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# No trust... no vote on fake citizenship

Hold on grilling

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Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Dec 28:** MP Muhammad Barrak Al-Mutairi has clarified that he refused to vote on forming a committee to investigate fake citizenship cases or refer such cases to the parliamentary Interior and Defense Committee because he does not trust the current Parliament.

Al-Mutairi pointed out that if the government is really serious in addressing this issue, it should have referred suspicious citizenship files and those involved to the Public Prosecution and then to the Court. He described any solution other than what he suggested as a way of securing electoral gains and mixing papers by the government.

He also explained that suspended his plan to grill HH the prime minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah until the end of the grace period given to the Legislative Affairs Committee to finalize discussions on the comprehensive amnesty draft law.

Meanwhile, MP Khalil Abul said someone is unsatisfied with the work of the Legislative Affairs Committee due to its position on the comprehensive amnesty draft law in the previous session. He added some MPs want the committee to work according to their whims, so they were furious as manifested in that session.

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## US contractor killed, troops wounded as Iran-bloc says Baghdad caves in to DC

WASHINGTON, Dec 28, (Agencies): A US defense contractor was killed and several American and Iraqi troops were wounded Friday in a rocket attack in northern Iraq, US officials said.

According to officials, the attack involved as many as 30 rockets fired at the Iraqi military compound near Kirkuk, where US service members are also based.

Officials did not provide the exact number of troops wounded in the attack or the severity of the injuries. They spoke on condition of anonymity to describe details before they were made public.

Such attacks have taken place on several occasions over the past few months, with US officials for the most part blaming Iran-backed fighters.

Col Myles Caggins, a spokesman for the US-led coalition fighting Islamic State forces in Iraq and Syria, said Iraqi security forces were leading the investigation and response to the attack.

Iraq has been roiled since Oct 1 by protests that have left more than 450 people dead, the vast majority of them demonstrators killed by security forces firing tear-gas and live ammunition. The mass uprisings prompted the resignation of former Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi late last month.

Iran-supported groups on Friday blasted Iraq's president for not naming their preferred prime minister candidate, saying his decision was at the behest of the United States, and warned him not to designate anyone who could be "an agent of the Americans."

In refusing to appoint Fatah-backed candidate Asaad al-Eidani on Thursday, President Barham Salih said he was responding to broad opposition by anti-government protesters who have flooded the streets for nearly three months to demand the overthrow of Iraq's entire political class.

The protesters accuse the government of corruption and

mismanagement and have demanded an independent prime minister candidate. On Friday evening, thousands of them poured into Baghdad's Tahrir Square to express their support for Salih's decision.

But in a statement Friday, the Hezbollah Brigades, or Kataeb Hezbollah, called the president's move "suspicious."

"We know that he is carrying out an American will that aims to pull the country toward chaos," the statement said. Legislator Odai Awad, a member of the Iran-backed Asaib Ahl al-Haq, or League of the Righteous, called Salih a coward in an interview with a local TV station and said "every Iraqi should spit in the face of the president for what he did."

The Iran-affiliated groups said the president had violated the constitution "by refusing to carry out his duties" to name the candidate chosen by parliament's largest bloc.

Since last year's elections, however, politicians have disagreed over which bloc is the largest, a dispute that has led them to twice miss the deadline for naming a new premier.

There are two main blocs in the Iraqi Parliament: Sairoon, led by populist Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr; and Fatah, headed by Hadi al-Amiri. But the numbers in the blocs have continued to change since the elections, with an unknown number of lawmakers leaving some blocs and joining others.

In a statement Friday, protesters called the Iran-backed groups "blobs of corruption" that are doing everything they can to ensure that sects and ethnic groups hold the country's top posts.

The Iraqis, on Friday, cautiously welcomed Salih's decision to refuse to assign the candidate Asaad Al-Eidani as Prime Minister of the new Iraqi government.

While there are no opinion polls to know the Iraqi street's position on political decisions, the signs of welcoming the decision were more prevalent on the scene.

