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AMIR CONGRATULATES 'FINANCE' ON CONFIDENCE PM vows ongoing summer governance

Assembly approves state budget

By Ahmed Al-Naqeeb
Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, July 3: In one of the last matters of business for the third round of the 15th legislative term, the National Assembly renewed its confidence in Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf as 32 MPs voting against the no-confidence motion while 16 voted in favor.



HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. KUNA photo

HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated the minister for winning the confidence of the Assembly once again.

After the voting process, Al-Hajraf expressed his gratitude to the Assembly for renewing confidence in him twice in less than a month, which allows him to continue doing his best for the country — a directive that both authorities are keen on following. However, the minister pointed out that the recent interpellations reflected and confirmed the existence of a hidden campaign to distort legislative efforts in a bid to destabilize the country.

The no-confidence motion came after MP Mohammed Hayef grilled the minister on June 25. Earlier, the minister faced and overcame another interpellation motion submitted by MPs Bader Al-Mulla and Riyad Al-Adsani.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah announced on Wednesday that the Government would dedicate the ample time of the Parliament summer recess to "relieve the people of Kuwait of living burdens."

His Highness the Prime Minister was addressing the Parliament's third session of the 15th legislative term as the countdown for the summer break for the lawmakers got started.

There are tremendous challenges facing Kuwait in its bids to place itself among ranks of advanced nations and this can only be achieved through serious action to meet citizens' needs and find solutions to issues, priorities of which, can be set in consensus between the government and the National Assembly, he added.

Bidding farewell to the MPs who are taking the summer leave, His Highness the Prime Minister said his Cabinet had worked hard to enable the Parliament play its role and "practice its constitutional commitments in full."

"With more optimism and compassion, we open the doors for positive and fruitful cooperation with your respectable assembly," he said, assuring the legislators that the executives would take into consideration their remarks on the government performance.

He noted the need for awareness of the serious events taking place in the region and the globe, expressed pride for electing Kuwait as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and expressed satisfaction with the Government performance in various sectors for sake of attaining His Highness the Amir development vision.

"Undoubtedly, lifting the rank of Kuwait on the (international) corruption indices in 2018 constituted a robust push for increasing the efforts to boost sincerity and combating corruption.

"It is also a clear proof of the soundness of the steps and measures that have been taken by the government with your respectable assembly."

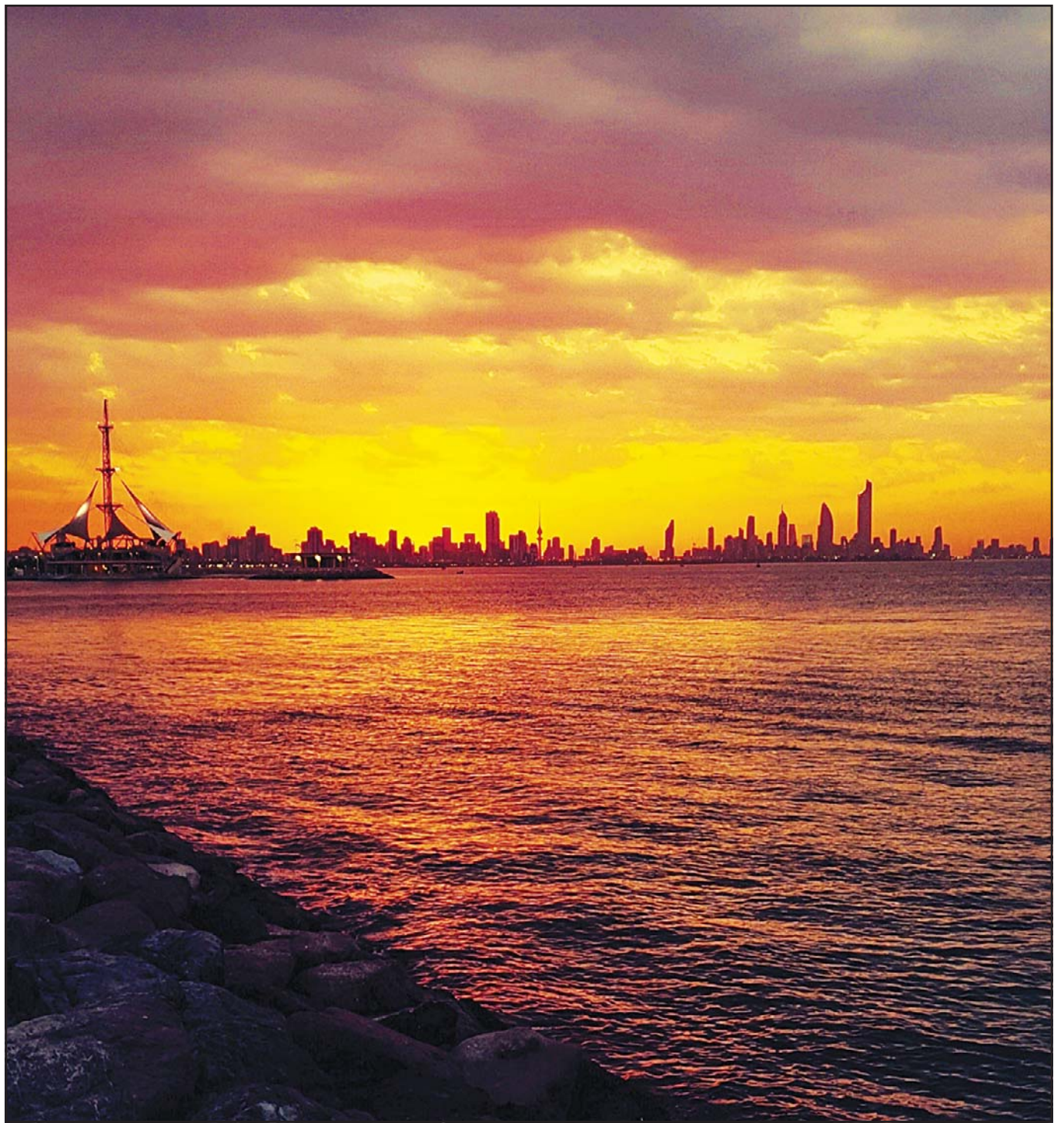
He vowed serious action to meet citizens' needs and pledged to attain more achievements "to mitigate concerns of the people of Kuwait and lighten their living burdens and boost their confidence in the state apparatuses' performance."

