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# 34 lawmakers demand vote on Dahoum's membership

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## Locusts swarm amid dust storm



KUWAIT: A swarm of locusts is seen during a dust storm in Shuwaikh yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 3)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: At least 34 MPs, forming an absolute majority in the National Assembly, yesterday insisted that the membership of leading opposition MP Bader Al-Dahoum, which was nullified by the constitutional court, must be settled in a vote in the house. In a statement they issued after an emergency meeting, the lawmakers said the Assembly speaker and office have no right to take unilateral actions against Dahoum, and any action must be decided by the entire Assembly.

The meeting was called after Dahoum said he had learnt that Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem instructed Assembly guards to stop him from entering the Assembly building and the chamber on the day of the Assembly's regular meeting, expected next week. MPs warned in the statement they will use constitutional tools if the speaker insists on his unilateral decisions against Dahoum, with some lawmakers floating the idea of boycotting the next session, thus preventing the new Cabinet from taking the oath because they form the majority needed for the session to convene.

"The country is passing through a dangerous political turning point that has no precedence in the framework of relations between public authorities, which has resulted in the disruption of the constitutional balance between them," the statement said, alluding to the recent court rulings on Dahoum.

The controversy began after the constitutional court on March 14 revoked the membership of Dahoum because he was convicted in 2014 of insulting HH the Amir. The ruling disqualified Dahoum from running for public office for life. But before contesting the Dec 5 general polls and scoring a resounding victory, the court of cassation, the country's top court, had ruled that Dahoum's participation in the election was legal and in line with the law.

Opposition MPs insist that the two rulings are contradictory and the cassation court's ruling should have priority over the constitutional court verdict, which they claim has several legal loopholes. But Ghanem had already instructed the Assembly secretariat to remove Dahoum's name from the Assembly website, clearly indicating his acceptance of the constitutional court ruling without even waiting for a debate on the issue. Some legal experts said Ghanem has the right to implement the verdict without consulting the house.

Dahoum yesterday reiterated that he is still a member of parliament and no one has the right to strike his name off except the National Assembly in a floor voting. If voting takes place, Dahoum has a clear majority to confirm his membership. The lawmakers said they will hold a meeting next week to spell out their course of action for the session, which could lead to a serious confrontation with the government and the speaker.

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## News in brief

### Sheikh Hamdan passes away

LONDON: Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Dubai's deputy ruler and one of the most influential figures in horse racing over the past four decades, has died at the age of 75, his brother and Dubai Ruler Sheikh Mohammed announced on Twitter yesterday. Sheikh Hamdan had also been the UAE's finance minister since 1971. — AFP

### Probe into trafficked Filipinas

MANILA: The Philippine immigration bureau said yesterday it has launched an investigation into allegations that some of its officers were involved in the trafficking of 44 women to work in Syria. A Senate inquiry has been told the women using tourist visas travelled to Dubai, where they had been promised work. After their 30-day visas expired, they were forced to go to Damascus, where they were sold to employers for as much as \$10,000. — AFP

### Lebanon hikes bread price

BEIRUT: Lebanese authorities announced late Tuesday a bread price hike, the third in nine months, a move the government blames on a plunge in the value of the local currency. The economy ministry announced that the price of 960 gm of bread would be set at 3,000 Lebanese pounds, up from 2,500 pounds, the state-run National News Agency reported. — AFP

### Largest art canvas sells for \$62m

DUBAI: Work by British artist Sacha Jafri consisting of the world's largest painting on canvas has been sold for \$62 million at an auction in Dubai, organizers said on Tuesday. The "Journey of Humanity" is split into 70 framed sections spanning 1,595.76 sq m. Organizers said that the work sold for \$62 million, with the money going to charities helping children. Andre Abdoune, a French national residing in Dubai, bought all 70 segments. — AFP

## Wedged giant ship blocks Suez Canal

CAIRO: Tugboats worked yesterday to free a giant container ship stuck in the Suez Canal after it veered off course in a sandstorm, creating huge tailbacks on one of the world's busiest trade routes. Egypt's Suez Canal Authority said it was trying to refloat the Taiwan-run, Panama-flagged MV Ever Given, a 400-m long and 59-m wide vessel, which was wedged across the waterway.

