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GCC SEEKS ROLE IN IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL TALKS



In this June 25, 2020 file photo, Engineers Mahmood al-Nasser (left), and Mohammad Nasser al-Emadi test the Emirates Mars Mission probe's 'flat sat', at the Mohammed bin Rashid Space Center in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. (AP)

Ambitious timeline for moon shot

The United Arab Emirates' space center announced Wednesday a more ambitious timeline for sending its first rover to the moon.

The Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Center said it is partnering with Japan's ispace company to send a rover to the moon on an unmanned spacecraft by 2022, rather than 2024.

The "Rashid" rover, named after Dubai's ruling family, will deploy to the moon using ispace's lunar lander. The company will also provide the mission with wireless communication on the lunar surface.

The UAE's National newspaper reported that the rover will be launched into space aboard a SpaceX rocket from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

The lunar mission is part of the UAE's broader strategy to become a major player in the field of space exploration. If the moon mission succeeds, the UAE and Japan would join the ranks of only the US, Russia and China as nations that have put a spacecraft on the lunar surface.

Already, an Emirati satellite is orbiting Mars to study the red planet's atmosphere. The UAE partnered with Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries to launch that probe, which swung into Mars' orbit in February.

The Rashid rover is expected to study the lunar surface, mobility on the moon's surface and how different surfaces interact with lunar particles. The 10-kilogram (22-pound) rover will carry two high-resolution cameras, a microscopic camera, a thermal imagery camera, a probe and other de-

vices.

"Our mission through scientific endeavours such as the Emirates Lunar Mission is to keep the UAE flag flying high and be at the forefront of countries contributing to scientific achievements that will change the face of humanity," said Yousuf Hamad Al-Shaibani, who heads the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Center.

The space center oversees the country's astronaut program, in which the first Emirati astronaut was sent to the International Space Station in 2019.

The UAE has plans to develop the Middle East's most advanced commercial satellite to produce high-resolution satellite imagery. It has also set the ambitious goal of building a human colony on Mars by 2117.

Meanwhile, The United Arab Emirates named the next two astronauts in its space program Saturday, including the country's first female astronaut.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai who also serves as the autocratically ruled country's prime minister and vice president, named the two astronauts on Twitter.

He identified Noura al-Matroushi as the UAE's first female astronaut. The announcement gave no biographical information about her or her male counterpart, Mohammed al-Mulla.

The two had been selected among more than 4,000 applicants in the UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula that's also home to Abu Dhabi. (AP)

Iran voids Vienna offer

Holocaust refuge in Israeli defense

DUBAI, April 15, (Agencies): Iran's supreme leader on Wednesday dismissed initial offers at talks in Vienna to save Tehran's tattered nuclear deal as "not worth looking at," attempting to pressure world powers after an attack on the country's main nuclear enrichment site.

The comments by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has final say on

all matters of state in the Islamic Republic, came after a day that saw Iran's president similarly ratchet up pressure over the accord. European powers meanwhile warned Tehran its actions were "particularly regrettable" and "dangerous."

The talks already have been thrown into disarray by a weekend attack on Iran's main Natanz nuclear enrichment site suspected to have been carried out by Israel. Tehran retaliated by announcing it would enrich uranium up to 60% -

higher than it ever has before but still lower than weapons-grade levels of 90%.

"The offers they provide are usually arrogant and humiliating (and) are not worth looking at," the 81-year-old Khamenei said in an address marking the first day of the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan in Iran.

He also criticized the US and warned time could be running out.

"The talks shouldn't become talks of attrition," Khamenei said. "They shouldn't be in a way that parties drag on and prolong the talks. This is harmful to the country."

Speaking to his Cabinet, an impassioned Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said the first-generation IR-1 centrifuges that were damaged in Sunday's attack would be replaced by advanced IR-6 centrifuges that enrich uranium much faster.

"You wanted to make our hands empty during the talks but our hands are full," Rouhani said.

Rouhani added: "60% enrichment is an answer to your evilness. ... We cut off both of your hands, one with IR-6 centrifuges and another one with 60%."

Rouhani also accused Israel of being behind the Natanz attack and threatened to retaliate.

