



Kuwait approves cyber security bill

Opinion

Government and parliament fight for a punctured football

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah
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IT seems as if Kuwait is wearing a new skin that contradicts its history, traditions and even its democracy on which the pillars of the renaissance were founded during the so-called "golden era" when an official had firm stances, and his opinion was heard. If he was subjected to any pressure, he either confronted it head-on, or tendered his resignation.

Unfortunately, all of that no longer exists. Rather, the instability of the executive authority has allowed the self-seekers to pursue their interests in the ministries and capitalize their gains in the least possible time, because of their certainty that the life of the government is short. Due to this fact, the level of performance continues to decline to new levels.

This is because achievement is no longer the marker, but time is being wasted by devoting it to bickering with the MPs over private matters, even if they are overshadowed by the public interest.

Perhaps it is useful to return to the government of the late Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah that was announced on March 3, 1985, which included the finest men of Kuwait. They were the knights of attitudes and were not tempted by the position. Among those was the late Yousef Al-Nisf. When he was asked to join the government, he clearly said, "I won't be of any good to you. I have conditions related to the reorganization of the Cabinet. I do not think you will agree to them."

The late Sheikh Saad had asked him to join the ministry and promised that his conditions would be met.

During the second session of that government, which was eight days after he was in office, Al-Nisf submitted his proposals.

The Minister of Justice, Legal and Administrative Affairs at that time Sheikh Salman Al-Duaij Al-Salman Al-Sabah said those proposals would require legislation. When the late Sheikh Saad didn't comment on this statement, Al-Nisf chose to submit his resignation in protest of the way the government was being managed.

During the first session of the National Assembly, which was held on March 26, the resignation became the focus of the session's discussion. At that time, the MPs demanded to be informed of the reasons that prompted a minister to leave the government in just a week after its formation and endorsement by the parliament.

To this day, this resignation still serves as evidence of the ministers' ability to change. In light of the government deficit that exceeds the financial deficit with its risks, and with the presence of ministers who are each focused on their own interests, and a prime minister who does not take the initiative, it seems that the risks are increasing.

The government is an ineffective executive authority, and the National Assembly does not have an active legislative authority. In fact, both are more like two teams squabbling over a punctured football.

During that era, the two authorities were working with national responsibility. Ministers did not strive to appoint their relatives and friends in positions. They did not succumb to any influential person, as is currently the case. MPs did not ignite political battles in order to pass a tender, or assign electoral keys.

At that time, the greatest modern laws were passed. On the other hand, Kuwait today almost lacks those statutes because of the haste in choosing ministers and their prime minister, especially after the position started repelling competencies as a result of instability.

Is it conceivable that four governments have been formed within 23 months, which means that each of them is less than six months old? Were all these governments born prematurely? Will they be able to live, grow and work?

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NewsWatch

RIYADH: Kuwait's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Majdi Al-Dhafaeri and his Saudi counterpart Walid Al-Khurajji discussed boosting relations and cooperation on all levels in Riyadh on Tuesday.

The two sides also discussed enhancing joint work in all fields, as well as the recent regional and international developments.

The Kuwaiti delegation included Kuwait's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's affairs office Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: The Kuwaiti cabinet on Monday agreed on resuming commercial flights with nine African countries after a hiatus over the emergence of the coronavirus Omicron variant.

In a statement following the cabinet regular meeting today, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Foreign Minister Dr. Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah said the government has instructed relevant state bodies to resume commercial flights with South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho, Eswatini, Zambia, and Malawi.

The cabinet stressed that all relevant preventive measures set by the coronavirus emergency committee have to be strictly observed, the minister added. (KUNA)

ADEN: Yemeni Foreign Minister Ahmad bin Mubarak called on Tuesday for taking international action against the Houthi militia to prevent it from terrorizing Yemenis and nearby countries.

According to the Yemen News Agency (SABA), Bin Mubarak's statement came during his meeting with the UN's Special Envoy to Yemen Hans Grundberg.

The Yemeni Foreign Minister condemned the Houthis targeting of Saudi Arabia and the recent attack on the Abu Dhabi international airport, which resulted in several casualties, saying that the actions aim "to destabilize regional security to serve the Iranian agendas."

On his part, Grundberg affirmed that the UN and partners would continue to pursue diplomatic efforts to bring just peace in Yemen. (KUNA)

JEDDAH: The Saudi-led Coalition announced Monday launching airstrikes against some targets in Sanaa, in response to military necessity and threat.

Some terrorist leaders have been targeted north of Sanaa and the operational situation requires the continuation of these strikes, in response to military necessity, the Coalition said in a statement quoted by Saudi Press Agency (SPA).

Meanwhile, spokesman for the Coalition Brigadier General Turki Al-Malki considered the Houthi militias' hostile attacks targeting civilians, residential areas and economic facilities in both Saudi Arabia and the UAE as "war crimes whose perpetrators must be held accountable." (KUNA)

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia reported on Tuesday 20 coronavirus deaths and 5,873 infections.

According to the Saudi Health Ministry's daily report, the tallies of deaths and infections hit 8,910 and 626,808 respectively.