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Photo courtesy of Ikuko Yamabe  
Pride in patriotism as our flag is flown high above Green Island on Saturday morning.

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### NewsWatch

**KUWAIT CITY:** Kuwaiti customs authorities foiled six attempts to smuggle cannabis, marijuana and amphetamine pills, reports GDNOnline.com.

They seized the banned products as they scanned passengers' luggage and arrested six smugglers, including a woman who travelled to Kuwait from a European country.

The suspects who arrived from Western countries were caught at terminals T4 and T5. They were referred to competent authorities to face charges, according to Al Qabas.

**ISTANBUL:** Turkish authorities arrested 16 people in two security operations against the so-called Islamic State (IS) on Friday, including people who held various positions in the organization.

Anadolu Agency (AA) reported that the Turkish anti-terrorist teams in western Balikesir city, carried out raids that included eight places in the city to fight against IS. (KUNA)

**RIYADH:** Saudi General Authority for Military Industries announced on Saturday signing a partnership agreement with Raytheon Saudi Arabia to locally maintain and upgrade the US made and provided Patriot missile systems.

The official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said the accord falls in line with goals of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 with respect of diversifying the economy and developing local industries. (KUNA)

**RABAT:** Moroccan authorities have sentenced a Youtuber who criticized the king to prison, and detained a journalist-activist who defended anti-government protesters in a tweet.

Freedom of speech advocates say the moves Thursday reflect growing pressure against those who use social networks to express anger at economic and social problems.

A court in Settat handed a four-year prison sentence to Mohammed Sekkaki for referring to Moroccans as donkeys and criticizing King Mohammed VI, in a video posted on YouTube in November. The royal family is widely revered in Morocco, and criticizing the king is a criminal offense. (AP)

**CAIRO:** Egyptian authorities have arrested an online comedian who criticized President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi in a YouTube video, according to a rights lawyer and local media.

Shady Sorour was arrested at Cairo International Airport earlier this week upon his arrival from the United States. Local Arabic-language newspaper Al-Masry Al-Youm reported that he would be tried together with a number of other defendants. Prosecutors allege that they incited protests to overthrow the government. (AP)

**CAIRO:** Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi Thursday echoed his country's backing for Libya's security and stability, and opposed foreign interference in this north African country's domestic affairs.

El-Sisi renewed the position in a contact with Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, which focused on the latest regional situation, primarily Libya, Presidential Spokesman Bassam Radhi said in a statement. (KUNA)

**PARIS:** France on Friday said it had no particular views or comment on the Lebanese government that is currently being formed, but Paris urged that the new executive in Beirut must be capable of being an "effective government" that can address the demands of the Lebanese people.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Agnes Von Der Muhll declined to comment on the potential composition of Lebanon's new government or its support within that country. (KUNA)

**NICOSIA, Cyprus:** Turkey's willingness to dispatch troops to Libya is "unacceptable" and such a move would constitute unwanted meddling in the affairs of a friendly country, the speaker of the north African country's parliament said Saturday.

Aguila Saleh said in a joint statement with his Cypriot counterpart that Turkey's actions are ratcheting up tensions and destabilizing the wider region.

Saleh and Cypriot parliamentary speaker Demetris Sylouris also reiterated their condemnation of a maritime border agreement that Turkey signed with Libya's Tripoli-based government - but which hasn't been ratified, as necessary, by the Libyan parliament - as a "flagrant violation of international law that's devoid of any legal basis." (AP)

**ANKARA:** A Turkish court on Friday convicted six journalists and one other employee of an independent newspaper of aiding the network of a US-based cleric who is accused of masterminding the failed coup in 2016, the state-run news agency reported.

The seven were accused of supporting the coup through their work for the newspaper Sozcu, which has been extremely critical of the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. (AP)



Sheikh Jaber Causeway at night. - Hassan Mahmoud-KUNA

## Iran in naval drills with Russia, China

TEHRAN, Iran, Dec 28, (AP): Iran's navy on Friday kicked off the first joint naval drill with Russia and China in the northern part of the Indian Ocean, Iranian state TV reported.