In Jerusalem at a Memorial Day commemoration, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared to reference Iran.

"We must never remain apathetic to the threats of war and extermination of those who seek to eliminate us," he said. Israel has not claimed the attack, though it rarely does in its ongoing shadow war against Tehran.

Aimed

The talks in Vienna are aimed at finding a way for the United States to re-enter Tehran's nuclear agreement with world powers and have Iran comply again with its limits. The accord, which former president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the US from in 2018, prevented Iran from stockpiling enough high-enriched uranium to be able to pursue a nuclear weapon in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

Late on Wednesday, the European Union said formal negotiations would resume Thursday in Vienna.

Rouhani in his comments Wednesday insisted Iran is still hoping that the Vienna talks lead to a negotiated settlement over its program - and the accompanying lifting of punishing sanctions. Khamenei as well said he believed in his negotiators, but kept up the pressure on the West in his remarks Wednesday night.

"They must do what we say first, and we are assured that it's done, then we will do what we are required to do," he said.

France, Germany and the United Kingdom, all parties to the nuclear deal, only hours earlier issued a joint statement Wednesday expressing their "grave concern" over Iran's decision to increase enrichment.

"This is a serious development since the production of highly enriched uranium constitutes an important step in the production of a nuclear weapon," the countries said. "Iran has no credible civilian need for enrichment at this level."

China and Russia also took part in the deal.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken also called Iran's enrichment decision a "provocative announcement."

GCC Secretary-General Nayef Al-Hajraf said Wednesday GCC countries should participate in ongoing negotiations between Iran and UN Security Council permanent members plus Germany to revive the nuclear agreement.

In a letter to foreign ministers of the six countries, Al-Hajraf said negotiations taking place in Vienna should take into consideration worries and interests of the GCC countries in a drive to boost security and stability in the region.

Ramadan Timings

Iftar Friday 18:15
Imsak Saturday 03:47
Iftar Saturday 18:16
Imsak Sunday 03:46

'Chaos key to force government hand'

Diatribes 'for dissolution'

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim said the attitude of some MPs during the last two sessions is aimed at dissolving the Assembly by instigating chaos.

In a press statement, Al-Ghanim disclosed that he adjourned Wednesday's session until the next couple of weeks and that he has a message for the people of Kuwait. He pointed out the recent turn of events in the Assembly is unfortunate as any political, legal or constitutional dispute should be handled through a calm and sophisticated dialogue as it was done previously. He believes the citizens are fully aware that the aim is to instigate chaos in every session to push for the dissolution of the Assembly.

He wants to reassure the people that the political leadership is aware of such plans, indicating that Article 107 of the Constitution states the dissolution of the Assembly is the absolute right of His Highness the Amir. He prefers to not reply to the statements of a few MPs against him; because he is committed to the Constitution, Kuwaiti morals and Islamic regulations. He said he can admonish majority of the MPs who do not agree with such attitude, asserting they are forced to take positions against him for fear of being subjected to pressure on social media. He claimed some parties are using the social media and are paying a large amount to form a fake public opinion. He pointed out the genuine public opinion was revealed in the election on Dec 5, 2020 during which he landed on the first spot in his constituency; as well as the election of the Assembly Speaker.

Talking about what transpired on the podium at the Assembly hall, Al-Ghanim confirmed receiving the request signed by 10 MPs to nullify the decision taken in the previous session. When voting on the request started, some MPs asked for withdrawal of the request but this is not possible once voting started. This is possible only if the same MPs submit another request to withdraw the first request, he clarified.

He added the MPs insisted on interrupting the voting pro-

cess through illegal actions, including the use of a loud speaker and physical altercation with the Assembly employees and security guards. He then called on everyone to return to the right track, protect Kuwait and not to set fire to the nation; otherwise, everyone will bite his own finger due to guilt.

On the other hand, MP Muhammad Al-Sayer asserted that the Speaker will not enjoy even a single peaceful session since he protected His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid against grilling motions and deprived the MPs of the right to use their constitutional tools to monitor the performance of the government.

