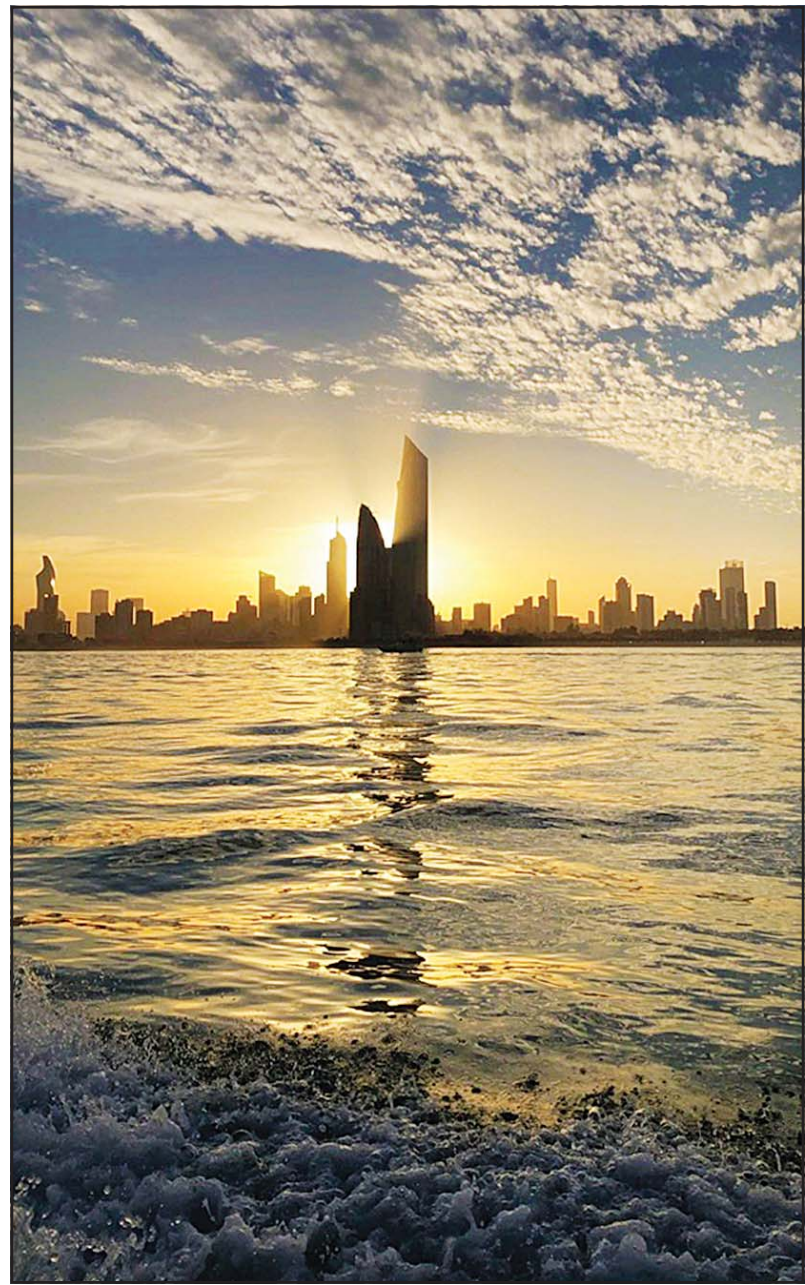




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Iraqis storm Iran consulate; 35 dead



Kuwait City skyline as seen from the Kuwait Bay. — Baqer Albassam-KUNA

Arrests in killing of Iranian

Turkey accuses France of sponsoring terrorism

ANKARA, Nov 28, (Agencies): Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu on Thursday dismissed French President Emmanuel Macron's criticism of Turkey's offensive in Syria against the Kurdish YPG militia, saying the French leader sponsors terrorism.

"He is already the sponsor of the terrorist organisation and constantly hosts them at the Elysee. If he says his ally is the terrorist organization ... there is really nothing more to say," Cavusoglu said.

"Right now, there is a void in Europe, (Macron) is trying to be its leader, but leadership comes naturally," he told reporters in parliament.

