protest against the Syrian regime outside Syrian embassy in Kuwait City on Feb. 5, 2012. (AFP)

Michael A. Kolarov
 Staff Writer & Agencies

KUWAIT: Hundreds of Syrian nationals and Kuwaiti citizens protested for the second day on Sunday, calling for the ouster of the Syrian ambassador from Kuwait.

Islamist lawmaker Waleed Tabtabaie called on the crowd to demonstrate on Monday in front of the Russian and Chinese embassies to protest their veto against a UN Security Council resolution aimed at pressuring Presi-

dent Bashar Al-Assad to end his bloody crackdown.

On Friday and Saturday, Al-Assad's regime bombarded the central Syrian city of Homs, which reportedly killed more than 200 civilians during a massive assault by regime forces.

The double-veto at the Security Council outraged the US and its European allies as well as Arab leaders, and intensified fears among regime opponents that Al-Assad will now unleash even greater violence to crush protesters, feeling that he has protection by his top ally Moscow,

AP reported.

Additionally, Arab states will not stop their efforts to resolve the Syrian crisis even though their bid to secure UN backing was blocked by Russia and China, the Arab League's secretary-general said in a statement obtained by Reuters on Sunday.

Also Sunday, Tunisian Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali called on all countries to cut off diplomatic relations with Syria over the violence there.

More on 3&4

US, Australian filmmakers die in helicopter crash

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Strollers walk on the frozen banks of the river Elbe in Hamburg, northern Germany, on Feb. 5, 2012. The Arctic cold snap that has hit Europe for over a week had claimed nearly 300 lives by Feb. 5, 2012, brought air travel chaos to London and dumped snow as far south as Rome and even North Africa. (AFP)

First 'vampire' Bat fly fossil discovered

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Queen Elizabeth II to mark 60 years on throne today

LONDON: The 85-year-old monarch marks 60 years on the throne on Monday - the anniversary will be marked by a series of regional, national and international events throughout 2012.

Elizabeth ascended the throne when her father, George VI, died on Feb. 6, 1952. She is the longest-serving monarch after Queen Victoria, who reigned for more than 63 years.

She spent a lifetime upholding her pledges to serve her peoples, earning a reputation in the process for calm shrewdness. When she ascended to the throne in 1952 aged just 25, Winston Churchill was prime minister of Britain, Jawaharlal Nehru led the newly-independent India and swathes of Africa and Asia were still governed by Britain. Queen Elizabeth II actually started five months of diamond jubilee celebrations last weekend with the promise of pomp and splendor despite the British monarch's wishes for restraint.

The queen will make a deliberately low-key visit to Norfolk in eastern England on Monday, 60 years to the day since she ascended to the throne after her father King George VI suddenly died on Feb. 6, 1952.

The visit kicks off a series of events culminating in a flotilla of 1,000 boats sailing up the River Thames on June 3, led by the queen in a barge decorated in royal scarlet and gold and adorned with flowers. Palace officials say the queen has ordered that there should be "no unnecessary expenditure of public money" on the celebrations. Underlining the calls for restraint, Prince Charles' wife Camilla stressed that the queen "likes things very plain" and launched an appeal for a recipe to mark the occasion, such as the coronation chicken created for the coronation in 1953.

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Egypt's Mubarak to be moved to prison for 1st time

Cairo protesters demand early vote, clash with police

CAIRO: Egyptian officials say Hosni Mubarak will shortly be moved to a prison hospital as soon as the facility is upgraded to house the 83-year-old former president. The officials said Sunday the hospital in Tora prison in Cairo will be upgraded in "record time," but that there is no set date for the move.

Since his arrest last April, Mubarak has been held in custody first at a hospital in the Red Sea resort city of Sharm El-Sheikh and later at a military hospital outside Cairo. The officials said nearly 50 stalwarts of Mubarak's regime held at Tora would also be dispersed to five dif-

ferent jails in the Cairo area. They include Mubarak's two sons. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media.

Meanwhile, protesters are demanding a swift presidential election and an early handover of power by the army hurled rocks at police guarding the Egyptian interior ministry on Sunday and were forced back with volleys of tear gas. It was the fourth day of clashes outside the ministry, in which seven people have died.

Protesters accuse the ministry of failing to prevent the deaths last week of 74 people after a soccer match in the Mediterranean city of Port Said. Five more have died in Suez.

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World powers 'plan anti-carbon tax talks'

FRANCE: India, Russia, the United States, China and other countries will meet in Moscow this month to decide whether to retaliate against the EU's decision to impose a carbon tax on air travel, a report says.

The European Union (EU) imposed the tax with effect from January 1, but over two dozen countries, including India, Russia, China and the United States, have opposed the move saying it violates international law.

The Press Trust of India late Friday quoted what it said were official sources as saying over 30 countries would meet in Moscow on Feb. 21 and 22 to decide on retaliatory measures against the EU

if it insists on imposing the carbon tax on non-EU flights as there was "growing agreement" on the matter. The report did not name the sources.

The news agency added that India delivered "a strong message" on the carbon tax issue to an EU delegation led by EU climate Chief Connie Hedegaard on Friday in New Delhi.

"Even if only India, Russia and China decide to start charging for over-flights by European carriers or decide to restrict the number of flights operated by them citing emission concerns, it could have a devastating effect on the European airline industry," a source said, according to PTI.

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