

## **Kuwait Amir accepts government resignation**

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His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah accepted resignation of the government on Sunday and instructed the cabinet members to take care of urgent business until a new government was formed. According to an Amiri decree, His Highness the Amir said he received the resignation of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Sheikh Sabah has accepted the resignation of the Prime Minister, appointed in his post in July 2, 2006, and the ministers, but they would carry out the urgent affairs of the respected ministries until a new government is formed, read the decree.

This decree is valid as of Sunday and is to be published in the official gazette.

According to a Reuters report, the Kuwaiti government resigned on Sunday in a move apparently aimed at thwarting a no-confidence motion against the Gulf Arab country's health minister, a member of the ruling family.

Ten Kuwaiti parliament members presented the motion last month against Sheikh Ahmad al-Abdullah al-Sabah, who is also acting information minister, over suspected financial and administrative breaches at the Health Ministry.

The vote was due to have taken place in parliament on Monday and Sheikh Ahmad would have had to step down if legislators had voted against him. The cabinet's resignation automatically cancels the parliament session.

Sheikh Ahmad had refused to resign, resulting in a stand-off between the elected parliament and the government of the oil producer, where the emir has the last word in politics.

Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister Ismail al-Shatti told the official KUNA news agency that cabinet members had all tendered their resignations because of "the difficulties in working with the parliament".

Parliament Speaker Jassem al-Kharafi told reporters the government's resignation had been accepted and the emir had appointed Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser al-Mohammad al-Sabah to form a new government.

The emir had the option of dissolving parliament to avoid the vote, but political sources had said that was unlikely because, though he has dissolved parliament before, it would have caused a constitutional crisis.

The emir dissolved parliament last year after a stand-off between the government and opposition over reforms. Political sources expect several ministers who were likely to have faced parliamentary scrutiny to be changed but it is not clear whether the changes to ministers will be comprehensive.

Kuwait's parliament has a history of challenging the cabinet, whose prime minister must be from the ruling family, in a region where the public plays little role in political change.

"We hope the next government will be a strong one, including strong ministers with a clear vision that parliament can work with," said parliament member Ahmad al-Shuhmi.

Political sources said the government was determined not to let the no-confidence vote go ahead because it was concerned that parliament's probes would not stop at Sheikh Ahmad.

In December, Information Minister Mohammad al-Sanousi resigned a day ahead of an expected grilling by an Islamist MP, but political sources say it is more sensitive for a member of the ruling family to be forced out by an elected body.

Sheikh Ahmad was named acting information minister after Sanousi's resignation. He said in parliament last month that mistakes had been made in his ministry.