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Amir opens Assembly term amid optimism over national dialogue

Speaker says reconciliation talks, accord best way to resolve problems



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem attend the opening of the second session of the 16th legislative term yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday opened the new term of the National Assembly amid optimism resulting from the outcome of the national dialogue to resolve political disputes. Unlike the previous term, the opening session passed off peacefully with no heated arguments or exchanges of strong words. A majority of permanent and temporary committees were also elected by a unanimous vote with no contests, contrary to the previous term where panel

elections saw stiff competition.

In his opening remarks to the parliament, HH the Amir reiterated the importance of efforts to reinforce reforms to benefit the people through cooperation between the legislative and executive authorities. Delivering the Amiri address on behalf of HH the Amir, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said HH Sheikh Nawaf stressed the importance of serving the people through parliamentary and government cooperation to overcome obstacles and bolster development.

In his speech, Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem

thanked HH the Amir for calling for the national dialogue and invoking his constitutional authority to issue an amnesty for some opposition politicians. He also thanked the prime minister and MPs for positively responding to HH the Amir's call and taking part in the national dialogue. The speaker specifically thanked opposition MP Obaid Al-Wasmi, who was one of three opposition lawmakers who took part in the dialogue.

Ghanem acknowledged that "we all committed mistakes" and expressed hope that the national dialogue will lead to more breakthroughs that will

make the Kuwaiti people very glad. "Dialogue, agreement and roundtable policy ... are the best ways to resolve all our problems," Ghanem said. He however insisted that "if we want to turn a new page, we must hold firm to our constitutional principles". The speaker also emphasized that achieving political stability does not mean dropping accountability like some said. "We should use constitutional tools in a prudent way".

HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah said the national dialogue was launched to achieve more

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Qatar amir pledges 'equal citizenship'

DOHA: Qatar's amir pledged "equal citizenship" yesterday after some people were excluded from participating in the country's first legislative elections, sparking rare debate in the wealthy Gulf country. Only descendants of Qataris who were citizens in 1930 were eligible to vote and run for 30 of the 45 seats in this

month's Shura Council polls, disqualifying members of families naturalized since then.

"To promote equal Qatari citizenship and translate it into practice... I have instructed the council of ministers to prepare the appropriate legal amendments to ensure the achievement of this goal," Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani told lawmakers at the new council's opening session. In his first remarks on the issue, he called for combatting "tribal bigotry vis-a-vis public interest or loyalty to the homeland".

This "negative aspect of tribalism" was surprising, he said, in apparent reference to isolated protests during the run-up to the elections. Energy-rich Qatar, a US ally, has a population of approximately 2.5 million, most of whom are foreigners and ineligible to vote.

Qataris number about 333,000. Candidates were required to stand in electoral divisions linked to where their family or tribe was based in the 1930s, using data compiled by the then-British authorities.

Some members of the sizeable Al-Murrah tribe were among those excluded from the electoral process, sparking a fierce debate online and sporadic protests. Qatar signed a constitution into effect in 2005 - the first time since independence from Britain in 1971 - with the aim of introducing democratic reforms. The constitution banned political parties but provided for legislative power to be vested in a consultative council, or parliament, made up of 45 members, two-thirds of whom would be elected. The rest are appointed by the amir. — AFP



Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani

Man stabs Jahra bank guard, steals KD 32,000

KUWAIT: A man stormed into a bank in Taima in Jahra, stabbed a guard and made off with KD 32,000. Detectives are looking for the suspect.



US, Bahrain conduct first drone drills

MANAMA: The US and Bahrain navies conducted yesterday a joint exercise at sea, launching a series of drills integrating unmanned systems into regional maritime operations. The US Fifth Fleet, based in

Bahrain, announced last month it launched a new task force in the Gulf to rapidly incorporate drones and artificial intelligence into operations, saying Task Force 59 would rely on regional and coalition partnerships.

The announcement by the US Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) came amid maritime tensions between Iran and its Zionist archenemy, with which Bahrain normalized ties last year.

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A US Navy Martin UAV drone flies over Gulf waters as Royal Bahrain Naval Force (RBNF) Abdulrahman Al Fadhel takes part in joint naval exercise between the US 5th Fleet Command and Bahraini forces yesterday. — AFP