



3 Kuwait's population growth eases, led by slowdown in expat growth



8 Baltimore: a city stalked by violence, poverty and scandal



22 Papa roach: China farmer breeds bugs for the table



26 Ex-cricketer Lewis on long walk from disgrace to redemption



Entertainment City to be handed to private sector by Amiri Diwan

Lawmaker calls for taxing expat remittances • Two MPs to grill info minister



KUWAIT: Lawmakers are seen during a National Assembly session yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak and Agencies

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah ordered the establishment of a ministerial committee to carry out the work of completing the Entertainment City by entrusting the implementation of this project to the private sector. An official source at the Amiri Diwan added the implementation of this project will be through the private sector, noting the Amiri Diwan will not be bearing any expenses.

The source also noted that the project for establishing, implementing, operating and maintaining the surrounding area of Kuwait Sports City has been put forward in a bid for local companies specialized in this field, adding that the estimated revenue is KD 50 million, which are revenues of the state treasury. The source stressed that the Amiri Diwan is subject to all the regulatory authorities in the country and legal procedures.

Meanwhile, MP Omar Al-Tabtabaei yesterday called for the need to impose taxes on financial remittances by expatriates living in the country, saying the number of expats has swelled to be equal to three times the number of Kuwaitis. He said expats remit billions of dinars annually without any benefit to the country, adding that the huge demographic imbalance in the country must be resolved.

A number of MPs have submitted a draft law calling to impose a five-percent tax on remittances by expatriates to their home countries. But the legal and legislative committee and the government rejected the bill, saying it will hurt the national economy. But the financial and economic

affairs committee went ahead and approved the bill and sent it for the Assembly for approval. The committee defended its decision, saying there was no violation of the constitution.

During the weekly session, two lawmakers said yesterday they will file to grill Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri over alleged violations in authorities under his supervision, especially the agricultural authority. MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said he will file next week to grill Jabri over violations regarding the distribution of agricultural plots and the so-called professional sport facility. The information minister is responsible for the agricultural authority and the sports authority. Later, MP Adel Al-Damkhi said he will join Adasani in the grilling over the agricultural violations. The Assembly will decide after two weeks whether to debate the grilling immediately or give the minister two more weeks.

The Assembly also agreed to debate a draft law granting civil rights to bedoons (stateless people) after two weeks based on a motion signed by 29 MPs. The government agreed and said it will be prepared for the debate on the future of bedoons and their problems. MP Mohammad Hayef, a member of the human rights panel, said the government agreed to discuss the draft law for bedoons' social and civil rights in the next session. He said the human rights panel will discuss any suspicions over the draft law. He welcomed a decision by the Assembly to form a committee to investigate the issue of passports that some bedoons had purchased from foreign countries and turned out to be fake.

News in brief

Bahrain jails 139, revokes citizenship

DUBAI: A court in Western-allied Bahrain sentenced 139 people to jail on terrorism charges yesterday and revoked the citizenship of all but one of them, the public prosecutor said, in the latest mass trial in the state. The High Criminal Court handed out life jail terms to 69 of the defendants, the prosecutor said, adding they were sentenced for crimes including joining a "terrorist" group, bombings, attempted murder and receiving arms and explosives training. It said the defendants had formed an Iran-linked cell it referred to as the "Bahraini Hezbollah" with the purpose of carrying out attacks in the country. Of those sentenced, 60 were in absentia, a defense lawyer said. Yesterday's decision took the number of citizenship revocations in Bahrain to 990, 180 of them this year. — Reuters

India acts against Tiktok app

NEW DELHI: The Indian government yesterday ordered tech giants Google and Apple to take down the Chinese-owned Tiktok video app after a court expressed concerns over the spread of pornographic material, sources told AFP. The app, which claims to have 500 million users worldwide with more than 120 million in India, has been fighting the effort to shut it down after a high court in Chennai called for the ban on April 3. The Chennai case was launched by an activist group which said the app encouraged pedophiles and pornography. On Sunday, a 19-year-old man was allegedly shot dead by a friend in Delhi as they posed with a pistol to make a video to show on TikTok, police told Indian media. Tiktok has already been banned in Bangladesh and hit with an enormous fine in the United States. — AFP

