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Kuwait says it respects Iran's integrity after Ahvaz meeting

Deputy FM reassures Iranian envoy, says meeting was held without approval

Damkhi files to grill Aseeri

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Islamist opposition MP Adel Al-Damkhi yesterday filed to grill Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Ghadeer Aseeri barely a week after she took office, over allegations that she challenged the integrity of MPs. In his brief grilling, Damkhi charged the minister of violating the principles of cooperation between the National Assembly and the government by issuing statements deemed offensive to lawmakers.

Acting Assembly Speaker Essa Al-Kandari said the grilling will be listed on the Jan 7 session's agenda for a possible debate unless the minister invokes her right to delay the debate



Adel Al-Damkhi

for two more weeks. The minister became a target of criticism by several opposition MPs for tweets she posted on her account some eight years ago in which she declared her total support for anti-government protests in neighboring Bahrain and for criticizing the dispatching of Gulf troops to Bahrain to support the government.

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By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Kuwait said yesterday that it respects Iran's "territorial integrity", a day after Tehran summoned its envoy to protest against Kuwaiti officials meeting Iranian separatists. In a meeting with Iran's ambassador Mohammad Irani, Kuwait's deputy foreign minister Khaled Al-Jarallah stressed that his country's foreign policy was based on respecting "sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs and good neighborliness", KUNA said. KUNA said Jarallah had reassured Iran's ambassador that Kuwait respects the "Islamic Republic of Iran's territorial integrity".

Iran's foreign ministry had said on Saturday that it summoned Kuwait's envoy to Tehran to protest against its officials meeting a separatist group and holding an "anti-Iran meeting". "Such actions are a clear interference in the internal affairs" of Iran, the foreign ministry told a Kuwaiti envoy, according to a statement. The Iranian statement did not specify which separatist group the Kuwaiti officials stood accused of having met.

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KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Irani yesterday. — KUNA

Maid dies after brutal assault

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Capital police were alerted yesterday after receiving a report from Sabah Hospital concerning the arrival of a deceased Filipina housemaid with bruises on various parts of her body. Initial examination of the body suggested the possibility of a homicide, so the public prosecutor was notified and the body was reexamined by the coroner, who confirmed earlier suspicions.

The maid's sponsor, who had taken her to hospital, admitted during interrogations that his wife had beaten the maid until she fainted, adding he was shocked when he realized at the hospital that she had died. The sponsor was detained and his wife was summoned. She admitted to beating the maid but said she had not intended to kill her.

Detectives and forensic experts rushed to the sponsor's house in Sulaibikhat to examine the crime scene, where they found traces of blood that had been cleaned and evidence that the maid had been brutally beaten. A case was filed and further investigations are still in progress.

Kuwait ends successful UNSC tenure

NEW YORK: Kuwait has concluded its non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council with great success, defending during its tenure a multitude of Arab-related causes connected with Palestine, Syria and Yemen. Moreover, Kuwait helped in formulating a resolution - the first of its kind - on missing persons in armed conflicts. The GCC state also had a hand in UNSC decisions on the humanitarian situation within context of the Syrian crisis and also contributed to a presidential statement on Yemen.

During the past two years, Kuwait managed to bear the great burden of being the sole Arab member of the council, and succeeded in following up and coordinating with Arab countries and trying to reflect their positions and concerns in the decisions or statements discussed by the council. "Unfortunately, Arab issues are many in the Security Council, and some of them have gone on for many years, such as the Palestinian cause. There are other issues listed since the seventies and since 2011... the situation has been very difficult and according to the statistics of the council, the Arab causes in which the council is occupied constitute almost 50 percent of its overall work," Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN headquarters in New York Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi told KUNA.

