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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2020 / RABEE'A AL-THANI 24, 1442 AH

emergency number 112

NO. 17557

16 PAGES

150 FILS

Amir assigns PM to form Cabinet

Opinion

Lest the Prime Minister be relieved

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ACCORDING to the prevailing custom, the Prime Minister-designate has 15 days to present his team of ministers. Before the position of the Crown Prince was separated from the Prime Minister, the person concerned was known. The picture changed after 2003, and the issue became limited to whoever His Highness the Amir chooses to take over this task.

However, it has become the usual practice to re-assign the same person more than once. From that date until 2011, the same person was reassigned more than once, but after the cruel and unjust campaign against His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed by the mob that wanted to push the country into chaos under the slogan of "The Arab Spring", Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed apologized for taking over the task. The matter was assigned to His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak until late last year when His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled was chosen to assume the leadership of the Council of Ministers. It was considered temporary to run a watershed period until the parliamentary elections.

Today, in the face of a radical change in the National Assembly, it seems that the upcoming ministerial team will be in a confrontation with a fierce opposition that is completely different from what was the case in the previous Parliament, which the Kuwaitis referred to as "The Parliament of Delegates". The ministers were getting rid of accountability by providing more services to lawmakers, coupled with conclusion of deals that darkened their noses, and the spread of corruption as part of the government's behavior which led to more deficits at all levels.

There is no doubt that His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, after one year and 18 days of leadership and due to the many criticisms from both Parlia-

ment and public about most of the ministers, is well aware of the weaknesses and failures of each minister.

To assign him again to form the new government, he must have a complete perception of the support team in the executive authority. He must avoid falling into the previous mistakes in order to ensure the future government is not lame and will not suffer great weakness and imbalance, as was the case with the previous one. It should not write a statement of its failure with the announcement of its birth, or get lost in mazes by losing its momentum and turning the executive authority into a "dealer tracker" for the representatives.

The upcoming government has a big and fateful task that is primarily confined to addressing the fiscal deficit which has risen to about 150 percent, and the further reduction of Kuwait's credit rating with it, which means more interest risks on international loans. This is one of the many problems that must be addressed.

During the past 12 and a half months, Kuwait underwent several tests but the Cabinet unfortunately failed in many of them. With the exception of the elections, it can indeed be said that it had no luck in any file or issue.

Therefore, if His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled does not change his approach in choosing ministers and in the management of his council, there is no doubt that we will face a parliamentary-ministerial problem which would either end with the dissolution of the National Assembly or the dismissal of His Highness the Prime Minister. Therefore, the challenge is great, and there must be sophistication in this regard.

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Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait listed 301 new coronavirus infections on Tuesday to raise the total 144,900, while three deaths recorded over the past 24 hours upped the death toll from the outbreak to 900, the health ministry said.

The number of people hospitalised with the virus currently stands at 3,362, with 83 of them in intensive care units, according to ministry Spokesman **Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad**, who revealed that some 5,783 swab tests were conducted over the last day out of a total of 1,152,203.

The ministry had earlier reported that some 297 more people had been cured from the virus over the past day, raising the total of those to have overcome the disease to 140,638.

He went on to urge nationals and expatriates alike that abiding by health precautions, mainly, following social distancing rules, is the only way to halt the spread of the virus. (KUNA)

BOSTON: Researchers at a cybersecurity firm say they have identified vulnerabilities in software widely used by millions of connected devices – flaws that could be exploited by hackers to penetrate business and home computer networks and disrupt them.

There is no evidence of any intrusions that made use of these vulnerabilities. But their existence in data-communications software central to internet-connected devices prompted the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency to flag the issue in a bulletin.

Potentially affected devices from an estimated 150 manufacturers range from networked thermometers to "smart" plugs and printers to office routers and healthcare appliances to components of industrial control systems, the cybersecurity firm Forescout Technologies said in a report released Tuesday. Most affected are consumer devices including remote-controlled temperature sensors and cameras, it said.

In the worst case, control systems that drive "critical services to society" such as water, power and automated building management could be crippled, said **Awais Rashid**, a computer scientist at Bristol University in Britain who reviewed the Forescout findings.

In its advisory, CISA recommended that users take defensive measures to minimize the risk of hacking. In particular, it suggested cutting off industrial control systems from the internet and isolated from corporate networks.

