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Assembly panel not to drop controversial laws

Speaker proposes amendments to election law

Amir receives message from Jordan King



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Sunday Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Al-Safadi. The minister relayed a message addressed to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah from King of Jordan Abdullah bin Al-Hussein on the

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By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee will not withdraw a number of controversial draft legislations, including the purchase of bank loans that last week forced the government to boycott parliamentary sessions, rapporteur of the panel MP Saleh Ashour said.

But he added that the committee may decide to recall those draft laws if fundamental changes on them were proposed and the National Assembly approves the move. Two ministers attending the Assembly session last Tuesday walked out of the chamber when MPs refused to return those draft laws to the financial committee and insisted to debate the laws.

The government completely boycotted the next day's session and held an extraordinary meeting after which it said that the panel did not allow the government to provide its opinions on such laws which are costly for public funds.

One of the draft legislations requires the government to purchase billions of dinars of

bank loans owed by over half a million Kuwaiti citizens, write off interest and then reschedule their repayment by deducting the KD 120 monthly cost of living allowance.

The government said the purchase is too expensive for public funds. It said the total value of such loans is KD 14.7 billion while MPs insist the value is under KD 2 billion because the rest is housing loans not included in the proposed scheme.

Finance Minister Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid said on Sunday that the government's proposed purchase of the bank loans will stimulate consumption as a result of boosting spending, eventually leading to a major rise in prices. He added the purchase will convince citizens that the state will always repeat the process, which will encourage them to take more loans and refrain from repayment.

MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf last week filed to grill the finance minister over a variety of allegations including mismanagement of Kuwaiti investments. The grilling will be listed on the agenda of the January 24

Assembly session.

MP Ashour also said that the committee will meet with representatives of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry to review a draft law calling to convert the chamber into a trade union for businessmen.

In the meantime, National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun yesterday submitted a draft law calling to amend the election law including a major change in the voting system. In his bill, Saadoun proposes that Kuwaiti voters are allowed to vote for up to four candidates at least one of them must be from their constituency.

Under the amendments, the voters have the right to vote for a maximum of three candidates from their constituency and at least one from other constituencies. The amendments state that the winners in the election will be the first 50 candidates who score more votes regardless of the constituency they have registered in.

Under the current voting system, Kuwaiti voters vote for just one candidate from their constituencies only.

News in brief



Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi

COVID-19 situation 'stable' in Kuwait

KUWAIT: The COVID-19 situation in Kuwait is stable and under control, said Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi on Sunday. This came on the sidelines of the 13th conference of the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences. Dr Al-Awadhi affirmed that the ministry gathered daily random samples to make sure that the situation was monitored. The three-day conference is focusing on sexually transmitted disease and the Islamic answer to this problem. Treatments and means of prevention would be discussed during the course of the event. — KUNA (See Page 4)

Kuwait to host next Gulf Cup in Dec 2024

BAGHDAD: Kuwait will be hosting the 26th Gulf Cup in December of 2024, Gulf Football Association's head Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani announced on Sunday. In a press conference, Al-Thani affirmed that the tournament would be held in Kuwait as efforts and preparations for the upcoming event are in place. He commended the 25th Gulf Cup held in Basra, saying that it was so far a success. The semifinals of the tournament, on Monday, will see Iraq facing Qatar and Bahrain against Oman. — KUNA

At least 67 killed in Nepal plane crash

POKHARA, Nepal: At least 67 people were confirmed dead Sunday after a plane with 72 on board crashed in Nepal, police said, in the Himalayan country's worst aviation disaster in three decades. Those on board the ATR 72 twin-engine turboprop aircraft that plummeted into a steep gorge, smashed into pieces and burst into flames in the central city of Pokhara included six children, officials said. As light faded late Sunday and soldiers extracted bodies with ropes and stretchers out of the 300-metre-deep (1,000-foot) ravine, there was no word on the fate of the five people still unaccounted for.

"We are actively working to retrieve and identify the bodies as soon as possible and hand (them) over to their families," police official AK Chhetri told AFP at the crash site, which was still smoldering and strewn with aircraft debris, including the mangled

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POKHARA, Nepal: Rescuers gather at the site of a plane crash in Pokhara on January 15, 2023. — AFP

Egypt unveils ancient royal tomb in Luxor

LUXOR: Egyptian authorities announced Saturday the discovery of an ancient tomb in Luxor dating back around 3,500 years that archaeologists believe holds the remains of an 18th dynasty royal.

The tomb was unearthed by Egyptian and British researchers on the west bank of the River Nile, where the famous Valley of the Queens and Valley of the Kings lie, said Mostafa Waziri, head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities.

"The first elements discovered so far inside the tomb seem to indicate

that it dates back to the 18th dynasty" of pharaohs Akhenaton and Tutankhamun, Waziri said in a statement.

The 18th dynasty, part of the period of Egyptian history known as the New Kingdom, ended in 1292 BC and is considered among the most prosperous years of Ancient Egypt.

Piers Litherland of the University of Cambridge, head of the British research mission, said the tomb could be of a royal wife or princess of Thutmosid lineage. Egyptian archaeologist Mohsen Kamel said the tomb's interior was "in poor condition". Parts of it including inscriptions were "destroyed in ancient floods which filled the burial chambers with sand and limestone sediment", Kamel added, according to the antiquities board's statement.

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CAIRO: Tourists view the colossal (10-metre long) reclining limestone statue of the ancient Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II (1279-1213 BC), originally found in the ruins of the nearby Temple of Ptah and now on display at its special enclosure in the ruins of ancient Memphis (Mennefer) in Mit Rahina, south of Egypt's capital Cairo. — AFP



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