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UNITED NATIONS: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN headquarters in New York Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi casts a vote during a session on Syria's humanitarian situation. — KUNA

News in brief

Death sentence for Yemeni stabber

RIYADH: A Saudi court sentenced a Yemeni man to death yesterday for a knife attack on a Spanish theatre group, state television said. The court also sentenced an accomplice to 12 and a half years in jail for the Nov 11 attack, which state media linked to militant group Al-Qaeda, and which Madrid said left four performers wounded. The assailant, identified by Saudi police as a 33-year-old Yemeni, went on a stabbing spree during a musical in the capital's King Abdullah Park. — AFP

Slain men were driving car bomb

DUBAI: Two Saudi men shot dead last week in the eastern city of Dammam were driving a car loaded with explosives and were planning an "imminent terrorist operation", the SPA state news agency said yesterday, citing security forces. The two started shooting at security forces when they were approached on Wednesday and were shot dead. Five kg of paste was taken from the car and found later to contain the explosive RDX. — Reuters

Arrests over 'indecent', harassment

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has arrested more than 200 people for violating "public decency" - including by wearing immodest clothing - and "harassment", police said. Some 120 men and women have been arrested over the past week for offending public morals, including wearing "inappropriate clothes". Another 88 people were arrested in various harassment cases after several women complained on social media that they were harassed at the MDL Beast music festival in Riyadh earlier this month. — AFP

Lathi: Indian cops' colonial weapon

NEW DELHI: As Indian protests against a new citizenship law have intensified, so has police use of "lathis", sturdy sticks used to whack, thwack and quell dissent since British colonial times - to sometimes deadly effect. At least 27 people have died in the past two weeks of protests, mostly from bullets, but hundreds more have been injured in clashes between demonstrators and riot police wielding the bamboo canes.

Images shot by AFP and other media of officers hitting people with them, in some cases apparently indiscriminately

lashing out at passersby and even minors, has only fuelled public anger. One video of a group of Muslim women in New Delhi protecting a cowering male fellow student from a police lathi barrage spread like wildfire on social media in India.

Those who have experienced a blow from a lathi, measuring five or six feet (1.5-1.8 m) and made of stout bamboo or plastic, say it leaves a numbing sensation that lasts for days. Multiple strikes can break bones, cripple and even kill. "From being used as means to regulate crowds, lathi has turned into a lethal weapon," said V Suresh, the secretary general of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUC), a non-profit rights group. "It is... being freely used, so much so that as a country we have become injured to it. Lathi is seen as a normal but it is

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GALORE, India: In this picture taken on Dec 19, 2019, policemen with "lathis" beat a protester during a demonstration against India's new citizenship law. — AFP

Iraq protesters lock down oil field, call strike

NASIRIYAH, Iraq: Iraqi anti-government protesters blockaded an oilfield and rallied in southern cities yesterday while political factions remained paralyzed in their attempts to form a new government. Several hundred people demanding jobs shut off access to the Nasiriyah field, 300 km south of Baghdad, which produces 82,000 barrels of oil per day, executives said. The two-day-old blockade is the first to disrupt operations in OPEC's second largest producer since the start of the popular revolt set to enter its fourth month in early January.

The Iraqi oil ministry said the blockade "will not

have an impact on production and exports", adding that the national oil company's branch in the southern port of Basra will "compensate for the losses". Iraq exports around 3.6 million barrels of oil per day. The youth-led protests demand the ouster of the entire political class that has run the country in the aftermath of the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein.

Demonstrators have vented their fury at what they consider inept politicians who have mismanaged the economy, enriched themselves and are beholden to powerful neighbor Iran. Sit-in protests have shut down state offices and schools across the Shiite-majority south for weeks, and demonstrators again declared a "general strike" in Diwaniyah yesterday, the first day of the working week. Mass rallies and picket lines also paralyzed Kut, Hilla, Amara and the shrine city of Najaf, AFP correspondents said.

The protests have continued despite being met with batons, tear gas and, at times, live rounds in violence that has claimed nearly 460 lives and left some 25,000

people wounded. The activists scored a partial success in November with the resignation of prime minister Adel Abdel Mahdi, who however remains in charge in a caretaker role. Pro-Iranian and other political factions have since wrangled over finding a replacement - so far without success.

And although parliament has just voted for an electoral reform package, there has been no indication that the early polls many citizens are calling for will be held anytime soon. Heightening the turmoil, President Barham Saleh last week threatened to resign rather than put forward the name of a pro-Iran candidate to form the next government.

Nasiriyah student demonstrator Osama Ali praised the head of state, saying he had "foiled the attempts by parties and militiamen to kill off the revolution to protect their own interests". "This gives us hope to continue our peaceful movement until we obtain all our demands," he told AFP.

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