The Speaker reiterated his query in the last legislative round

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KUNA photo Speaker of Parliament Marzouq Al-Ghanim delivering his speech.



A golden sunset over Kuwait City. — Nawaf Alhmoud-KUNA

EU ASKS IRAN NOT TO BREACH LIMIT 'Need' to cap enrichment

Iran marks US downing of passenger jet

TEHRAN, July 3, (Agencies): Iran will ratchet up its level of uranium enrichment after July 7 to whatever levels it needs beyond the 3.67 percent limit agreed upon in a 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday.

"We will abandon this commitment and will increase the enrichment level to the level required," semi-official Mehr news agency quoted Rouhani as saying.

He called on the US and European powers to return to the negotiating table, saying, "We will remain committed to the deal as long as the other parties live up to their commitments."

Iran's enriched uranium stockpile has passed the 300-kg limit set under its nuclear deal, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said two days earlier.

Iran has given European powers 60 days to salvage its nuclear deal by shielding it from US sanctions in protest at the US decision to pull out of the accord and re-impose sanctions last year.

Uranium refined to a fissile purity of 3.67 percent is deemed suitable for electricity generation and is the maximum allowed by the deal. Enrichment to 90 percent yields bomb-grade material.

Rouhani added that the Islamic Republic's actions were reversible. "All of our actions can be returned to the previous condition within one hour, why are you worried?" he said.

His tone was unusually tough. Rouhani was the architect of the nuclear pact and is seen as a pragmatist, unlike senior clerics in Iran's ruling elite who opposed his opening to the West and have kept up their denunciations of the United States.

Rouhani further urged the Trump administration to "adopt a rational approach again" and return to the negotiating table.

Trump's "maximum pressure" policy aims to push Iran into negotiate a wider-ranging deal also reining in its ballistic missile programme

and its backing of proxies around the Middle East in a struggle with Saudi Arabia for regional dominance.

Rouhani said that if the other signatories did not protect trade with Iran promised under the deal but blocked by Trump's reimposition of tough sanctions, Tehran would also start to revive its Arak heavy-water reactor after July 7.

As required by the accord, Iran said in January 2016 that it had removed the core of the reactor and filled it with cement.

"From (July 7) onward with the Arak reactor, if you don't operate (according to) the programme and time frame of all the commitments you've given us, we will return the Arak reactor to its previous condition," said Rouhani.

"Meaning, the condition that you say is dangerous and can produce plutonium," he said, referring to a key potential component of a nuclear bomb. "We will return to that unless you take action regarding all your commitments regarding Arak."

He kept the door open to negotiations, saying Iran would again reduce its stockpile of enriched uranium below the 300-kg limit set by the nuclear pact if signatories Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China honoured their deal pledges.

Iran will gain nothing by departing from the terms of the deal, the French foreign ministry cautioned on Wednesday.

"Putting (the deal) into question will only increase the already heightened tensions in the region," ministry spokesman Agnes von der Muhll told reporters in a daily briefing.

EU calls on 'German, French and British foreign ministers as well as European Union (EU) High Representative for Foreign Affairs Tuesday called on Iran to be committed to uranium enrichment limit agreed upon in the nuclear deal signed in 2015.

In a joint statement, Germany's Heiko Maas, and his French and British counterparts, Jean-Yves Le Drian and Jeremy Hunt respectively,

as well as chief of EU Foreign Policy chief Federica Mogherini expressed "extreme concern" at Iran's announcement that it has exceeded the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action stockpile limit for low enriched uranium.

They called on Iran to rescind all measures it took that will harm the deal in this matter.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has confirmed this information, they added in the statement.

"We have been consistent and clear that our commitment to the nuclear deal depends on full compliance by Iran. We regret this decision by Iran, which calls into question an essential instrument of nuclear non-proliferation," they said.