Statins don't work in half of patients

PARIS: Millions of patients around the world taking statins to lower the risk of heart disease fail to achieve the recommended levels of cholesterol reduction after two years of treatment, new research said Monday. Statins - a class of medicines designed to reduce cholesterol linked to heart disease and strokes - are among the most commonly prescribed drugs in the United States and Britain. A team of researchers in Britain reviewed public health records of 165,000 patients taking the medicine and found that fewer than one in two reached the recommended "healthy" 40 percent cholesterol reduction within two years. The study found nearly 23,000 cases of cardiovascular disease within six years of statin treatment among patients. In total, 51 percent of patients had an insufficient drop in cholesterol even while taking the drugs. — AFP

MPs back changes to constitution to extend Sisi rule

CAIRO: Egypt's parliament yesterday approved constitutional amendments allowing general-turned-president Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi to stay in power until 2030, state media reported. Deputies also backed other sweeping changes to the constitution including giving the military greater influence in political life as well as granting Sisi more control over the judiciary. The

Omar caught in a political maelstrom

WASHINGTON: A former refugee and the first black Muslim woman elected to Congress, Ilhan Omar embodied the American dream in her November victory but faces controversies fueled by her

own words and President Donald Trump's hostility toward her. Omar's win was celebrated as historic, and her arrival in Washington contributed to the appreciation that Congress was finally becoming a more diverse, representative American institution. Now she is receiving daily death threats.

Since her January swearing-in, the 37-year-old Minnesota Democrat has been at the center of a swirling debate about anti-Semitism, discrimination and

Continued on Page 24

Seals, caviar, oil: Caspian faces pollution threat

BAKU: Seals waddling along the waterfront were once a common sight in Baku Bay, the Caspian Sea home of Azerbaijan's capital. Not anymore. Of the more than one million seals which inhabited the shores and islands of the

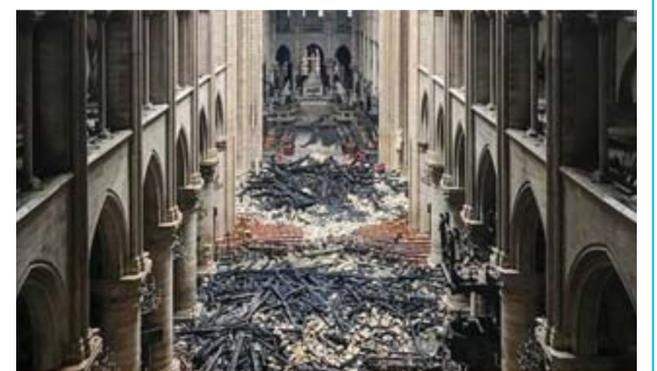
Caspian a century ago fewer than 10 percent remain, and the species has been declared endangered. Azer Garayev, the head of the Azerbaijan Society for the Protection of Animals, says the seals have for decades been suffering from over-hunting and the effects of industrial pollution. In 2003, his group found 750 seal carcasses in just one month. "It was not normal," but no one looked into the issue, the 57-year-old activist said. "The seal is a sign of all the major environmental problems (in the Caspian)."

Continued on Page 24



BAKU: Men fish at an embankment of the Caspian Sea on March 22, 2019. — AFP

Notre-Dame still stands; Amir expresses sorrow



PARIS: A picture taken yesterday shows an interior view of the Notre-Dame Cathedral in the aftermath of a fire that devastated the cathedral. — AFP

PARIS: French investigators probing the devastating blaze at Notre-Dame Cathedral yesterday questioned workers who were renovating the monument while hundreds of millions of euros were pledged to restore the historic masterpiece. As firefighters put out the last smoldering embers, a host of French billionaires and companies stepped forward with offers of cash worth around €700 million (\$790 million) to remake the global landmark.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable yesterday to French President Emmanuel Macron, expressing his deepest regret and sorrow over the massive blaze. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime

Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

Most of the roof has been destroyed, its steeple has collapsed and an unknown number of artifacts and paintings have been lost. The main organ, which had close to 8,000 pipes, has also suffered damage. But the cathedral's walls, bell towers and the most famous circular stained-glass windows at France's most visited tourist attraction remain intact, leading the vicar general Philippe Marsset to call it "more than miraculous". "We're all just dumbfounded. It's more than miraculous, it's heroic," Marsset said, who paid tribute to the more than 400 firefighters who toiled through the night.

Continued on Page 24