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# MPs pass budget with deficit of KD 6.7bn, higher spending

## Finance minister survives no-confidence vote, Amir sends congratulations

By B Izzak

### 102,280 residencies of expats cancelled in four years: MoI

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Interior ministry statistics show that a total of 102,280 residency visas of expats working for both the government and the private sector were cancelled between 2015 and the end of the previous year. Statistics showed a remarkable drop in the number of expats in both sectors in 2018, when 2,501 visas were cancelled - an increase of 671 compared to 2017.

Statistics showed that cancelled private sector visas dropped to 15,734 in 2018 compared to 16,141 in 2017, of which 63 percent were for non-Arabs and 32 percent for Arabs. Statistics showed that the majority of

cancelled visas in the government sector were for Arabs, with 1,769 visas cancelled in 2018 (70 percent).

Meanwhile, statistics showed that the current number of article 18 (private sector) visa holders is 1,531,000, including 957,000 Asians and 549,000 Arabs, while the remaining are from Africa, Europe, North and South America and Australia. The total number of expats holding article 17 (government sector) visas is 108,000, the lowest number since 2015. Arabs form the majority of expats working for the government at 57,124 (53 percent), while Asians number 47,754, in addition to 495 Africans and 58 from Australia and the Pacific.

KUWAIT: The National Assembly yesterday passed the 2019/2020 budget which projects a KD 6.7 billion deficit for the fifth year in a row as a result of the crash in oil prices in mid-2014. During the Assembly's last session for the current term, Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf survived a no-confidence vote by 32 votes against 16 following last week's grilling for not abolishing interest rates on loans taken by pensioners from the social security agency.

Revenues in the 2019/2020 budget, which began on April 1, are projected at KD 15.8 billion, most of them from oil, while spending is estimated at KD 22.5 billion, over two-thirds of which are for wages and subsidies. Oil income is projected at KD 13.85 billion, calculated at \$55 a barrel. The income from oil makes up some 88 percent of total public revenues.

Head of the budgets committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad warned the country is faced with major challenges, adding that even if the government imposes taxes and raises charges on public services,



KUWAIT: Surrounded by MPs and ministers, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah greets Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf (left) at the National Assembly yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

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### News in brief

#### Facial recognition at T4

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation marks one year since the launch of Terminal 4 allocated for Kuwait Airways today by using facial recognition technology at T4 for a trial period of three months. The biometric technology is part of a digital strategy put in place at the airport, where passenger and flight information will be available upon facial recognition, DGCA Director General Yousef Al-Fouzan said in a statement. Besides better passenger handling, the system will also be able to locate the whereabouts of passengers at all times, resulting in better airport services, he explained. — KUNA

#### Man threatens to blow up consulate

KUWAIT: An unidentified man was arrested yesterday at the Egyptian consulate in Salam after threatening to blow himself up, said security sources. The sources explained that according to eyewitnesses, one of the visitors to the consulate suddenly started shouting abusive words, then threatened to blow up the consulate. Security officers controlled him, and on searching him, found he only had a knife and no explosives. — By A Saleh

#### Sharjah prince buried, Amir condolences

DUBAI: A son of the ruler of Sharjah was buried in the emirate yesterday, as a three-day mourning period began after his unexpected death in London. Sheikh Khalid bin Sultan Al-Qasimi was reported to be 39. His father, Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed Al-Qasimi, and other Emirati officials took part in the funeral procession as flags flew at half-mast. HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a cable of condolences to Sheikh Sultan, praying to Almighty Allah to bestow mercy on Sheikh Khalid. 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. — Agencies

#### Minaj to perform in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH: US rapper Nicki Minaj will perform in Saudi Arabia this month, organizers said, triggering a storm on social media. Minaj, known for her profanity-laced lyrics and raunchy music videos, will perform in Jeddah on July 18, organizers of the ongoing Jeddah Season cultural festival announced on Twitter on Tuesday. One Twitter user posted a picture of Minaj and wrote: "My dream has come true". But a woman said in a video posted on Twitter: "She is going to go and shake her backside and all her songs are about sex... and then everyone tells me to wear the abaya. What the hell!" — AFP

## Dozens killed in strike on Libya migrant center

TRIPOLI: International condemnation mounted yesterday after more than 40 migrants were killed in an air strike on a detention center in Libya that the UN said could constitute a war crime. The UN Security Council was set to hold urgent talks about the situation in the North African country following what the European Union called a "horrific" attack that the UN-recognized government blamed on strongman Khalifa Haftar. Bodies were strewn on the floor of a

hangar in the Tripoli suburb of Tajoura, mixed with the belongings and blood-soaked clothes of migrants, an AFP photographer said.

