

Amir accepts resignation of interim government



His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (center) chairing a Cabinet meeting which was aimed towards reviewing the resignations of the transitional government, Sunday, Feb. 2, 2012. (KUNA)

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For his part, MP Khaled Al-Sultan said he is under enormous pressure to run for the speakership position, noting that he is still engaged in consultations and that no final decision has been made on the matter.

In a related development, MP Ali Al-Rashed asserted his determination to contest the speakership position, adding that the people of Kuwait are yearning for further reforms which will not be accomplished without the embodiment of cooperation.

Further, sources close to MP Adnan Abdulsamad have confirmed his intention to vie for the position of deputy speaker and that he already initiated consultations to this end.

In the meantime, an official source stated that the government has yet to decide on parliamentary posi-

tions, while parliamentary sources spoke of government's eagerness to achieve cooperation between the executive and legislative authorities. Reportedly, the government would seek the neutralization of the opposition in order to avert interpellations targeting the prime minister and certain members of his Cabinet.

The outgoing interim cabinet was appointed in December after its predecessor resigned in response to a political deadlock that has stymied reform and held up vital development projects in the major oil-exporter.

The Amir then dissolved parliament and called early elections in which an Islamist-led opposition bloc stormed to victory, taking control of the state's fourth parliament in six years.

The next cabinet, which is handpicked by a prime minister of the Amir's choice, is expected to face an opposition emboldened by its gains in last week's vote.

14 Third Constituency voters appeal against Al-Juwaihel's victory

Ibtisam Saied
Staff Writer

KUWAIT: At least 14 voters from the Third Electoral Constituency on Sunday filed an appeal demanding the annulment of the election of MP Mohammad Al-Juwaihel to Parliament following a closely contested election. The lawsuit was filed at the Constitutional Court by the representing the complainants who are challenging the election of Al-Juwaihel in the recent parliamentary elections.

Citing Article 68 of the Penal Code, the complainants contended that whoever is sentenced should not be allowed to occupy public office, stand as candidate or take part in board elections.

They also invoked Article 2 of the said law which stipulates that any person indicted for being in honor and trust related crimes should be barred from elections.

The complainants therefore urged the Constitutional Court to declare Al-Juwaihel's seat as vacant and to strip him of his membership.

Women lost elections in a country where majority of voters are females



FILE- Photo of first former female MPs to win four seats in 2009 parliament out of 50 seats, but failed to win a single seat in 2012 parliament.

Bedour Al-Mutairi
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KUWAIT: The outcome of the recent parliamentary elections was an "unexpected defeat" of female candidates. Women won four seats in 2009 parliament out of 50 seats, representing eight percent of the MPs, but they failed to win a single seat in 2012 parliament.

Political struggle of women began a long time ago. Historian and female activist Nouriah Al-Sadani submitted a complaint to the National Assembly's Petition Committee in 1971 demanding granting women with their political rights and taking part in elections. But it seems that Al-Sadani did not expect that her demands would not be met before 35 years, as the political rights of women have been approved on May 16, 2005. Accordingly, women participated in 2006 elections but they did not win. On 2008, 27 female candidates ran for elections but they all failed. But in 2009, 17 female candidates ran for elections and 4 of them won.

Despite the fact that the number of female voters in all constituencies reaches 215,300 voters compared to 184,996 male voters, none of the female candidates won elections in 2012.

The former female MPs ran for elections but they did not win. However, former female MP Masouma Al-Mubarak came in 11th place and needed only 40 votes

to win. Meanwhile, Dr. Aseel Al-Awadhi came in 13th place, Dr. Rola Dashti came in 20th place and Dr. Salwa Al-Jassar came in 19th place.

New female candidates ran for elections and achieved unacceptable results. Third Constituency candidate Safaa Al-Hashem came in 14th place with 5,021 votes, and Fourth Constituency candidate Thikra Al-Rashidi gained 4,943 votes.

With the failure of female candidates winning any seats in the new Parliament, there are concerns that the political struggle for women's rights have been rolled back. However, this loss may bolster calls to allocate seats for women in Parliament through the quota system, which is applied in several Arab countries including Jordan, Iraq, Sudan, Palestine, Mauritania and Lebanon. Kuwait signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1994 and signed Beijing Agreement on the empowerment of women and protecting their political, social and economic rights. However, these agreements haven't been applied and men are still dominating all leading posts in Kuwait.

