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MPs demand probe into alleged corruption cases

Barrak, others thank Amir for pardon • Ghanem adjourns Assembly session

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Eleven opposition MPs yesterday demanded a comprehensive parliamentary investigation into suspected corruption in which previous and current lawmakers and ministers have been allegedly involved since 2009. In a motion submitted to the National Assembly, the lawmakers called for forming a five-MP investigation committee which will be entrusted to investigate former MPs and ministers and senior state officials and bureaucrats suspected of being involved in corruption cases.

According to the motion, the panel should be elected by the Assembly and must submit the outcome of its probe within three months. The investigation should include money transfers into the suspects' bank accounts or that of their companies since they assumed public

office. It should also cover ownership of real estate, investments and industrial, agricultural and service land plots, normally offered by the state. The committee should also probe tenders and contracts at all ministries including Kuwait Petroleum Corp and its subsidiaries, and arms deals, especially Caracal, Eurofighters and Rafael deals.

Meanwhile, the official gazette did not publish the names of people who were pardoned by HH the Amir, but local media published some names, including all 11 former opposition MPs and activists who have been living in exile in Turkey since the summer of 2018. One of them, ex-MP Musallam Al-Barrak, thanked HH the Amir for the pardon. He also thanked all those who exerted efforts to achieve the pardon.

The names also include relatives of members of an Iran-linked cell who had received various jail terms for harboring

members of the cell despite being wanted by security authorities. A majority of the 25-member cell have been convicted on charges of terrorism and sentenced to long jail terms.

Two leading opposition MPs yesterday criticized the cancellation of the National Assembly's regular session scheduled for yesterday, saying that the cancellation violated the constitution. MPs Shuaib Al-Muwaizri and Mubarak Al-Hajraf said in separate statements that although the government has tendered its resignation, HH the Amir has not yet accepted the resignation and accordingly the Cabinet is still active and should have attended the Assembly session. Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday adjourned the Assembly session, saying that he had been informed by the prime minister that the Cabinet had resigned and cannot attend the session.



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem adjourns the parliament session over the government's resignation yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

News in brief

426 residency violators deported

KUWAIT: At least 426 residency violators have been deported in a week, according to statistics by the deportation and temporary arrest affairs department, the interior ministry said yesterday. It said the deportations were on instructions of Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Al-Sabah and follow-up by Undersecretary Maj Gen Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. The decision aims at taking necessary legal action against residency violators as soon as possible. — KUNA

COVID infections pass 250m

PARIS: More than 250 million COVID-19 infections have been recorded worldwide since the start of the pandemic, according to an AFP count. The number of new cases around the world has been slowly increasing over the past few weeks. Nearly 449,000 new daily infections have been recorded on average over the past seven days, against just over 400,000 in mid-October. Of the new infections recorded worldwide, more than 60 percent are in Europe. — AFP

Top UAE diplomat meets Assad

DAMASCUS: The United Arab Emirates' top diplomat met Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad in Damascus yesterday, state media said, in the first such visit by a top UAE official since Syria's war began 10 years ago. The UAE broke ties with Syria in Feb 2012, as the repression of nationwide protests demanding regime change was escalating into a devastating war. In Dec 2018, the UAE reopened its embassy in Damascus. — AFP

Indian journalists investigated

NEW DELHI: Lawyers and journalists are among dozens of people being investigated by police in India over posts on social media about anti-Muslim violence. Authorities have opened a criminal investigation into the owners of 102 social media accounts under strict anti-terrorism legislation for allegedly sharing "fake news" about mob attacks on Muslims in the state of Tripura. — AFP

Kuwait real estate market witnessing 'noticeable rebound'

KUWAIT: Kuwait's real estate market witnessed a "noticeable rebound" during the third quarter of this year, particularly in the investment and residen-

Tuvalu minister films speech standing in sea

GLASGOW: Tuvalu's foreign minister has filmed a video address to be shown at a UN climate summit yesterday standing thigh deep in seawater and pleading for help as his country slips beneath rising oceans. In the video, Simon Kofe tells delegates that "climate change and sea-level rise are deadly and existential risks for Tuvalu and low-lying atoll nations". "We are sinking, but so is everyone else," he

said. "And no matter if we feel the effects today, like Tuvalu, or in a hundred years we will all still feel the dire effects of this global crisis."

The film begins with a close-up Kofe standing at a lectern, wearing a suit and tie, in front of a blue screen with Tuvalu and UN flags. "We are demanding that global net-zero be secured by mid-century, that 1.5 degrees be kept within reach, that urgently needed climate finance be mobilised to address loss and damage," he pleaded. "We are looking for the world to get its act together."

The camera then pulls out to reveal Kofe standing up to his thighs in the water off Tuvalu's coast.

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This videograb taken from footage released yesterday shows Tuvalu's Foreign Minister Simon Kofe standing thigh-deep in seawater as he addresses delegates at the ongoing COP26 conference in Glasgow. — AFP

Closed Morocco, Algeria border divides families

Oujda, Morocco: Fatima Chaaoufi gazes across the sealed Moroccan border towards an Algerian village on the other side, home to family members she hasn't seen for years. "We're so near yet so far," she sighs. Chaaoufi's village of Oulad Bouarfa, east of the Moroccan city of Oujda, lies just a stone's throw from Boussfar, the Algerian village where her brother died a month ago.

Chaaoufi had not been able to see him since 1994, when the border was closed following a diplomatic crisis between the North African rivals.

"When I found out he had died, I couldn't control myself," she said, tears in her eyes. "I ran to the barbed wire. They tried to hold me back but (my grief) was stronger than me." The 75-year-old, sitting in the yard of her family's modest farm wearing a hijab on her head and an apron around her waist, said she had been forced to watch the funeral procession from a distance, "impotent and in tears".

Chaaoufi's is just one of many families divided by a frontier that Algeria closed in 1994 after Morocco accused its neighbor of involvement in a jihadist attack on a Marrakesh hotel that killed two tourists. The frontier has been sealed ever since, and there is little prospect of it opening soon as tensions mount once again between Rabat and Algiers.

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Oujda, Morocco: Algerians take pictures along the border with Morocco on Nov 4, 2021. — AFP