"There were bodies, blood and pieces of flesh everywhere," a survivor, 26-year-old Al-Mahdi Hafyan from Morocco, told AFP from his hospital bed where he was being treated for a leg wound. Tuesday night's strike left a hole around three meters in diameter at the center of the hangar, surrounded by debris ripped from the metal structure by the force of the blast. At least 44 people were killed and more than 130 severely injured, the UN said. "This attack clearly could constitute a war crime, as it killed by surprise innocent people whose dire conditions forced them to be in that shelter," UN envoy to Libya Ghassan Salame said.

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TRIPOLI: Emergency workers recover bodies after an airstrike at Tajoura detention center east of Tripoli early yesterday. — AFP

## Unhappy birthday: Hundreds fall sick at Imelda Marcos party

MANILA: Over 200 guests fell ill with suspected food poisoning yesterday after a meal at a birthday party for 90-year-old Imelda Marcos, the notorious former first lady of the Philippines. Ambulances rushed vomiting friends and supporters from a sports stadium in Manila where around 2,500 people gathered to honor the widow of late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Although Marcos was chased from power by a 1986 peaceful uprising, the family is still revered by many in the Philippines and has made a political comeback in recent years.

"Our ambulances took people to hospital after they complained of dizziness and vomiting. They apparently suffered from food poisoning," Philippine Red Cross chair-



MANILA: Attendees are checked by medical personnel after they fell ill during a birthday celebration in honor of Imelda Marcos at a sports arena yesterday. — AFP

man Richard Gordon told AFP. Health secretary Francisco Duque told journalists the number of ill was 260. One of them, a woman who only gave her first name, Leonora, said she believed it was caused by the party food.

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## Spectacular fall of India's 'dosa king'

CHENNAI: P Rajagopal's story has it all: rags to riches, the visionary creator of a trailblazing Indian restaurant chain - and having a romantic rival murdered after some fateful cosmic advice. On Sunday, the founder of Saravana Bhavan, the eatery found in India and beyond - from Leicester Square to Lexington Avenue via Singapore, Sydney and Stockholm - is due to begin a life sentence. Rajagopal, 71, always dressed in white with a strip of sandalwood paste on his forehead, is the pious son of a low-caste onion trader from a village in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

In 1981, having opened a grocer's shop in Chennai - then known as Madras - he took the brave step of opening his first restaurant at a time when eating out was unusual for most Indians. The winning formula was,



CHENNAI: This photo taken on June 28, 2019 shows the image of P Rajagopal, founder of the Saravana Bhavan food chain, on a menu at one of the popular restaurants. — AFP

and remains, that the southern Indian vegetarian delights on offer - dosa pancakes, deep-fried vadas and idli rice cakes - taste homemade, and are affordable.

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## Gandhi calls for change as he quits as Congress leader

NEW DELHI: Rahul Gandhi quit yesterday as head of India's main opposition Congress party, taking the blame for a second-straight election humiliation by right-wing Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "As president of the Congress party, I am responsible for the loss of the 2019 election," he said in a statement on his official Twitter account. "Accountability is critical for the future growth of our party. It is for this reason that I have resigned as Congress president."

The 49-year-old, who was seeking to become the fourth member of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty to become prime minister, had only been Congress president since Dec 2017. Congress has dominated Indian politics since independence in 1948, but it has seen a spectacular collapse in support in the past decade. Gandhi said immediately after his party's defeat in the April-May national elections that he would not continue as leader, but party barons had hoped to change his mind and yesterday's official announcement still came as a surprise.

Congress won only 52 of the 543 seats in the lower house of parliament in the election. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) took 303 seats, increasing its majority as it won a second consecutive five-year term.

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Rahul Gandhi