The reasons behind the failure of women to win the recent elections were repeating the claims that female MPs "achieved nothing", although they were keen to attend all sessions, in addition to lack of experience of female MPs.

Kuwait voters punished government for graft: Analysts

KUWAIT: The election victory by the Islamist-led opposition reflects public frustration with corruption, coupled with the rise of tribal power and unprecedented street protests, analysts say.

Voters harshly punished the previous government and its allies over corruption charges that implicated at least 13 MPs, with fingers also pointed at senior government officials, they said.

Women, who made history in the 2009 vote by winning four seats for the first time, failed to win a single seat, paying the price for the blind support of most of the female MPs for the government, the analysts added. The Islamist-led opposition won a majority 34 seats in the 50-member parliament in Thursday's snap election, with 21 seats won by tribal candidates, half of them Islamists.

Islamists won a total of 23 seats. "It's a triumph for Islamists and tribes combining to oppose the government... and a punishment for the previous government over allegations of corruption," independent political analyst Ayed Al-Manna told AFP.

Tribes, who constitute 55 percent of

Kuwait's 1.17-million population, were historically the main supporters of the government and the Al-Sabah ruling family, but that has changed in recent years.

Al-Manna said the unprecedented youth-led street protests, inspired by the Arab Spring, played a decisive role in the opposition's victory.

Islamists and the Popular Action Bloc, another major component of the opposition, strongly supported the protests which demanded far-reaching political reforms, including the establishment of a constitutional monarchy.

As a result of the protests, the previous government led by Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah resigned in late November. A week later Kuwait's Amir dissolved parliament and called for early polls. "The Arab Spring has reached Kuwait, but in Kuwaiti style... calm, peaceful and legal," former Islamist MP Mubarak Al-Duwailah wrote in Al-Qabas daily on Sunday.

"The people have expressed their support for the Islamist forces," he said.

Pro-government MPs were reduced to a small minority, while only two of

13 former MPs questioned by the public prosecutor over corruption charges were re-elected. The remainder either lost or did not contest the poll.

"The tribes are now the most powerful (group) within the opposition," said liberal political analyst Shamlan Issa, who cautioned that the loose opposition coalition remains "divided" with different political agendas.

Liberals were also big losers in the election, being reduced to just two seats from five previously. Many liberal activists and writers predict that the new parliament will not last long because it is packed with hardliners. "We are headed for an extremely hot political season after a brief honeymoon... parliament may not survive for two years," said Issa, a political science professor at Kuwait University.

Al-Manna, however, said that Kuwait's future hangs on the "government's ability to deal and coexist with the Islamists."

OPEC member Kuwait has been rocked by a series of political crises over the past six years, leading to the resignation of seven governments and the dissolution of parliament four times. -AFP

Al-Saadoun is best for Parliament presidency: MP Al-Khanfour

Abbas Dashti
Staff Writer

KUWAIT: Newly-elected MP Saad Al-Khanfour praised the level of transparency and honesty, as well as the smooth organization involved in the election process, saying, "All authorities assigned to the organization and security of the election did their part perfectly."

Speaking to the press during an election victory reception party held in his constituency in the city of Ishbiya, Al-Khanfour went on to say that the people of Kuwait were now concerned with who would be occupying the position of the President of the National Assembly. He explained that currently there are three MPs contesting for the position. The first one is Ahmad Al-Saadoun, followed by Mohammad Al-Saqr and Ali Al-Rashed.

Al-Khanfour noted that according to the constitution, they are all qualified to nominate themselves for the job, yet, according to Al-Khanfour, he personally believes that Al-Saadoun comes first in the selection because "[Al-Saadoun] is a man strong enough and capable to manage as the country is going through a thorny and tense phase". Al-Khanfour added that Al-Saadoun had the right experience as a former president of the Parliament, pointing out at the same time that Al-Saadoun had acquired the needed experience as a veteran MP.

"I also believe that the government needs to appoint qualified and highly skilled people and to forget about the quota system as well as technocratic approach so that the national unity would be truly achieved," he remarked.

As for the parliamentary committees, the MP said that it would be too early to speculate and that sufficient time is needed to discuss the matter with other colleagues to see which committees should



Photo of Newly-elected MP Saad Al-Khanfour (center) with supporters during an election victory reception party held in his constituency in the city of Ishbiya, Sunday, Feb. 5, 2012. (Al Watan)

be addressed.