Last month, Macron met Jihane Ahmed, the spokeswoman for the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), of which the YPG is a big part, to express France's solidarity with them in their fight against Islamic State in Syria.

Turkey considers the YPG as a terrorist group and has been infuriated by the supports its allies have given the group. The Turkish assault, launched on Oct 9, was condemned by Ankara's NATO allies, including France.

Earlier on Thursday, Macron said that Turkey could not expect solidarity from NATO allies when it launched its offensive in northeast Syria as a "fait accompli".

Ties between Turkey and France have been strained in recent years, but Macron and Cavusoglu's comments on Thursday highlight growing tensions ahead of NATO's 70th anniversary summit in London next week.

Reuters reported on Tuesday that Turkey was refusing to back a NATO defence plan for the Baltics and Poland until it got more political support for its fight against the YPG. On Wednesday, a Turkish source said the impasse stemmed from the United States' move to withdraw its support for a separate Turkey defence plan.

Turkish police said on Thursday they had detained five people in relation to the killing in Istanbul of an Iranian citizen who Turkish media said was an opponent of Iran's government.

Masoud Molavi died after he was shot at from a car in Istanbul's central district of Sisli on Nov 14. Turkish broadcaster Haberturk said Molavi was a former Iranian intelligence employee who later became an opponent of Tehran.

Police said five people, including the person who is believed to have carried out the shooting, were detained on Wednesday. The other four suspects allegedly helped the gunman obtain the weapon he used and helped him hide.

A mortar attack targeting a Turkish military post near the border with Syria

has killed two soldiers, Turkey's defence ministry said Thursday.

The ministry said Turkish artillery units immediately returned fire across the border into northeastern Syria after the attack, which took place Wednesday evening near the Turkish town of Akcakale. It added that "operations" in the area were continuing.

However, an opposition group that monitors the war in Syria said the first shots were fired by Turkish troops and Turkey-backed opposition fighters. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the Turkish shelling prompted a retaliatory attack from Syrian Kurdish fighters. It did not say if there were any casualties in Syria.

The differing accounts of the fighting could not immediately be verified.

Turkish troops and Turkey-backed opposition fighters seized areas in northeastern Syria in a military offensive launched nearly two months ago. That offensive took control of the town of Tal Abyad, which sits just across the border from Akcakale. The Turkish incursion aimed to push Syrian Kurdish fighters away from the border. A fragile truce sponsored by Turkey and Russia had halted the fighting but has been sporadically violated.

Turkey will repatriate 11 French Islamic State detainees early in December, state media quoted Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu as saying on Thursday, as Ankara pressed on with a repatriation programme that had strained ties with some of its allies.

Turkey began the process of repatriating the Islamic State detainees earlier this month, sending several suspects to their home countries despite calls from some European nations that the suspected jihadists should be tried where they committed crimes.

Turkey's foreign minister has called on NATO to support Ankara's security concerns, accusing allies of backing Baltic countries' security concerns but dismissing threats to Turkey from Syrian Kurdish fighters.

Cavusoglu made the comments Thursday. He confirmed media reports that said Turkey was blocking a NATO defence proposal for the Baltic nations and Poland until the alliance supports Turkey's concerns relating to the Kurdish fighters, which Ankara considers to be terrorists.

Cavusoglu said: "We are not against NATO's retaliation plans for the Baltic nations (but NATO) should also want for Turkey what it wants for the Baltics."

He said the NATO chief was working to overcome the dispute.

A plan to defend the Baltic nations in case of a Russian attack needs the backing of all member states.

Hand offered, awaits return

By Ahmed Al-Naqeeb and Saeed Mahmoud Saleh Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 28: MP Abdullah Al-Kandari expects fruitful cooperation between Parliament and the incoming Cabinet, clarifying that the Parliament will extend its cooperative hand if the new Cabinet initiates a reciprocal directive.

Although the law does not specify the period for forming the Cabinet, the lawmaker hopes that HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah will not delay the formation and announcement of the new Cabinet in order to avoid complications and to ensure cooperation between the two authorities.

