

Local

Deputy Amir, Crown Prince: Kuwait, Turkey share strong historic ties

Sheikh Mishal receives Turkish National Assembly Speaker



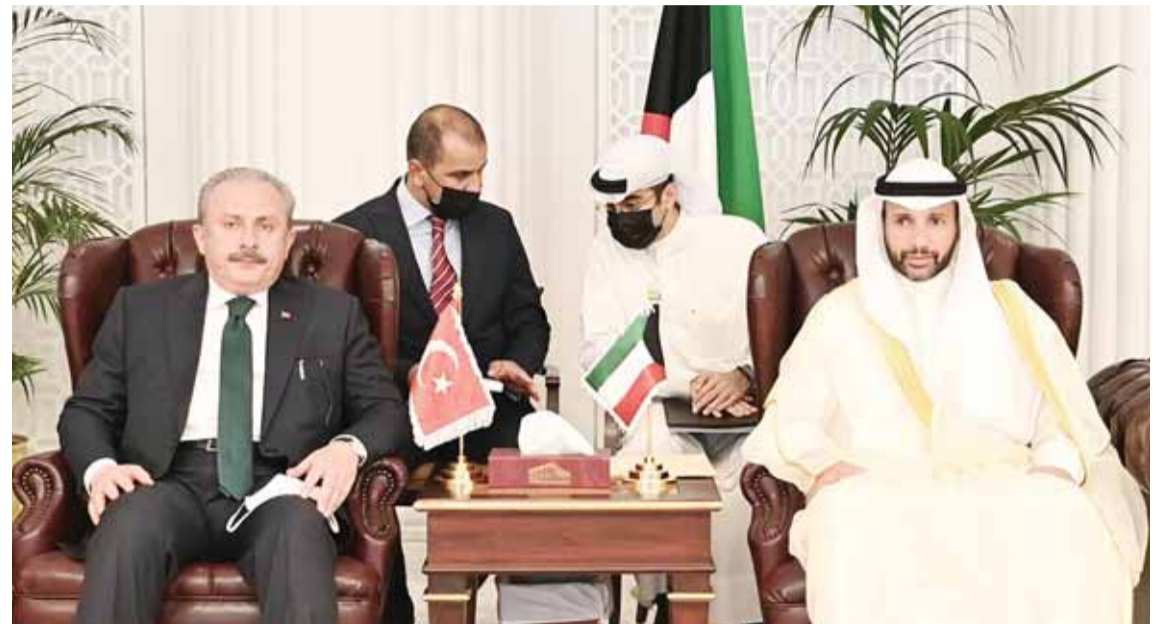
KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets the visiting Turkish Grand National Assembly Speaker Mustafa Sentop. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah hailed the strong Kuwaiti-Turkish ties yesterday. The remarks were made during the visit of Turkish parliament speaker Mustafa Sentop and his accompanying delegation. His Highness expressed his joy over Sentop's visit, noting that the two countries share historic diplomatic relations that started in 57 years ago. Kuwait's Embassy opened in 1971 in the capital Ankara, said His Highness the Crown Prince, adding that Kuwaitis will never forget Turkey's support to their country during the Iraqi Invasion and its participation in the liberation. He thanked Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for his notable support to Kuwait throughout the years.

His Highness Sheikh Mishal also hailed the two countries cooperation on different levels including politics, economy, security and commerce. He also mentioned the love Kuwaiti tourists have for Turkey, which they consider as their second home. The rise in trade and exports between the two countries is part of the strong economic ties, he

said. He expressed his joy over Kuwait's growing investments in Turkey, adding that Turkish companies also played a role in building Kuwait's infrastructure. Meanwhile, His Highness the Deputy Amir spoke of the role of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), launched in Turkey in 1979, in financing projects to aid the country in meeting the health, educational and economic and social needs of Syrian refugees.

In the meantime, Sentop expressed his joy over the visit, which was by an invitation from National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. He conveyed the greetings of President Erdogan and the Turkish people to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Sentop added that Turkey and Kuwait must exert further efforts to develop their relations and cooperation in all fields. He noted that he had received Speaker Ghanem in January 2020 and had held fruitful meetings in Ankara and Istanbul. The Turkish parliament had formed the Turkish-Kuwaiti friendship group as a priority, said Sentop, hoping that Kuwait's assembly would also make haste in form-



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets his Turkish counterpart Mustafa Sentop.

ing the group for further cooperation between the two parliaments.

Moreover, the Speaker affirmed that he is working with Al-Ghanem to create bigger support for the Palestinian cause. He added that he hopes his country would host the meeting of the Palestinian committee of the parliaments of member-countries in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in October. Sentop also spoke of the visit of Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs last April, where they discussed the meeting of the partnership council for cooperation between the two countries. The visit included setting a road map for the council and discussed cooperation in defensive military industries. Turkey is set to organize the 15th International Defense Industry Fair (IDEF) 2021 in August and Kuwait will take part in the event, he said. Sentop asked for Kuwait's support for Turkey's initiative to open Yunus Emre Institute, a topic that Erdogan and His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah had discussed in 2017. The institute is a cultural center that will boost the two sides' relations in the

field, he noted.