The discovery highlights the dangers that cybersecurity experts often find in internet-linked appliances designed without much attention to security. Sloppy programming by developers is the main issue in this case, Rashid said.

Fixing the problems, which could afflict millions of impacted devices, is particularly complicated because they reside in so-called open-source software, code freely distributed for use and further

modification. In this case, the issue involves fundamental internet software that manages communication between internet devices via a technology called TCP/IP. (AP)

TEHRAN: Iranian President **Hassan Rouhani** said Tuesday his country will continue to support **Syria**, urging Damascus to confront **Israel** in the occupied Golan Heights.

Rouhani's website said the remarks came during a meeting with visiting Syrian Foreign Minister **Faisal Mekdad**.

"The Islamic Republic of **Iran** will continue its support to the Syrian government and people as our strategic ally and we will stand by Syria until its final victory."

Rouhani said confronting "Zionist occupiers and terrorism" is the joint goal of both nations.

"Until the liberation of all occupied lands including the **Golan**, confronting Zionist occupiers," should continue, said Rouhani.

It was Mekad's first visit to Iran as foreign minister after he assumed his post in November. He arrived in **Tehran** on Monday.

Iran has been a key ally of Syrian President Bashar Assad since the beginning of Syria's civil war in 2011, lending his government in **Damascus** vital military and economic support.

Iran does not recognize Israel and supports anti-Israel militant groups like the Palestinian Hamas and **Lebanon's** Hezbollah. (AP)

WASHINGTON: President **Donald Trump's** administration is facing new scrutiny Tuesday after failing to lock in a chance to buy millions of additional doses of Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine, which has shown to be highly effective against COVID-19.

That decision could delay the delivery of a second batch of doses until Pfizer fulfills other international contracts.

The revelation comes as Trump's plans to host a White House summit aimed at celebrating the expected approval of the first vaccine later this week. His administration is seeking to tamp down public skepticism over the vaccine and secure a key component of the Republican president's legacy.

The focus was to be on the administration's plans to distribute and administer the vaccine, but officials from President-elect **Joe Biden's** transition team, which will oversee the bulk of the largest vaccination program in the nation's history once he takes office Jan 20, were not invited.

Pfizer's vaccine is expected to be endorsed by a panel of Food and Drug Administration advisers as soon as this week, with delivery of 100 million doses – enough for 50 million Americans – expected in coming months. (AP)

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 8: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah assigned Tuesday His Highness Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to form a government, the first under His Highness the Amir and the 37th in Kuwait's history.

This will be His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled's second Cabinet following the one he formed on Dec 17, 2019 until he tendered the

AstraZeneca vaccine safe, effective

Sites set for COVID shots

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 8, (Agencies): The government has shown a tendency to allocate three sites to vaccinate the citizens and residents to protect them from the COVID-19 pandemic when the vaccine arrives in the country, which is expected to be soon, reports Al-Anba daily quoting reliable health sources.

The same sources said two of the three allocated sites will be the Ahmadi and the Jahra governorates to serve the residents of those areas, in addition to the residents of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorate, while the third main site will be at the Mishref Fairground and will serve the governorates of Hawalli, Capital and Farwaniya.

The sources pointed out the vaccination will be distributed 'free' and is 'optional'. However, those who want to avail the facility will have to opt for e-reservation to avoid crowding.

The sources indicated that priority will be given to the elderly, people with chronic diseases and groups most vulnerable to infection, such as healthcare providers, front-row workers and basic service providers, noting that the vaccination will be in two doses, spread over 21 days.

The sources indicated that the Public Authority for Civil Information is currently counting and collecting data for people according to age groups from 18 to 55 years and from 56 years and over in all governorates of the country, and it will provide this information to the committee to prepare and implement the appropriate mechanism for vaccination as per the Council of Ministers guidelines.

Vaccine

New results on a possible COVID-19 vaccine from Oxford University and AstraZeneca suggest it is safe and about 70 percent effective, but questions remain about how well it may help protect those over 55 – a key concern for a vaccine that health officials hope to rely on around the world because of its low cost, availability and ease of use.

Still, experts say the vaccine seems likely to be approved, despite some confusion in the results and lower levels of protection than what other vaccine candidates have shown.