"We urge Iran to reverse this step and to refrain from further measures that undermine the nuclear deal. We are urgently considering next steps under the terms of the JCPOA (Iran nuclear deal) in close coordination with other JCPOA participants," added the statement.

The statement came a day after the IAEA said on Tuesday that Iran had breached the uranium enrichment limit agreed upon in the nuclear deal.

Relatives of those killed in the US Navy's 1988 shootdown of an Iranian passenger jet have thrown flowers into the Strait of Hormuz to mark their deaths.

Iranian state television aired footage Wednesday of mourners in the strait, as armed Iranian Revolutionary Guard fast boats patrolled around them. They tossed gladiolas into the strait as some wept.

The July 3, 1988 downing of Iran Air Flight 655 by the US Navy remains one of the moments the Iranian government points to in its decades-long distrust of America. The US Navy's mistaken missile fire killed 290 people.

This year's commemoration comes amid heightened tensions with the US, after President Donald Trump pulled America from Iran's nuclear deal. Iran this week broke a low-enriched uranium stockpile limitation set by the deal.

Instagram down: Users worldwide have access problems

LOS ANGELES, July 3, (RTRS): Here we go again: Instagram users across the globe reported problems logging in, sharing or otherwise accessing the Facebook-owned photo and video service on mobile apps and the web on Wednesday.

Instagram began having issues since 8:45 am ET, with most of the user reports concentrated in the Northeast US and Western Europe, according to DownDetector.com.

For many Instagram users, most images and videos were failing to load in the app on

Wednesday, July 3. On desktop, Instagram also was not loading images or videos, accompanied by a message that said "No photo description available" or messages with tags like "Image may contain: food." Some said when they tried to post photos, Instagram only displayed the caption and not the image, while other users reported an inability to access the service at all.

Predictably, many disgruntled Instagram users took to Twitter to vent their frustration, and the hashtag #instagramdown became the top-

trending topic on Twitter on Wednesday morning in the US.

In addition to Instagram, users of Facebook and WhatsApp were also encountering access problems. "We're aware that some people and businesses are currently having trouble uploading or sending images, videos and other files on our apps," a Facebook spokesperson said in a statement. "We're working to get things back to normal as quickly as possible and we apologize for any inconvenience."

France confers honor

KUWAIT CITY, July 3, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Wednesday sent a congratulatory cable to the Assistant Foreign Minister, Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, on winning France's top award called the National Order of the Legion of Honor, gifted by French President Emmanuel Macron, in appreciation for his contribution to the promotion of bilateral relations between Kuwait and France.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to Sheikh Ahmad.

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NewsWatch

BENGAZI, Libya: An airstrike hit a detention center for migrants near the Libyan capital early Wednesday, killing at least 44 people and wounding more than 130, the UN mission to the war-torn country said.

The airstrike raises further concerns about the European Union's policy of partnering with Libyan militias to prevent migrants from crossing the Mediterranean, which often leaves them at the mercy of brutal traffickers or stranded in squalid detention centers near the front lines.

It wasn't immediately clear who was responsible for the strike but some suspected involvement by foreign countries allied with Khalifa Hifter, the Libyan general whose forces launched an offensive on Tripoli in April. Countries assisting Hifter include the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Russia.

The Tripoli-based government blamed Hifter's self-styled Libyan National Army for the airstrike and called for the UN to investigate. The attack could also lead to greater Western pressure on Hifter. (AP)

DUBAI/LONDON: Saudi Arabia has raised 3 billion euros from over 14.5 billion worth of orders for its first bond denominated in euros, as the Kingdom taps new financing sources to cover its budgetary needs in an era of lower oil prices.

With this deal, the Saudis have sold over \$60 billion in international bonds since their debut as a global borrower in late 2016, making the Kingdom one of the biggest debt issuers among emerging markets.

Its foray in the euro debt market — the first by a Gulf government — will allow it in the future to tap different investors at different times. The Saudi bonds are split into a 1 billion-euro eight-year tranche and a 2 billion-euro 20-year tranche, a document issued by one of the banks leading the deal showed. (RTRS)

TUNIS: A wanted militant wearing an explosive belt blew himself up in the Tunisian capital after being surrounded by police, the government said on Wednesday, but there were no other casualties.

The third such incident within a week comes months ahead of an election and at the peak of a tourist season in which Tunisia is hoping for a record number of visitors.

Witnesses had told Reuters the man blew himself up in the Intilaka area of the capital, Tunis, after being surrounded by the police. Residents heard a loud explosion.

An interior ministry spokesman said police opened fire on the man, whom authorities described as a wanted militant called Ayman Smiri, without giving further details. (RTRS)

ANKARA, Turkey: Turkey's state-run news agency says two Russian women who are suspected of being Islamic State militants and are allegedly listed as wanted by Interpol have been detained by authorities.

Anadolu Agency said Wednesday that the two were detained in the border town of Akcakale while trying to enter Turkey illegally from neighboring Syria and being accompanied by their nine children.

The agency said the women told police that their husbands had been killed in Syria and that they were trying to return to Russia via Turkey.

It said the women — identified them by their initials B.I. and F.B. — are scheduled to appear before a court in the city of Sanliurfa, which would decide their fate. (AP)