His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah had received at Bayan Palace yesterday the visiting Turkish Grand National Assembly Speaker Mustafa Sentop with his official delegation. Speaker Ghanem attended the meeting, in addition to senior officials of the Amiri Diwan.

Speaker Ghanem had met his Turkish counterpart earlier at his office, and the two officials held a meeting focusing on means to boost cooperation between both nations in various levels, especially in the parliamentary domain. The two top parliamentarians also discussed the urge to unite stances towards various Islamic issues on the international and continental parliamentary arenas.

Turkish Speaker Sentop had arrived in Kuwait late Sunday in an official two-day visit to the country. The Turkish guest was received at the airport by Secretary of Kuwait's National Assembly Farz Al-Daihani, Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Ayse Koytak and Secretary General of Kuwait's National Assembly Adel Al-Louhghanit. —KUNA

Iraqis skeptical of COVID jabs...

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But across the capital, mask-wearing has become lax and restrictions have loosened considerably. Sarmad Al-Qarlousi, who heads Baghdad's Al-Kindi Hospital, was insistent that, unless far more citizens get jabbed, the country is spiraling toward "an epidemiological catastrophe". "We have entered the third wave and we have to be ready," he said. "We are trying to control the disaster, and we are advising people to take the vaccine."

The hospital's 54 intensive care unit beds have been fully occupied all year, and there is a long waiting list. In one of the air-conditioned rooms of the COVID isolation ward, a woman in her late twenties was gasping for air as a ventilator aided her ravaged lungs. "She has been here for 15 days," said her 20-year-old sister Roqayya Abdel-Moutaleb as she gently stroked her arm. "We come regularly to support her."

She has been taking turns with her mother to tend to her sister, while her nieces and nephews - prevented from visiting the hospital for fear of contracting the virus - fret over their mother. Asked

about her feelings about the vaccine, Abdel-Moutaleb however retorted firmly that "it's too risky... this vaccine isn't safe".

The UN World Health Organization says that the "approved COVID-19 vaccines provide a high degree of protection against getting seriously ill and dying from the disease". It also says on its website that they "are safe for most people 18 years and older, including those with pre-existing conditions of any kind, including auto-immune disorders".

Iraqi health ministry spokesman Saif Al-Badr blamed the general hesitation to get inoculated on a "misinformation campaign which preceded the arrival of the vaccine". Even doctors have been complicit in spreading false news. Hamid Al-Lami, a general practitioner, was arrested and banned from practicing medicine in May after asserting that the virus was curable with natural herbs. Another rumor about vaccines which spread widely was the unfounded claim that they cause infertility.

Populist Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr, with millions of ardent followers, initially lambasted US-manufactured vaccines but, after he received his first jab in April, registrations for the vaccine rose significantly. Skepticism and apathy remain especially rife amid younger Iraqis, the 60 percent of the population aged under 25. One of two young men smoking cigarettes in an upmarket Baghdad district told AFP that "we don't trust the government or the types of vaccines it has brought". — AFP

announced they had foiled a bid to destabilize the pro-Western kingdom, but 16 were later released. A former crown prince who was sidelined as heir to the throne by the king in 2004, Hamzah has made accusations against Jordan's rulers in a video message posted by the BBC on April 3. He said the same day that he had been put under house arrest.

Authorities later said he would not stand trial, as his case had been resolved within the royal family, with Hamzah pledging allegiance to Abdullah. The king appointed Hamzah as crown prince in 1999, at the request of his late father, but removed him from the post in 2004, later naming his son, Prince Hussein, as next in line to the throne.

The court had rejected a defense request to summon three princes along with Prime Minister Bisher Al-Khasawneh and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi as witnesses, calling it "unproductive". The trial was held behind closed doors in the capital Amman. Bin Zaid's lawyer said ahead of the verdict that the defense team had asked the court to "find both our clients innocent of the charges against them".

US-educated Awadallah was long considered a contentious and divisive figure in Jordan, having served as finance and planning minister before becoming royal court chief in 2007. He played a key role pushing for economic reforms, before he resigned in 2008 amid criticism over alleged interference in sensitive political and economic issues. Following the crisis, King Abdullah appointed Samir Al-Rifai, a former prime minister, to oversee plans to "modernize" the country's political system. The initiative aims to offer Jordanians "a political life that suits them", Rifai said in June. — AFP

Jordan ex-officials...

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But yesterday, journalists were allowed to watch footage of the ruling via video link from a tent set up outside the court. Delivering the ruling, Judge Muwaffaq Al-Masaid noted that the men had been friends for 20 years and were close to Prince Hamzah. He said they had tried to put into action "ideas that are hostile to the existing political system in the kingdom and his majesty King Abdullah".

