



## 7 Philippine cops win battle of the bulge after rule dropped



## 8 Building boom in Lhasa heightens Tibet divisions



## 11 Being Nigerian 101: Social media group debates identity



## 13 Never apologize for who I am: Rashford



# Kuwait to close all children's activities, camps from July 25

## Defense ministry, KPC hospitals urged to support health system

### Court frees poet Sayer, sets trial in October

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** The criminal court yesterday decided to free poet Jamal Al-Sayer without bail and set his trial for Oct 5 on charges of writing tweets deemed offensive to HH the Amir and spreading false news. Sayer was arrested last week and the public prosecution ordered his detention pending his trial. He has denied the accusations.

MPs have strongly criticized the way Sayer, who is elderly, was arrested by police without calling him for investigation. They also criticized a decision by the public prosecution to detain him, saying the action violates a new amendment to the law banning the detention of defendants fac-

ing opinion charges.

Opposition MP Muhammad Al-Sayer, who is a relative of the poet, said despite the release of the poet, opposition MPs are still demanding holding an emergency term of the National Assembly to discuss a number of draft laws. The lawmakers said the proposed term will debate the non-implementation by the public prosecution of a new amendment that bans the detention of defendants being interrogated in opinion cases.

The term also seeks to debate and approve a law challenging judges and prosecutors and a law that will set the duration of service for judges and prosecutors. So far, 29 MPs have signed the

Continued on Page 2

**KUWAIT:** The Cabinet decided late Monday to shut down all activities for children indefinitely from July 25 on recommendations by the ministerial committee overseeing the coronavirus pandemic. The Cabinet decided to "close all activities for children including summer clubs from Sunday, July 25 until further notice" read a statement issued following the Cabinet's weekly meeting.

The Cabinet also asked the ministry of defense and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) to offer their hospitals to the country's health system after a sharp increase in the number of new coronavirus cases. Kuwait has seen a spike in the number of new coronavirus cases and deaths despite vaccinating hundreds of thousands of people.

The ministry of health has reported well over 1,400 new cases daily for the past several weeks and also reported a significant increase in the number of deaths, patients receiving treatment at hospitals and patients in intensive care units. The

ministry on Monday reported 1,694 new cases and as many as 19 deaths, all of whom had not received any vaccination. The rate of infection remains high at 11.74 percent when it should be below 5 percent.

The ministry said 1,175 people infected with the coronavirus are receiving treatment at hospitals, while as many as 331 patients are in intensive care units. The largest number of cases were reported in Ahmadi governorate with 30 percent, followed by Farwaniya and Hawally governorates with 24 percent each. Jahra came in fourth place with 12 percent and the Capital governorate came in last place with 10 percent.

The Cabinet called on the public to continue their cooperation by complying with health precautions and to register with the national vaccination program in a bid to reach immunity levels in the society which will result in reducing pressure on the health system in the country.

### News in brief

#### Gene editing 'blocks virus'

**PARIS:** Scientists have used CRISPR gene-editing technology to successfully block the transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in infected human cells, according to research released yesterday that could pave the way for COVID-19 treatments. Researchers in Australia used an enzyme, CRISPR-Cas13b, that binds to relevant RNA sequences on the novel coronavirus and degrades the genome it needs to replicate inside human cells. — AFP

#### Iran, US in prisoner swap talks

**TEHRAN:** Iran confirmed yesterday ongoing "negotiations" with the United States over a potential prisoner swap, after a US official said Washington is working to release its detained citizens. The US envoy for Iran, Robert Malley, said on Saturday that US President Joe Biden insists on the release of all Americans and will not accept a "partial deal". — AFP

#### GBS risk after J&J jab

**WASHINGTON:** The US Food and Drug Administration updated its warning labels Monday for the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine to include information about an observed "increased risk" of a rare neurological disorder called Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS). — AFP

#### Face recognition to fight COVID

**BEIJING:** Facial recognition tech linked to personal health codes has been rolled out in a Chinese city bordering Myanmar as authorities seek to squash a coronavirus outbreak. This is the first publicly reported instance of facial recognition being used to track a person's movements and health status as they enter and exit residential areas, supermarkets, transport hubs and other public places. — AFP

#### Iran unveils Islamic dating app

**TEHRAN:** Iran on Monday unveiled an Islamic dating application aimed at facilitating "lasting and informed marriage" for its youth, state television reported. Called Hamdam - Farsi for "companion" - the service allows users to "search for and choose their spouse", the broadcaster said. — AFP

## Grief, anger as 64 killed in Iraq COVID unit fire

**NASIRIYAH, Iraq:** Grief and anger gripped the Iraqi city of Nasiriyah yesterday after fire swept through a temporary COVID isolation unit, killing at least 64 people and injuring dozens. The devastating blaze on Monday evening at the southern city's Al-Hussein Hospital, which medics said was fuelled by oxygen canisters exploding, was the second such tragedy in Iraq in three months.

"Sixty-four (bodies) were retrieved and 39 identified and handed over to their families," a source at the provincial forensic science department told AFP. "Medical teams and relatives of victims are finding it difficult to identify the rest of the corpses," the source said, adding that the toll could rise as more bodies were feared buried under the rubble. An official tally listed in local media said 39 of the victims so

Continued on Page 2



NASIRIYAH: People gather as a massive fire engulfs the coronavirus isolation ward of Al-Hussein hospital in this southern Iraqi city late Monday. — AFP

## Qatar takes key step to control its own airspace

**DOHA:** Qatar said yesterday that it has been given a preliminary green light by a UN body on a proposal to control its own airspace, months after resolving a rift with its neighbors. The UN's

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has given Qatar permission "in principle" to establish its own Flight Information Region (FIR) in its airspace, the wealthy Gulf emirate announced.

This decision was in response to a request from Doha to withdraw from an agreement signed with Bahrain, another Gulf monarchy, under which it had delegated its air navigation services. A three-year row with its Gulf neighbors led by Saudi Arabia had highlighted the shortcomings of the deal, which left Qatar completely reliant on access to airspace controlled by other countries.

Qatar and Bahrain were left with maritime boundaries drawn by Britain, the former colonial power, that have been the source of recurring disputes and clashes. Airspace is largely determined based on existing land and maritime borders. The ICAO "agreed, in principle... with the establishment of a Doha Flight Information Region (FIR) and Doha Search and Rescue Region (SRR)," at talks last month, Qatar's transport and communications ministry said in a statement. It would "include Qatar's sovereign airspace and, to optimize safety

Continued on Page 2

## Foreign envoys in Lebanon despair

**BEIRUT:** As Lebanon's economy tanks, foreign envoys are resorting to increasingly undiplomatic language to make clear their exasperation with politicians who demand bailout cash without delivering basic reforms in return. Donors have conditioned any financial aid to the Mediterranean country on the establishment of a new government to enact urgently needed reforms that would tackle endemic graft.

But while Lebanese citizens slide

further into poverty, politicians remain unable to agree on a new government line-up, nearly a year on from a deadly port explosion that forced the last one to resign. "There's great frustration with the Lebanese political class, because it's incapable of placing the common good above its personal interests," a French diplomatic source said. As political parties squabble over ministerial portfolios, the Lebanese pound has plunged, lately trading on the black market at less than a tenth of its official value.

Bread has become more expensive and petrol scarce, while at home and work Lebanese swelter during increasingly long power cuts. Supplies of some drugs have run low and the

Continued on Page 2



BEIRUT: French Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade and Economic Attractiveness Franck Riester and French Ambassador to Lebanon Anne Grillo visit Beirut port yesterday. — AFP