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Amir to open new Assembly term; 2 grillings on agenda

Legal committee declares premier's grilling unconstitutional

Amir receives message from Saudi King



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday visiting Saudi State Minister and cabinet member Prince Turki bin Mohammad Al-Saud and his accompanying delegation. The Saudi minister conveyed a verbal message from King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud on brotherly

ties between the two countries and means to develop them on all levels. In return, HH the Amir voiced utmost appreciation for the Saudi monarch and for Crown Prince, Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Mohammad bin Salman Al-Saud, as well as everlasting prosperity for the brotherly Saudi people. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah opens the new term of the National Assembly today amid what appears to be strained Assembly-government relations after MPs filed to grill three ministers. The Amir, in his first public appearance after undergoing successful medical tests in the United States, is expected to address domestic, regional and international issues and urge cooperation between the government and lawmakers in the last term before general polls.

The opening ceremony will also hear speeches by the speaker and the prime minister, then move to debate at least two of three grillings submitted against the ministers of finance and public works. A third grilling against the interior minister has been listed on the Nov 12 session agenda but could be brought forward if the minister and the Assembly agree. The ministers are accused of committing administrative and financial violations.

If enough time remains, the Assembly will then elect its various committees amid expectations that the government and its supporters, who enjoy a comfortable majority, will consolidate their grip on a number of key panels, especially the financial, legal and interior committees. Other committees to be elected include the health and labor, public utilities, housing and petitions panels.

The new term is expected to debate a crucial legislation to find a solution for the decades-old problem of some 120,000 stateless people or bedoons, who or their forefathers have been living in the country for over 70 years without citizenship. Speaker Marzuq Al-Ghanem said he has completed a comprehensive law that would provide lasting solutions, insisting that there will be no bedoon problem after one year if the law is implemented correctly. He said that he decided to delay filing the bill for a week to allow other MPs to study it and submit proposals.

And since this term is the last before parliamentary elections, populist demands by MPs seeking re-election are expected to rise sharply. An example of such demands was the approval on Sunday by the legal and legislative committee of five proposals to resolve the consumer loan problem at the expense of public coffers.

In another development, the legal and legislative committee yesterday voted to declare that a grilling filed by opposition MP Abdulkareem Al-Kandari against the prime minister is not in line with the constitution. It was the committee's second such decision during the previous term. Kandari said the decision of the committee had been highly anticipated, alleging the grilling was referred to the committee to make such a decision to prevent the grilling of the premier.

News in brief

Clampdown on drones

KUWAIT: The ministry of commerce and industry urged all drone importers and outlets licensed by the interior ministry to register all buyers' civil ID and mobile phone numbers. The ministry stressed importers need prior interior ministry licenses to import drones, adding that a decision had been made to ban the import of remote control-operated drones equipped with video recording or communication devices without interior ministry authorization. — A Saleh

Floods kill 7 in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH: Seven people have been killed and 11 injured in floods after heavy rain lashed northeastern parts of Saudi Arabia, Al-Ekhabriya state television reported yesterday. Rescue services in the northeastern city of Hafer al-Batin, about 100 km southwest of Kuwait, said that 16 people were forced to evacuate their homes. Seven affected by the rain were provided with shelter, it added. Schools in Hafer al-Batin suspended classes yesterday due to the weather. In January, 12 people were killed in floods in Saudi Arabia. Ten died in Tabuk, one in Madinah and another in a northern border area. — AFP

Top executives expected at FII

RIYADH: Top finance executives and political leaders have converged on Saudi capital Riyadh for a Davos-style investment forum. US officials and the heads of giant banks, top asset management firms and major sovereign wealth funds top the guest list at the three-day Future Investment Forum (FII) that starts today. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro, whose countries are key emerging markets, are set to speak at the summit along with King Abdullah II of Jordan and four African leaders. — AFP