"What we can see looks reasonable, but it's a bit more complicated than what we've seen so far," said Dr Buddy Creech, a Vanderbilt University researcher helping to test two other vaccines. "If this had been the first report out, the field would have still been excited to have a vaccine."

The medical journal Lancet on Tuesday published partial results from tests of the vaccine in the United Kingdom, Brazil and South Africa – safety results on 23,745 participants and protection levels on 11,636.

They're hard to interpret because a mistake led some participants to get a half dose followed by a full one rather than two full doses as intended.

Researchers claim the vaccine protected against disease in 62 percent of those given two full doses and in 90 percent of those initially given the half dose. However, independent experts have said the second group was too small – 2,741 people – to judge the possible value of that approach and that more testing is needed.

The half-dose group also didn't include anyone over 55, and among others in the study, only about 20 percent were in that age group.

It's unclear if the results will be enough to lead regulators in the United Kingdom and elsewhere to approve its use right away.

"We have no safety concerns about the vaccine," with no hospitalizations or severe disease among those who received it, and results from all study locations consistently showing benefit, said one study leader, Oxford's Andrew Pollard.

"The only way we get the pandemic behind us is if we get doses of vaccine out there," he said.

AstraZeneca's Mene Pangalos called the results "very compelling" and said they "clearly show we have an effective vaccine" that meets criteria for approval around the world. "I really believe this vaccine will have a big impact on the pandemic," he said.

Documents released by US regulators Tuesday confirmed that Pfizer's vaccine was strongly protective against COVID-19 and appeared safe – offering the world's first detailed look at the evidence behind the shots.

The positive review from the Food and Drug Administration sets the stage for a decision allowing the vaccine's initial use within days. FDA regulators posted their analysis online even as across the Atlantic, Britain began vaccinating its oldest citizens with the shots, which were co-developed with BioNTech.

But the US judges experimental vaccines in a unique way: On Thursday, the FDA will



A nurse holds a phial of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine at Guy's Hospital in London on Dec 8. UK health authorities rolled out the first doses of a widely tested and independently reviewed COVID-19 vaccine Tuesday, starting a global immunization program that is expected to gain momentum as more serums win approval. (AP)

convene what's essentially a science court that will debate – in public and livestreamed – just how strong the data backing the shots really is. That public vetting is considered key to bolstering confidence in the shots ahead of what's expected to be the largest vaccination effort in US history.

A panel of independent scientists will pick apart the FDA's first-pass review before recommending whether the vaccine appears safe and effective enough for millions of Americans. The FDA typically follows the committee's advice and if it gives the green light, the first recipients would be healthcare workers and nursing home residents, according to plans laid out by each state.

Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla declined to predict how quickly FDA might issue a decision.

Comfortable

"They need to take as much time as they need to feel comfortable. It's very important for the trust of the vaccine from the people," he said at a news conference in Geneva.

It's one of several vaccines in the pipeline being tested in the hope of ending the pandemic. The FDA later this month will consider a COVID-19 vaccine by Moderna and the National Institutes of Health.

Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech previously reported the shots appeared 95 percent effective at preventing mild to severe COVID-19 disease in a large, ongoing study. That's based on the first 170 infections detected. Only eight of the infections were among volunteers given the real vaccine while the rest had received a dummy shot.

FDA's reviewers agreed that the shots were strongly protective. And of special concern, they worked about as well in older adults, too, the agency confirmed. Among volunteers over age 55, there were three cases of COVID-19 infection who were vaccinated and 48 among placebo recipients. Five of the cases were among people 75 or older, and all had received the dummy shots.

While FDA noted that protection begins to appear two weeks after the first dose, full protection wasn't calculated until after the second dose. No one yet knows how long that protection lasts, something the still unfinished study eventually will need to answer.

"We're looking at the best possible data," Dr Paul Offit of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and an FDA adviser recently cautioned. "People worry, reasonably, how about six months later?"

In the two months that volunteers were tracked so far after the second dose, FDA's reviewers said protection hadn't begun waning.

Cabinet resignation on Dec 6 a day after parliamentary elections.

His Highness the Prime Minister expressed gratitude to His Highness the Amir for assigning him as Prime Minister and to form a new government Tuesday.