The number of recoveries hit 573,831 with the addition of 4,535 cases, added the report. (KUNA)

DOHA: Qatar reported, Tuesday, 3,816 coronavirus (COVID-19) cases and three deaths in the last 24 hours.

According to the Health Ministry, the pandemic had infected 307,056 in the country thus far, while deaths stood at total at 630.

There were 3,386 recoveries, putting the tally at 264,282, it added. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: The UAE reported on Tuesday 2,792 COVID-19 infections within the last 24 hours.

The Emirati health authorities announced that the tally of infections hit 811,029 cases, while deaths stood at 2,198 with the addition of three fatalities.

Recoveries reached 762,379 with 1,166 new cases, it revealed. (KUNA)

Day by Day

IN civilized countries there is a single security institution called the National Security Agency, not a dozen security agencies. It is entrusted with specific tasks – the most important of which is to keep the ruler informed about everything he wants to know about and what is going on around the country, the trends of public opinion, as well as the dangers that threaten the state.

The National Security apparatus, therefore, has an important role to play, not toying with the fate of people. People are not children's toys for officers to buy and sell at their whims and fancies. Isn't it, O State, and Minister of the Interior?

... Yet, tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

No combat for women

Ten file no confidence in DM

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18: Ten MPs signed a no-confidence motion against Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali towards the end of the ordinary session of the National Assembly on Tuesday.

The Assembly then decided to postpone voting on the no-confidence motion until Jan 26, 2022.

During Tuesday's session, the Assembly witnessed a minor incident when Secretary General Adel Al-Lugani fell down while reading the incoming letters.

Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim adjourned the session for 15 minutes to pave way for providing medical care to Al-Lugani.

Al-Ghanim then resumed the session, disclosing that Al-Lugani was rushed to the hospital and his condition is stable.

He called for postponing other items in the agenda until Wednesday, and then the Assembly proceeded with the grilling motion of the defense minister.

Al-Azmi was given one and half hour to present the five points of the grilling motion. He started with the decision to allow Kuwaiti women to join the Kuwait Army. He wondered why the minister stressed that his decision cannot be withdrawn, only to say later that he is waiting for the opinion of the Legal Advice and Legislation Department.

He cited the opinion of religious institutions and most outstanding scholars that it is totally forbidden for women to engage in combat missions. He argued that allowing women to join the Army exposes them to the danger of being prisoners of war (POWs). He added the nature of women is not for military tasks such as carrying weapons and facing the enemies.

Assaults

He also mentioned the statistics released in July 2021, stating the US Army recorded 135 sexual assaults in 11 years. He showed the tweet of former US President Donald Trump who said there have been 26,000 unreported sexual assaults in the military compared to only 238 convictions. He added 175 officers in the US Navy were involved in gang rape within the institution, but some victims are afraid to report such cases. He went on to say that a decision was taken to allow abortion for female soldiers who got pregnant while in an illicit relationship. He presented as well a report, stating that almost one third of the female soldiers in the British Army were victims of rape or bullying by their superiors. He said another study showed that more than half of the female soldiers in the German Army are victims of sexual assault.

He showed the results of surveys conducted by Kuwait Center for Gulf and Peninsula Researches, indicating the number of Kuwaiti women who objected to the entry of women into the Army is higher than men – 73 percent of the male participants compared to 81 percent of their female counterparts.

Giving a breakdown of the results per governorate; Al-Azmi disclosed that 90 percent of female participants in Jahra are against the decision, 77 percent in Hawally, 73 percent in Farwaniya, 74 percent in the Capital, 73 in Ahmadi and 79 percent in Mubarak Al-Kabeer. He stressed these results clearly indicate that Kuwait is a conservative society.

On the second point of the grilling motion, Al-Azmi pointed out the minister does not know anything about the reports of the State Audit Bureau (SAB) on the Eurofighter armament deal. He said the fact-finding committee formed as per the decision of the late Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad has yet to complete its report despite the passage of three years since its formation.

He mentioned one of the violations in the deal by comparing the prices of the Eurofighter aircraft to that of the deals settled by other GCC countries. He disclosed the Kuwaiti deal is valued at \$9 billion for 28 aircraft, while Saudi Arabia purchased 72 aircraft of the same model for the same price. Qatar purchased 24 Eurofighter for GBP5 billion and Oman purchased the same number for \$2.24 billion.

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KUNA photo
Defence Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali during his reply to the grilling motion.



In this satellite image provided by Planet Labs PBC, white fire suppressing foam is seen after an attack on an Abu Dhabi National Oil Co. fuel depot in the Mussafah neighborhood of Abu Dhabi, Monday, Jan. 17. A drone attack claimed by Yemen's Houthi rebels targeting a key oil facility in Abu Dhabi killed three people on Monday and sparked a fire at Abu Dhabi's international airport. (AP)

Kuwait Cabinet denounces Houthi attack on Abu Dhabi

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18, (Agencies): The Kuwaiti government has strongly denounced the Houthi militia Monday's drone attack on civilian areas in the United Arab Emirates which left casualties among innocent people.