The MP went on to say that the last election can be described as "characteristically Islamic" but added, "This is natural and inevitable result considering the nature of the Kuwaiti society."

When asked about the fact that there is not one single woman MP in Parliament this time around, Al-Khanfour replied by saying that this is the will and the choice of the people of Kuwait and that such results were concluded through democratic process.

"Women candidates have obtained excellent results but obviously were not good enough to secure a place for her in the parliament.

Therefore we just have to accept it and move on. On the other hand, we are hopeful that the MPs would be at the level of performance expected from them in terms of pushing forward the develop-

ment plans and growth, reform and political stability, and exert all endeavors as a united front to lead the country to national unity," he remarked.

The MP went on to say that past should be forgotten and that people should move forward leaving behind all anecdotes related to violence, conflict and political disputes. He also urged better and healthier approach to resolving pending issues adding that the issue of the multi-million deposits is now in the hands of the judiciary system and therefore there is no pointing discussing something prior to the court's ruling.

The MP was also specific about the issue of national unity and that stricter measures and regulation need to be introduced and implemented so that those who are keen to split the society would be deterred from attempting to proceed with their agendas.

Al-Fadhli election victory dinner disrupted

Mervat Abduldajem
Staff Writer

KUWAIT: Large crowd were seen entering Hayat Regency Hotel Saturday evening all heading to the dinner party held and organized by the newly-elected Member of Parliament (MP) Nabeel Al-Fadhli for the occasion of getting elected to the National Assembly.

The dinner party was scheduled to begin seven thirty but unusually started off a half hour earlier. Along with the guests, a good number of police officers were also present.

Suddenly, there was commotion and chaotic scene as a number of guests were jostling as another newly-elected MP Mohammed Al-Juwaihel entered the hall to congratulate Al-Fadhli. This had alerted the police officers who fearing for the life of Al-Fadhli promptly escorted him outside

the building to a secure spot. MP Al-Fadhli was already threatened the morning prior to the dinner party.

Following Al-Fadhli's evacuation, there was a hubbub with the crowd jostling to reach Al-Juwaihel. Fearing for his life, his close supporters circled him for his own protection. Some had lost conscious amid such disorder. The police officers once again alarmed at the scene escorted Al-Juwaihel outside the hall. He chose to take his car accompanied by some of his close friends and left the hotel altogether.

Prior to Al-Fadhli's departure, he was asked about his own opinion of the structure of the National Assembly and whether he approves it.

The MP said that from the outside, the structure doesn't look really optimistic. However, he added that it is too early to pass judgment at this stage. He added that the first parliamentary session for the

National Assembly will reveal the kind of predispositions and the political inclinations the MPs might have.

He went on to say, after thanking all voters, that he will carry out all the promises he had made during his election campaign. He also revealed that during his campaign, several people contacted him expressing their wishes to be part of his constituency.

Asked about the rise of violence in the country, Al-Fadhli attributed to the failure of applying the laws which has been the case for a long time.

"The situation is very dangerous. The danger I am talking about here is two-fold; the so-called Arab Spring which is taking place in some neighboring countries. The other is related to the anarchy coupled with the fact that it is uncontrollable. We have already warned against it," he remarked.

Al-Qanaee: Lawmakers should endorse women's rights in coming Parliamentary sessions

KUWAIT: The Head of the Kuwait Testahel "Worth" Committee Abrar Al-Qanaee said in a press release that the newly elected lawmakers have to assist Kuwaiti women order obtain all their rights in accordance with the Constitution. He added that some women are afraid that laws, which are expected to contribute in lifting injustice women suffer from, might not be endorsed in the coming stage. Al-Qanaee said that boosting women's rights should top the priorities of the current Parliament, indicating that the document stipulates that the sons of Kuwaiti women

who are married to foreign men should be eligible to obtain the Kuwaiti citizenship. It also states supporting Kuwaiti women to hold senior positions, amending the housing law to enable women to receive equal housing rights, and granting the sons of Kuwaiti women the right to pursue their overseas study according to Offset Program. She concluded her statements saying that women's rights should never be marginalized any more, adding that woman make a majority of the Kuwaiti society and is politically educated and aware of her rights.