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Kuwait backs 'stable, secure and unified' Iraq: Ghanem

Halbousi: Iraq's relations with Kuwait 'crucial and dynamic'



BAGHDAD: Senior parliamentary officials including Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem attend the Baghdad Summit for Parliaments of Iraq's Neighboring Countries yesterday. — KUNA

BAGHDAD: Kuwait's chief lawmaker praised an Iraqi-hosted conference for bringing together neighboring parliaments, saying Kuwait welcomes a stable and unified Iraq that is open to its neighbors. "For our part in Kuwait, we say, without ambiguity and with clarity: We are with a stable, secure and unified Iraq," National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem told top lawmakers from the host nation, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Jordan, Syria and Turkey.

The talks "give hope to the region's people, Iraqis in specific, that entering an age of peace and stability is possible, and that regional fighting and tension are not an inevitable fate as some tend to portray," he said. "Strategically, we support a prosperous and developed Iraq that enjoys growth and prosperity," Ghanem said. Iraq is a "neighbor," he said, and it is not in the interests of its neighbors for the country to be going through a period of turmoil.

This is the reason HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah chose to host the Iraqi reconstruction international donors' conference in early 2018, he explained. Ghanem described the talks as "unprecedented", commending the "will" of the nations gathered and the "tireless efforts" of Iraqi parliament speaker Mohammad Al-Halbousi in bringing them all together.

Halbousi described his country's relations with Kuwait as "crucial and dynamic" during the conference. He said there was "wide" understanding and that economic deals were in the "preparation phase" between

the two. He said that this was thanks to Kuwait's hosting of the global donor conference targeting Iraq's reconstruction in February last year.

Iraqis are "no longer anxious" about being one-dimensional and are today keen on building strategic partnerships with their neighbors, without "favoritism", Halbousi said. Iraq has signed agreements with Iran and Saudi Arabia, he said, while its relations with Turkey are "exceptional" as the two prepare for joint economic plans. Iraq is also keen to open its border crossings with Syria for trade, after doing so with Jordan.

The leading parliamentarians of Iraq's neighbors, including Ghanem, met Iraqi President Barham Saleh. Ghanem later attended a meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdulmehdi, whereby both discussed bilateral relations and means to achieve "integration and cooperation" for the benefit of both countries.

The one-day roundtable brought together countries fiercely at odds across the region. Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and Kuwait sent the heads of their legislative bodies, while Iran dispatched a senior parliamentary official. Hosted by Iraq's youngest-ever speaker of parliament, the 38-year-old Halbousi, the meeting lasted just shy of three hours.

The countries pledged to support stability, reconstruction and development in Iraq, which has been ravaged by several decades of conflict including a three-year battle against the Islamic State group.

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CAIRO: Chief Executive Officer of Al-Kharafi Group and Zain Bader Al-Kharafi meets Egyptian Prime Minister Mustafa Madhouli in the presence of Egypt's Communications Minister Amro Talaat.

Al-Kharafi Group eyes new Egypt investments

CAIRO: Chief Executive Officer of Al-Kharafi Group and Zain Bader Al-Kharafi said the group is highly interested in the Egyptian market, adding "we inherited the love of Egypt from our father Nasser Al-Kharafi". He said the group is keen on increasing its investments in Egypt and expand its current projects that include investments in the field of constructions in the new administrative capital and other projects in the field of contracting and roads, in addition to being interested in investing in communications and Internet services, besides smart cities.

Kharafi spoke during his meeting with Egypt's Prime Minister Mustafa Madhouli to discuss the opportunities of expanding investments in Egypt, in the presence of Egypt's Communications Minister Amro

Talaat. Kharafi said the group's investments in the industrial sector in Egypt are on the increase, as it carried out expansions in the group's plants in Alexandria and other cities, besides its partnership with Japan's Mitsubishi in the Egyptian market.