The men had tried "to create chaos, sedition and divisions within Jordanian society and spread hateful discourse towards the political system, threatening the safety and security" of the kingdom, he said. Awadallah and Bin Zaid were found guilty of "incitement against the ruling system" and "acts that could threaten society and create sedition". Awadallah, who holds Saudi nationality, had been on trial alongside Bin Zaid, a relative of King Abdullah, since June 21.

Images released by authorities showed the two men, wearing light blue prison uniforms, being escorted in handcuffs into the court, under heavy guard. Their lawyers did not comment on the ruling apart from saying they would appeal. Bin Zaid was also found guilty on two drugs charges which would have carried prison terms, but the court did not extend his incarceration.

The unprecedented palace crisis erupted in April. Eighteen suspects were arrested after authorities

UK agonizes over abuse of...

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Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka, the three players whose penalty shootout misses handed victory to Italy at Wembley on Sunday, were the victims of a stream of abuse on Instagram and Twitter - many apparently from foreign trolls and bots. While some people identifying as England fans used racial slurs in blaming the trio for the defeat, other offensive messages were accompanied with "forza italia" hashtags.

"This England team deserve to be lauded as heroes, not racially abused on social media," Johnson wrote on Twitter. "Those responsible for this appalling abuse should be ashamed of themselves." England's players have made a strong stand against racism at the tournament, taking a knee before their games including the final.

But Johnson and others in the Conservatives' "anti-woke" government had initially defended the freedom of speech of England fans who booed the players, before backing the team later in the tournament. Former Manchester United player Gary Neville accused the prime minister of having "promoted" racism, noting one notorious past comment by Johnson likening Muslim women who wear the veil to "letterboxes".

Former Conservative party chairwoman Sayeeda Warsi urged the government: "It's time to stop the culture wars that are feeding division. 'Dog whistles win votes but destroy nations.' Johnson's official spokesman pushed back against Warsi and said of Neville: 'I'd utterly reject that claim. The prime minister is explicit in his condemnation of any racist abuse in any circumstances,'" he told reporters.

The Downing Street spokesman also noted that new UK legislation coming up will mandate tougher action by social media companies.

Lightning kills 76 in India, including...

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He said up to 30 people were on the towers when the lightning struck. Emergency teams were checking if any victims had fallen into a deep moat on one side of the towers. "Some of the injured were left unconscious by the strikes. Others ran out in panic and extreme pain," he added. Officials told local media some of those killed were taking selfies during the storm.

Every year, tens of thousands of tourists visit the Amer Fort, a medieval complex on a hilltop outside Jaipur also known as the Amber Fort. People had been flocking to the fort, which gives a panoramic view of the tourist city of Jaipur, after several weeks of intense heat in the state. In the neighboring state

of Uttar Pradesh, at least 42 people were killed in lightning strikes on Saturday and Sunday, officials said. They did not give further details about where they had been killed.

Facebook said it had "quickly removed comments and accounts directing abuse" at the footballers. "No one thing will fix this challenge overnight, but we're committed to keeping our community safe from abuse," it added.

London's police force said it was aware of "a number of offensive and racist social media comments", promising an investigation. The Metropolitan Police also said it was probing scenes of mayhem after some ticketless fans forced their way into Wembley Stadium. Greater Manchester Police in northwest England said they were treating as a racist incident the defacement of a mural in the city in honor of Rashford. Obscenities and Saka's name were daubed over the artwork.

England player Raheem Sterling also received a stream of racial abuse after social media users accused him of cheating to win a penalty in England's semi-final win over Denmark. European football's governing body UEFA said it "strongly condemns the disgusting racist abuse" and that "we stand by the players and the English FA's call for the strongest possible punishments".

The Football Association said: "We're disgusted that some of our squad - who have given everything for the shirt this summer - have been subjected to discriminatory abuse online after tonight's game. 'We stand with our players.' Prince William, the FA's president who attended the final with his wife Kate and son George, said he was "sickened" by the abuse. Despite the abuse, the overwhelming majority of messages were in support of the players, who have been praised throughout the tournament for helping bring together a nation hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

Meanwhile, England football chiefs and police faced questions over the chaotic and violent scenes around Wembley Stadium for Sunday's Euro 2020 final, with concerns it could affect the country's 2030 World Cup bid. Police have launched an investigation to find the ticketless fans who stormed through security barriers and entered the stadium before the final. — AFP

Another 11 people died in the central state of Madhya Pradesh over the weekend, an official at the state's disaster control room told AFP. Two of them, who had taken their camels and sheep for grazing, were sheltering under a tree when they were hit by lightning, the official said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the victims' families would be offered compensation.

Last month, 27 people were killed and four passengers on a flight were hospitalized after severe turbulence during monsoon storms the eastern state of West Bengal. Nearly 2,900 people were killed by lightning in India in 2019, according to the National Crime Records Bureau - the most recent figures available. The monsoon is crucial to replenishing water supplies in South Asia, but also causes widespread death and destruction across the region each year. — AFP