The Suez Canal is one of the world's most important trade routes, providing passage for 10 percent of all international maritime trade. The SCA said the stranded ship was caught up in a gale-force sandstorm, a common occurrence in Egypt's Sinai desert at this time of year, which blotted out light and limited the captain's ability to see. It was "mainly due to the lack of visibility due to the weather conditions when winds reached 40 knots, which affected the control" of the ship, the SCA said.

Ship operator Evergreen Marine Corp said the Rotterdam-bound vessel "ran aground after a suspected gust of wind hit it".

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ISMAILIA: Taiwan-owned MV Ever Given (Evergreen) vessel is lodged sideways yesterday, impeding all traffic across the Suez Canal. — AFP

## Islamic party kingmaker after Israel elections

JERUSALEM: Israel's election brought a surprise when a conservative Islamic party

crossed the threshold to enter parliament and its leader emerged yesterday as a possible kingmaker. Mansour Abbas and his Raam party - unlike other Arab political groups before it - have not ruled out joining an Israeli government. "We are prepared to engage" with either Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's camp or his rivals, Abbas told Israeli radio while stressing that "I'm not in anyone's pocket".

Yesterday the party was on track to win five seats in Israel's 120-member Knesset, with roughly 90 percent of the vote counted. Israel's latest inconclusive election left no clear path for Netanyahu or his rivals to form a government, setting the stage for protracted coalition talks. When Israel last voted a year ago, Raam had been part of the mainly Arab Joint List.

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Mansour Abbas

## Postcard from the edge - of a black hole

PARIS: The astronomers who gave the world its first true glimpse of a black hole have produced another landmark image, this time capturing the polarized light swirling around the same star-eating monster's magnetic fields. But it is more than just a pretty picture. Never before has it been possible to measure polarization - which causes light waves to vibrate in a single plane - so close to the edge of a black hole.

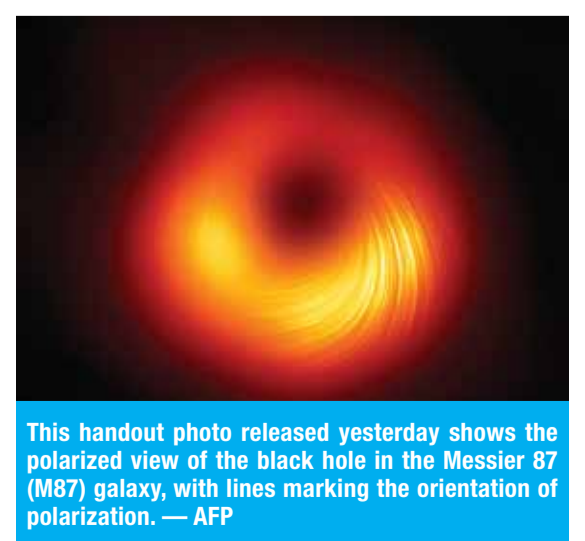
The new observations, based on data collected by the Event Horizon Telescope (EHT) in 2017, are

key to understanding how a galaxy can project streams of energy thousands of lightyears outward from its core, more than 300 scientists reported yesterday in a pair of studies.

"We are now seeing the next crucial piece of evidence to understand how magnetic fields behave around black holes," said co-author Monika Moscibrodzka, an assistant professor at Radboud University in the Netherlands. "Activity in this very compact region of space can drive powerful jets that extend far beyond the galaxy."

After releasing the historic image of the supermassive black hole at the heart of galaxy M87, more than 55 million light years from Earth, the researchers discovered that a significant fraction of its surrounding light was polarized. "The polarization of light carries information that allows us to better understand the physics behind the image we

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This handout photo released yesterday shows the polarized view of the black hole in the Messier 87 (M87) galaxy, with lines marking the orientation of polarization. — AFP