In a press statement following its regular meeting Monday, the cabinet clarified that the Houthi militia's continued attacks, violation of international humanitarian law, and threatening of the regional countries' security and stability had exposed the group's dangerous behavior which necessitates a swift action from the international community, especially the UN Security Council, to stop its hostile actions and safeguard international peace and security.

The cabinet also expressed Kuwait's full solidarity with the UAE and support to all the measures it will take to maintain its security and stability.

A suspected drone attack claimed by the Houthi rebels targeting a key oil facility in Abu Dhabi killed three people on Monday and sparked a separate fire at Abu Dhabi's international airport.

Emirati police identified the dead as two Indian nationals and one Pakistani. Several people were also wounded at an industrial area where Abu Dhabi's state-owned energy company runs a pipeline network and an oil tanker storage facility. The police said they suffered minor to moderate injuries.

Three transport tankers caught fire at the facility, while another fire was sparked at an extension of Abu Dhabi International Airport.

Police said an investigation was underway and that preliminary findings indicate there were small flying objects, possibly belonging to drones, that fell in the two areas and may have caused the explosion and fire. They said there was no significant damage from the incidents, without offering further details.

Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi

rebels claimed they were behind an attack targeting the United Arab Emirates on Monday, but they did not offer details. Although the UAE has largely withdrawn its own forces from the war in Yemen, it is still actively engaged in the conflict and supports Yemeni militia fighting the Houthis.

The incident comes as the Houthis face pressure and are suffering heavy losses. Yemeni forces, allied and backed by the UAE, have pushed back the rebels in key southern and central provinces, dashing Houthi efforts to complete their control of the entire northern half of Yemen.

Yemen's government-aligned forces reclaimed the entire southern province of Shabwa from the Houthis earlier this month and made advances in nearby Marib province. They were aided by the UAE-backed Giants Brigades and had help from Saudi airstrikes.

Saudi Arabia condemned Monday's attack targeting Abu Dhabi, describing it as "a cowardly terrorist attack" that shows the dangers posed by the Houthis. Saudi Arabia, as well as the United States, U.N. experts and others have accused Iran of supplying arms to the Houthis.

The UAE was a key member of the Saudi-led coalition that has waged war against the Houthis since 2015, trying to restore the internationally backed government, ousted by the rebels the previous year.

While Emirati troops have been killed over the course of the conflict, now in its eighth year, the war has not directly affected daily life in the wider UAE, a country with a vast foreign workforce that is also home to Dubai, a glitzy city of skyscrapers and five-star hotels.

The airport fire in Abu Dhabi was described by police as "minor" and took place at an extension of the international airport that is still under construction. For years, the airport home to Etihad Airways has been building its new Midfield Terminal, but it was not clear if that was where the fire took place.



KUNA photo
Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah

Center nod

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 18, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti government on Monday endorsed a number of bills on the Capital Markets Authority's budget, establishing the national center for cyber security, amending the law regarding the Kuwait diplomatic institute and others.

This came during the cabinet meeting led by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Saif Palace.

During the meeting, the cabinet discussed the Economic Affairs Committee's recommendation on a draft law on the Capital Markets Authority's budget for the fiscal year 2022-2023 and approved the bill, and submitted it to His Highness the Amir, in preparation to refer it to the National Assembly. Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah said after the meeting.

Furthermore, the cabinet discussed the recommendations of the Legal Affairs Committee on draft decrees establishing the national center for cyber security, and amending some provisions of the Decree No. 390 of 2004 on Box Hill College Kuwait for Girls, amending some provisions of Decree No. 156 of 2002 on Gulf University for Science and Technology.

The cabinet decided to endorse all the draft decrees and referred them to His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser, also Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, added.

The cabinet was briefed on the recommendation regarding the strategy of the Public Authority for Sports for 2022-2028, that aims to improve and develop sports, and overcome all obstacles facing the future of sports and athletes in Kuwait.

Aggression

In addition, marking the 31st anniversary of the Operation Desert Storm to liberate the State of Kuwait from the brutal Iraqi aggression, the cabinet expressed its appreciation and gratitude for the efforts made by Saudi Arabia and the United States as well as the countries of the international coalition to liberate the State of Kuwait after the issuance of the relevant UN resolutions.

It further recalled the prominent role of the Kuwaiti Air Force in the war of liberating Kuwait, the steadfastness of Kuwaitis and their great sacrifices to defeat the brutal aggression and restore national legitimacy.

Moreover, the cabinet was briefed by Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah on the results of his official visit to the Cypriot capital, Nicosia, last Monday, and the outcome of his meeting with Cyprus' President Nicos Anastasiades.

He pointed out that he had discussed with President Anastasiades bilateral relations and ways of developing them in various fields and at all levels for the benefit of the two countries and their friendly peoples.

The ministers also were informed about the gist of the talks Sheikh Ahmad Nasser held with Cypriot counterpart Nikos Christodoulides that culminated in signing a memorandum of understanding on preventing theft, secret excavation, illegal importation and transferring ownership of cultural property.

Besides, Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser apprised the cabinet of the results of his recent official visit to Wuxi City, China, and his talks with State Councilor and Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi and senior Chinese officials.