He believes the resignation of the previous government abated tension between the legislative and executive authorities, confirming the interpellations were cancelled due to the prospect of genuine cooperation with MPs.

He explained the Kuwaiti public is fed up with both authorities, so a big number of citizens are calling for the dissolution of the Parliament. He somewhat agrees on this demand but he would rather do as much good as possible within the remaining period of the legislature, a matter that is heavily dependent on cooperation.

In another development, MP Osama

Continued on Page 2

News watch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences Thursday to President of Albania Ilir Meta over victims and injuries of a devastating earthquake that ripped through the country.

In the cable, His Highness prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow mercy upon the dead and a speedy recovery for the wounded, voicing trust in local authorities to overcome aftermath of such natural disaster.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent similar cables. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable on Thursday to US President Donald Trump, offering condolences over casualties of a chemical plant explosion in the State of Texas.

His Highness the Amir prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow mercy upon the dead and wished a speedy recovery for the injured.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar letters to President Trump. (KUNA)

DUBAI: Iran rejects as "irresponsible" comments by France that it is seriously considering triggering a mechanism within the Iran nuclear deal that could lead to UN sanctions, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Thursday.

"Iran's scaling back of its nuclear commitments was implementation of its legal rights to react to America's illegal and unilateral exit of the deal and the European parties' failure to fulfil their obligations," Mousavi said in remarks quoted by state television.

"Under these circumstances, the deal does not allow triggering of the mechanism by the European parties to the deal ... such remarks by the French official are irresponsible and not constructive." (RTRS)

LONDON: The police commander in charge of operations at the 1989 Hillsborough soccer stadium crush that killed 96 Liverpool supporters was found not guilty of manslaughter on Thursday, the BBC reported.

Former Chief Superintendent David Duckenfield was in charge of the stadium in Sheffield, northern England, at an FA Cup semifinal match against Nottingham Forest 30 years ago. The victims died in an overcrowded, fenced-in enclosure. Harrowing images of young fans crushed against metal fences, bodies lying on the pitch and spectators using wooden advertising hoardings as makeshift stretchers horrified the nation. (RTRS)

GENEVA: African migrants were among at least 20 civilians killed this week in two attacks on a market in northern Yemen where migrants are known to congregate as they make their way to wealthy Gulf states in search of a better life, the United Nations said.

The UN statement, issued on Thursday, did not specify the type of attacks on Al-Raqw market in Saada province, near the Saudi border, or say who was responsible, but said many of those killed or wounded were Ethiopians. (RTRS)

Crisis deepens

Concern on financial collapse in Lebanon

BEIRUT, Nov 28, (Agencies): Hundreds of Lebanese women marched across a former front line in the Lebanese capital Wednesday carrying white roses and Lebanese flags to denounce overnight clashes between rival groups that injured dozens of people. They pledged no return to civil war.

But amid a political impasse after 40 days of protests, sectarian and political rivalries are awakening, with scuffles breaking out daily, including in areas that were deadly front lines during the country's 1975-90 conflict.

The tiny Mediterranean country is also reeling under the worst financial crisis in decades with unprecedented capital controls, and as tempers flare, there are real concerns Lebanon could be sliding toward a prolonged period of instability.

"We are standing before two dangers that are racing with each other, the danger of financial collapse and the danger of security collapse. It is an unprecedented situation," said Nabil Bou Monsef, deputy editor-in-chief of the An-Nahar newspaper.

The overnight clashes — mostly fistfights and stone throwing be-

tween supporters and opponents of Lebanese President Michel Aoun — erupted in cities and towns across the country, injuring dozens of people, and 16 people were detained for their involvement, the Lebanese Red Cross and the army said.

President Michel Aoun has yet to hold consultations with parliamentary blocs on choosing a new prime minister after the government resigned a month ago.

Outgoing Prime Minister Saad Hariri, who was Aoun's and the militant Hezbollah's favorite to lead a new Cabinet, withdrew his candidacy for the premiership, saying he hoped to clear the way for a solution to the political impasse after over 40 days of protests. Protesters have resorted to road closures and other tactics to pressure politicians into responding to their demands for a new government.