The four-day exercise, launched from the southeastern port city of Chahbahar in the Gulf of Oman and near the border with Pakistan, is aimed at boosting security of the region's waterways, the report quoted Iran's navy chief Adm. Hossein Khanzadi as saying.

On Thursday, Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman Wu Qian said the drill would "deepen exchange and cooperation between the navies of the three countries." He said Chinese navy's guided missile destroyer "Xining" was taking part in the exercise.

Tehran has been seeking to step up military cooperation with Beijing and Moscow amid unprecedented economic sanctions from Washington. Visits to Iran by Russian and Chinese naval representatives have also increased in recent years.

Later on Friday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said in a Tweet the drill is an indication of Iran's commitment to provide security to regional waterways. "Iran has long stated its readiness to work w/our neighbors to secure Arabian Gulf," he said.

The Iranian TV also said the drill shows that Iran is not isolated, despite the US withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers and the Trump administration's escalated sanctions on Iran.

The drill is also seen as a response to recent US maneuvers with its regional ally Saudi Arabia, in which China also participated.

France's government has summoned Iran's ambassador to demand the release of two French researchers held in a notorious Tehran prison, and to express "extreme concern" about the health of one who is on a hunger strike.



A homeless girl selling candy poses for a picture while hugging her brother during anti-government demonstrations in Baghdad, Iraq on Dec 26. (AP)

France considers the months-long detention of Fariba Adelkhah and Roland Marchal "unacceptable" and is seeking permission for consular officials to visit them, according to a foreign ministry statement.

The ministry said the ambassador was summoned Thursday, and that France is demanding "total transparency" about what is happening with the researchers.

## Japan approves ME deployment Call to aid Idlib

TOKYO, Dec 28, (KUNA): Japan, on Friday, formally decided to dispatch a Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) unit to the Middle East for an information-gathering mission to protect Japanese commercial ships in the waters.

According to the plan approved at a Cabinet meeting, from next month, Tokyo will mobilize two P-3C patrol airplanes that have been engaged in anti-piracy missions off Somalia for the planned intelligence activities.

In addition, the government will also send a helicopter-equipped destroyer along with around 260 MSDF personnel early February, with an eye to implementing operations by the end of the same month.

The mission will cover the Gulf of Oman, the northern part of the Arabian Sea, and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait connecting the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. There are no plans to send the MSDF to the Strait of Hormuz and the Arabian Gulf amid Iran's criticism of the US coalition initiative.

If there are any emergencies, the government will issue a special order to allow the MSDF to use weapons to defend Japan-related ships. The operations will continue for one year and can be extended.

Defense Minister Taro Kono gave the order to senior official to start preparation earlier in the decision was confirmed earlier in the day.

BEIRUT, Dec 28, (Agencies): A Syrian opposition leader called Friday on the international community to help millions of civilians in the country's last rebel-held stronghold amid a crushing government offensive, calling it a "disaster area."

After weeks of intense bombardment, Syrian government forces launched a ground offensive on the southern and eastern parts of Idlib province in the northwest last week. It has forced tens of thousands of people to flee their homes.

Idlib, which is dominated by al-Qaeda-linked militants, is also home to 3 million civilians. The United Nations has warned of the growing risk of a humanitarian catastrophe along the Turkish border.

Opposition leader Nasr Hariri told reporters in Istanbul that the international community "should turn on the red lights because there is a humanitarian catastrophe inside Syria." He added that large numbers of people are fleeing toward the Turkish border in what could trigger a new refugee crisis.

"We declare this area a disaster area and it should be dealt with accordingly," said Hariri, who heads the High Negotiations Committee. He said work should be done to reach a permanent cease-fire in Idlib, not a truce that would crumble later.

Hariri said if the international community cannot protect those civilians, they should send them humanitarian assistance "so that they will be able to survive in this cold weather and difficult circumstances."

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said that as a result of hostilities more than 235,000 people have been displaced between Dec 12 and Dec 25. It said many of those who fled moved out of the town of Maaret al-Numan, toward which Syrian troops have been advancing since Thursday.