Also, MP Muhammad Al-Mutair revealed that Al-Ghanim was the one who started insulting and offending the MPs including him, Khalid Al-Otaibi and Thamer Al-Suwait. He added that the speaker urged some employees assigned in his office to insult them, but they tried to avoid these employees. He said they were surprised when the employees filed complaints against them at the police station. He pointed out the most dangerous part is that Al-Ghanim justified his action by claiming the political leadership is satisfied with him and he sometimes talks on behalf of the political leadership. He considers this behavior of Al-Ghanim as offensive to the political leadership.

In another development, MP Hassan Jawhar asked His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah about the number of meetings held by the committee formed according to the Cabinet's decision issued on April 3, 2017 on assigning the committee to study cases of losing, dropping and withdrawal of Kuwaiti citizenship.

Jawhar requested for the names of committee members, copy of the committee's reports, number of cases in which the committee recommended reinstatement of citizenship, number of cases in which citizenship has been reinstated, those whose citizenship has not been reinstated and reasons behind such a decision.

Moreover, MP Marzouq Al-Khalifa submitted a proposal to suspend for six months the collection of loan installments from military personnel, doctors and nurses who are Bedouins, children of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis and citizens of other countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Opinion

Khaled & Ghanim, no excuse, let the work begin

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

THERE is no longer an excuse for either the executive authority or its legislative counterpart as to why work shouldn't begin, especially after confirming the immunity of His Highness the Prime Minister in the parliament, even though his immunity was long established through his probity, and also the immunity of the Speaker.

There is no longer an excuse since the government has attained the majority in the National Assembly with 33 members. It is irrelevant whether this was attained through planning and sophistication, or by a stroke of luck. The important thing is that the two authorities must start working on mending whatever crookedness was found in the Kuwaiti course.

There is no doubt that the four months of bickering and wrangles, and the negative impacts it left on the economic and political situations, is sufficient for everyone to learn the lesson, which is that there is no escape from facing the facts, working for the sake of Kuwait, and getting out of the cycle of blame game that the two authorities hurl at each other.

After the positive development that we have witnessed in the last two days, people are eagerly waiting for the plans set by the government regarding economic rescue and social openness. The government, in partnership with the National Assembly, must start amending the laws that were enacted in the previous parliaments when the MPs imposed their backward viewpoints, which almost destroyed the country after it closed it to investment - both local and foreign. I worked to consecrate a discrimination spirit, which Kuwait had never witnessed before even in its darkest circumstances.

The 33 MPs and ministers who constitute the majority are today facing the biggest challenge, which is work, and to set their eyes on their predecessors, so that they do

not hesitate, or use their positions for their personal interests.

We are witnessing an era when a former prime minister, ministers and officials are being tried on charges of corruption, negligence and not managing the state well. This means that no one is safe, no matter how high his position or social status is.

They also have to remember that we are under a firm political leadership, as His Highness the Amir is known for his integrity, uprightiness and asceticism, and His Highness the Crown Prince is known for his absolute belief in justice, giving everyone his right and ensuring that truth always prevails. They tolerate neither procrastination nor excuses or inaction because their top priority is to serve Kuwait and its people. Through that, they earn satisfaction of the Almighty Lord, and peace of mind.

Therefore, all conditions are ripe for His Highness the Prime Minister to start working on the real reform that the country has been waiting for years. No more excuses are available including the National Assembly's reluctance to proceed with the development of laws or others, as per what we have heard and read about in the past months. The will to change should launch from the two leaders - the prime minister and the Speaker - and the others must follow.

There is nothing more important than removing the repression from Kuwait and once again making it an oasis of freedom of opinion and expression, and a platform for launching individual economic and social initiatives, without any objection.

This is the challenge that both authorities must succeed in dealing with so that we do not go back to spinning around a vicious circle ... Time is ruthless.

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Attack 'fires' Saudi 'U'

Newswatch

JEDDAH, April 15, (AP): A Saudi university near the country's border with Yemen caught fire early Thursday after the kingdom's air defenses intercepted a barrage of ballistic missiles and bomb-laden drones.