The Egyptian prime minister appreciated the valuable contributions of Al-Kharafi Group in the Egyptian economy, adding the government is keen on extending all forms of support for serious investments and welcomed the group's desire to invest in the field of communications, Internet and smart cities. He indicated the government's interest in bringing investments in the field of manufacturing electric mass transport vehicles as well as electric cars.

Madhouli pointed to the government's

efforts to encourage national industry and increase local components, and replace imported commodities with locally manufactured ones in order to reduce the trade deficit and bring in hard currency, while emphasizing the government's support to all Arab and foreign investments that may contribute to achieving these goals.

Meanwhile, the communications minister spoke about the possibility of cooperating with Al-Kharafi Group in the field of establishing a data center, because it is one of the promising and important fields in Egypt. Kharafi welcomed cooperation in this field, and spoke about the expertise of the group in establishing and managing data centers, and its readiness to establish such centers within a maximum of 18 months.

Visa curbs on 6 nationalities; job tests for expats mullied

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Well-informed sources said various residency affairs managers have been instructed not to approve any visit or entry visa requests for nationals of Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Iran and Pakistan and refer them to Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, who will either approve and return the applications to the concerned departments for issuance or reject them. The sources added that the same applies to Bangladeshi applicants.

Meanwhile, well-informed sources at the manpower authority said the authority is studying subjecting expats applying to work in Kuwait to professional tests prior to bringing them here. The sources said the first phase of the tests will be done in Kuwait, and later determine the professions to be tested abroad after the professional standards division sets the job description of each profession. The sources justified the new decision to the fact that some expats had been recruited to work in certain professions but turned out to know nothing about them.

Egyptians vote in referendum to extend Sisi rule

CAIRO: Egyptians voted yesterday in a referendum that aims to cement the rule of President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, the former coup leader who presents himself as a rock of stability in a turbulent region. Voters were being asked to back amendments to the constitution to allow Sisi, 64, to run for another six-year term while boosting his control over the judiciary and giving the military even greater influence in political life.

At a polling station in Manyal, a Cairo suburb overlooking the Nile, Mohamed Abdel Salam, 45, told AFP he was voting enthusiastically in support of the changes. "I don't care about the presidential terms," he said. "Sisi could stay forever as long as he's doing his job... and he has already done a lot"

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CAIRO: Elderly Egyptian women cast their ballots at a polling station at a school in the neighborhood of Shubra yesterday. — AFP

Trump seethes over report; poll numbers drop

WASHINGTON: A seething President Donald Trump launched a tirade Friday against the "bulls**t" Mueller report on how he tried to thwart the probe into Russian interference in the 2016 election, while a leading Democratic opponent urged his impeachment. In early morning tweets, Trump called it "the Crazy Mueller Report" written by "Haters" and filled with statements that "are fabricated & totally

untrue". Some of the statements, he said, "are total bulls**t & only given to make the other person look good (or me to look bad)."

Just 24 hours earlier, the president crowed "Game Over" after the report by special counsel Robert Mueller was finally released, following two years of investigations. Crucially, the report stated that Trump's election campaign never colluded with Russian meddling efforts, clearing the president of suspicions that he'd been in cahoots with the Kremlin. But Trump, spending the Easter weekend at his Florida golf resort, is now digesting the report's findings that he was happy to benefit from Russian dirty tricks and tried repeatedly to hamper Mueller's investigation.

The number of Americans who approve of

Trump dropped by 3 percentage points to the lowest level of the year following the release of a redacted version of Mueller's report on Thursday, according to a Reuters/Ipsos online opinion poll. There was also no let up for the president from opposition congressional Democrats. Senator Elizabeth Warren, who is vying to become the Democratic candidate against Trump in 2020, tweeted that the Democrat-led House "should initiate impeachment proceedings". And House judiciary committee chairman Jerry Nadler issued a subpoena to try to force publication of still more documentation from Mueller, as well as the portions of the probe that were blacked out for legal or security reasons.

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WASHINGTON: An illustration shows a Game of Thrones-styled montage from US President Donald Trump's Twitter page. — AFP