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled made the remarks when he was received by His Highness the Amir at Bayan Palace after signing a decree appointing him as Prime Minister.

He reiterated commitment to the Constitution and laws to serve the best interests of the State and citizens.

His Highness the Prime Minister prayed for Allah the Almighty to help him bear this responsibility to continue the process of development.

There were seven officials, except His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, who were Prime Ministers since 1962. Article 56 of the Constitution states that His Highness the Amir shall, after the traditional consultations, appoint the Prime Minister or relieve him of office. The Amir shall also appoint ministers and relieve them of office upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

It says ministers shall be appointed from amongst the National Assembly members and from others, and that number of ministers in all shall not exceed one-third of the MPs.

Late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah headed the first government in January 1962, while late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah chaired by the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Cabinets between January 1963 and November 1965, when he was Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

Late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th governments between December 1965 and December 1977 before becoming the 13th Amir of the State.

Late Father Amir Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah chaired the 10th government in February 1978 until the 20th Cabinet, which was formed in February 2001.

Late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah chaired the 21st government in 2003 until the passing away of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad in 2006.

His Highness Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired the 22-28 governments between February 2006 until December 2011.

Succeeded

His Highness Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah succeeded His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad and took over the 29-35 governments between December 2011 until November 2019.

Kuwait witnessed the formation of 37 governments over 57 years, the last of which was the one formed in December 2019 headed by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and included 15 ministers.

The first government was called the transitional Cabinet, it was formed on Jan 17, 1962, and chaired by the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, consisting of 14 ministers, and it had a specific mandate, writing a Constitution, thus ended with the end of its task on Jan 27, 1963.

The second government, formed on Jan 28, 1963, was chaired by Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and consisted of 15 ministers including the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah who was named Foreign Minister for the first time in post-independence Kuwait.

The third government was formed on Dec 6, 1964, chaired by Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem, consisting of 14 ministers, four of them were MPs.

This government survived for 28 days only because it failed to win confidence of the National Assembly due to constitutional measures regarding the selection of some ministers.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem chaired the fourth government that was formed on Jan 3, 1965 and included 13 ministers.

The fifth government was formed on Dec 4, 1965 and was chaired by Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

This government consisted of 13 ministers including three MPs. Late Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah was given the Portfolios of Finance, Oil and Foreign Affairs.

MP-elect Badr Al-Dahoum has unveiled his plan to grill former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Anas Al-Saleh in case the latter is appointed to the same position.

Al-Dahoum disclosed the grilling motion consists of only one point – that Al-Saleh is not competent for such a position.

MP-elect Muhammad Al-Rajhi also announced his plan to take a similar step, revealing that his grilling motion will focus on two issues without specifying these issues.

MP-elect Abdullah Al-Taraji confirmed receiving an invitation from MP-elect Abdulkareem Al-Kandari to the consultative meeting scheduled for Wednesday.

Absence

Al-Taraji explained that he did not attend the meeting held in the house of Al-Dahoum on Monday, because he did not receive an invitation. He added that his absence has nothing to do with his view regarding the election of the next National Assembly Speaker.

MP-elect Hamdan Al-Azmi said the return of incompetent ministers is considered a bad beginning due to the fact that the new government must match the remarkable outcome of the recently concluded parliamentary elections. He pointed out the formation of the new government will determine the extent of its cooperation with the Assembly, while affirming his support for the grilling of Al-Saleh if the latter gets reappointed as interior minister.

MP-elect Ali Abdullrasoul Al-Qattan denied rumors spread on social media about his alleged intention to vote for a new Speaker, asserting this is a violation of the Constitution and that he has yet to take a decision in this regard.

MP-elect Ahmed Al-Shuhoumi clarified that he left early during the consultative meeting in the house of Al-Dahoum on Monday, because he heard nothing but the announcement of those present that they will not vote for Marzouq Al-Ghanim in case he is nominated for the Speakership. He said he will decide on his own, apart from the opinion of others.

MP-elect Muhannad Al-Sayer stressed the need to obligate the government to present a clear work program to the Assembly.

He also intends to adopt the bills on amending the Elections Law and establishment of a special administrative court to rule on citizenship cancellation cases.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Progressive Movement (KPM) urged the incoming prime minister to take into consideration the message of citizens in choosing the new ministers.