67-year-old gives birth

BEIJING: A 67-year-old woman has given birth in China, a hospital said yesterday, with the parents claiming they are the country's oldest couple to conceive a baby naturally. The woman, surnamed Tian, delivered a healthy girl by Caesarean section on Friday. Zaozhuang city's Maternity and Child Health Care Hospital told AFP. The Global Times reported the new baby girl was called "Tianci", meaning "gift from heaven". The Jinan Times said Tian already had two children, including a son born in 1977, two years before China imposed a one-child policy to control its burgeoning population. — AFP

Tharoor expounds on politics, diplomacy, literary escapades

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: In an inclusive interview with Kuwait Times yesterday, prominent Indian MP and Congress party leader Dr Shashi Tharoor said his party is now recovering from the shock it sustained in the parliamentary elections earlier this year. He added recent assembly election results from Maharashtra and Haryana states make things "more hopeful for the party" and point the way forward.

Tharoor, a former undersecretary general at the

United Nations, also recalled his UN days as an international career diplomat and fondly remembered his interactions with Kuwaiti diplomats there. Tharoor arrived in Kuwait yesterday to deliver a keynote speech at the 16th anniversary of the founding of the Indian Business and Professional Council (IBPC) Kuwait at Radisson Blu Hotel.

"We were certainly stunned by the defeat and as a result we neglected to do some of the things we needed to do in the first few months, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the elections, which is a somewhat difficult thing," Tharoor replied to a question on the chaos the Congress party plunged into following the elections in India.

"I think Rahul Gandhi stepping down as Congress president actually was a bit of a surprise, because normally, political leaders in our country have a habit of saying 'these are parts of the ups and downs in democracy

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Shashi Tharoor



Jihad Azour

Unemployment fuels unrest in Arab states: IMF

DUBAI: Unemployment and sluggish economic growth are fuelling social tension and popular protests in several Arab countries, the International Monetary Fund said yesterday. The unrest is in turn contributing to slower growth in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, alongside global trade tensions, oil price volatility and a dis-

orderly Brexit process, the IMF said in a report on the regional economic outlook. Earlier this month it lowered the 2019 forecast for the region - taking in the Arab nations and Iran - to a meager 0.1 percent from 1.1 percent last year.

The IMF slashed its outlook for the region's three largest economies - Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates. The risks around the forecast of earlier this month "are skewed to the downside and are highly dependent on global factors," the IMF said in its report yesterday. "The level of growth that countries in the region are having is below what is needed to address unemployment," said Jihad Azour, the IMF's direc-

tor for the Middle East and Central Asia.

"We are in a region where the rate of unemployment at the youth level exceeds 25-30 percent and this requires growth to be higher by 1-2 percent" in order to make a dent in joblessness, Azour told AFP in an interview. The IMF report said that the high unemployment was worsening social tensions in Arab countries. "Unemployment averages 11 percent throughout the region versus seven percent across other emerging market and developing economies," it said. "Women and young people are particularly likely to be out of work, with more than 18 percent of women... without jobs in 2018."

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Trump booed at World Series baseball game

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump was booed by baseball fans as he attended a World Series game with his wife Melania in Washington Sunday. Trump attended the tie-breaking game five of the series on the day his administration announced the death, long-sought by the Pentagon, of Islamic State group leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. After the game's third inning, the stadium's video display showed military members in attendance - but then quickly cut to Trump.

The cheering crowd immediately switched to loud and sustained boos. When the display cut back to the soldiers, the booing died down, but fans soon took up a chorus of "Lock him up!" - a play on the chant frequently heard at pro-Trump rallies against Hillary Clinton, but now often used against the president. Demonstrators sitting behind the home plate also unfurled "veterans for impeachment" banners during the game, in reference to the House of Representatives investigation into whether Trump abused power by withholding military aid to Ukraine.

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WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump attends Game Five of the 2019 World Series between the Houston Astros and the Washington Nationals at Nationals Park on Monday. — AFP