The most recent violence first began Sunday night after supporters of the two main Shiite groups, Hezbollah and the Amal Movement of Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, attacked protesters on Beirut's Ring

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'Cut hands'

BAGHDAD/NAJAF, Iraq, Nov 28, (Agencies): Iraqi security forces shot dead at least 30 protesters on Thursday after demonstrators stormed and torched an Iranian consulate overnight, in what could mark a turning point in the uprising against the Tehran-backed authorities.

At least 29 people died in the southern city of Nassiriya when troops opened fire on demonstrators who blocked a bridge before dawn on Thursday and later gathered outside a police station. Medical sources said dozens of others were wounded.

Four others were killed in the capital Baghdad, where security forces opened fire with live ammunition and rubber bullets against protesters near a bridge over the Tigris river. Two died during the day in clashes in Najaf.

In Nassiriya thousands of mourners took to the streets, defying a curfew to bury their dead after the mass shooting.

Stunning image

Video of protesters cheering in the night as bright flames billowed from the consulate were a stunning image after years in which Tehran's influence among Shi'ite Muslims in Arab states has been a defining factor in Middle East politics.

The bloodshed that followed was one of the most violent days since the uprising began at the start of October, with anti-corruption demonstrations that swelled into a revolt against authorities scorned by young demonstrators as stooges of Tehran.

In Najaf, a city of ancient pilgrimage shrines that serves as seat of Iraq's powerful Shi'ite clergy, the Iranian consulate was reduced to a charred ruin after it was stormed overnight.

The protesters, overwhelmingly Shi'ite, accused the Iraqi authorities of turning against their own people to defend Iran.

"All the riot police in Najaf and the security forces started shooting at us as if we were burning Iraq as a whole," a protester who witnessed the burning of the consulate told Reuters, asking that he not be identified.

Another protester, Ali, described the attack on the consulate as "a brave act and a reaction from the Iraqi people. We don't want the Iranians."

But he predicted more violence: "There will be revenge from Iran, I'm sure. They're still here and the security forces are going to keep shooting at us."

Iran's foreign ministry condemned the attack and demanded "the Iraqi government's firm response to the aggressors".

So far, the authorities have been unyielding in response to the unrest, shooting dead hundreds of demonstrators with live ammunition and tear-gas, while floating proposals for political reform that the protesters dismiss as trivial and cosmetic.

Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi has so far rejected calls to resign, after meetings with senior politicians that were attended by the commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force, the elite unit that directs its militia allies abroad.

Cut hands

In a statement that suggested more violence was to come, the military commander of the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF), an umbrella group of paramilitary groups whose most powerful factions are close to Iran, suggested the overnight unrest in Najaf was a threat to Shi'ite clergy based in the city.

The paramilitary fighters would use full force against anyone who threatened Iraq's most senior Shi'ite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis said in a statement posted on the PMF website.

"We will cut the hand of anyone trying to get near al-Sistani," he said.

Influential populist cleric Moqtada al-Sadr issued a fresh call for the government to resign, while warning those who torched the embassy that they risked provoking a violent backlash from the authorities.

"Do not give them cover to end your revolution, and stay clear of religious sites," he said in a statement posted on Twitter. If the government does not resign, "this is the beginning of the end of Iraq," he said.



Anti-government protesters set fire while security forces close Rasheed Street during clashes in Baghdad, Iraq on Nov 28. Scores of protesters have been shot dead in the last 24 hours, amid spiralling violence in Baghdad and southern Iraq, officials said. (AP)



Photo by Rizalde Cayanan, courtesy of DAI Valentina Baginska

Baginska performs

Dar Al Athar Al Islamiyyah hosted a music night performed by Valentina Baginska with Kinga Martek and Abdulwahab Al-Muhaiteeb at the Yarmouk Cultural Centre on Wednesday evening. Baginska graduated with honours

degree from the Frederic Chopin University of Music in Warsaw. She is an artiste with international achievements as a conductor, concert organist, pianist, music professor, juror, lecturer, and impresario.