The interception scattered debris on Jizan University's campus, which caused a fire that has been contained, the Saudi-led coalition at war in Yemen said in a statement. It said no one was killed, and there were no immediate reports of injuries.

Video on social media purportedly showed a Patriot missile flying low across Jizan to intercept a missile or drone, with it detonating over the city.

The barrage came just hours after Saudi Arabia warned Iran its recent decision to push its nuclear enrichment to its highest level ever risked raising tensions in the Mideast.

The Saudi statement blamed the Iran-backed Houthis group for the attack, saying the five ballistic missiles and four bomb-laden drones specifically targeted civilian areas and had been launched from the rebels' stronghold of Saada in Yemen.

Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yehia Sarie tweeted Thursday that his group had launched 11 missiles and drones at Saudi Arabia, targeting the kingdom's Patriot defense system, oil sites and other "critical" areas in Jizan. Sarie did not mention the university.

The conflict in Yemen was sparked by the Houthis takeover of the capital, Sanaa, in 2014, which forced the internationally recognized government to flee the city. A Saudi-led coalition, which until recently was supported by the U.S., has been fighting the Houthis nearly ever since.

The U.N. humanitarian office says the war has caused an estimated 233,000 deaths, including 131,000 from indirect causes such as lack of food, health services and infrastructure.

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait Ministry of Health Wednesday registered four deaths and 1,402 coronavirus cases in the past 24 hours.

The new fatalities raised total deaths to 1,423 and registered infections topped 251,675, ministry spokesman **Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad** said in a statement to KUNA.

He added that 1,296 people recovered in the past 24 hours to reach a total of 235,053. He said recovery-to-infection ratio was 93.4 percent.

Al-Sanad said 237 Covid-19 patients were in the intensive care units, while total patients receiving health care was 15,199.

Health care workers conducted 8,880 swab tests in the past 24 hours to reach a total of 2,187,159 tests since the pandemic broke out in Kuwait, said Al-Sanad who added that infections-to-swab ratio was 15.8 percent. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir **Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah** received on Wednesday a phone call from Prince **Turki bin Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud**, the Saudi Minister of State and Cabinet Member.

Prince Turki expressed congratulations on advent of the blessed fasting month of Ramadan, wishing that it would recur with all goodness for the two countries, the Arab and Muslim nations.

He also expressed good wishes for His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf who thanked him for the gracious gesture, this brotherly contact, reciprocating identical sentiments. (KUNA)

COPENHAGEN: Three members of an Iranian separatist group, the Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahwaz, were charged Thursday with financing and promoting terror in Iran with an unnamed Saudi intel-

ligence service.

The three, who were arrested in February 2020 in Ringsted, 60 kilometers (40 miles) southwest of Copenhagen, also were charged with illegal intelligence activity.

If found guilty, the men who were not named according to Danish rules, face up to 12 years in jail, chief prosecutor **Lise-Lotte Nilas** said in a statement. (AP)

DUBAI: One of Dubai's famed "jetman" pilots killed in a crash in November failed to deploy the emergency parachute attached to the winged engines strapped to his back, an investigative report released Thursday found.

Investigators from the **United Arab Emirates' General Civil Aviation Authority** gave no explanation for why **Vincent Reffet**, 36, of **Anney, France**, didn't use his parachute in the fall during a training flight in the desert of the sheikhdom.

Describing Reffet as an "experienced professional skydiver" and jetwing pilot, the investigators said video from the Nov. 17 crash appeared to show him lose control and go into a backflip hovering some 240 meters (800 feet) off the ground. (AP)

DUBAI: The **United Arab Emirates** played a role in getting longtime Asian rivals **India** and **Pakistan** to agree to a cease-fire amid tensions over the disputed region of Kashmir, the Emirati ambassador to **Washington** said.

The comments by **Yousef al-Otaiba** come as the Emirates tries to recalibrate its diplomacy to Washington following US President **Joe Biden** taking office.

After enjoying a close relationship to President **Donald Trump**, the autocratically ruled UAE has sought to underline its importance in regional affairs as Biden has struck a harder tone with **Saudi Arabia** and suggested he wants to rejoin Iran's nuclear deal with world powers. (AP)