

News in brief

◆ **The Lebanese army said yesterday it had detained a man wanted over an attack** on mourners at a funeral where three people were killed, after the powerful Shi'ite group Hezbollah demanded the perpetrators be detained. The attack targeted the funeral of Hezbollah member Ali Shibli who was shot dead on Saturday during a wedding. Sunni Arab tribes claimed responsibility for that shooting, saying they had taken revenge for the killing of one of their members last year in Khaldeh. Army intelligence stormed the homes of a number of wanted people and detained a man who was involved in the funeral attack, the army said. Hezbollah, an armed group backed by Iran, has said it is seeking to maintain calm but said the attackers must be handed over. The group has called it a planned ambush.



Lebanese army detains man after deadly funeral attack

◆ **Britain summoned Iran's ambassador yesterday** after London and the United States both blamed an attack on an Israeli-managed tanker in Oman last week on Tebran. "Minister (James) Cleverly reiterated that Iran must immediately cease actions that risk international peace and security, and reinforced that vessels must be allowed to navigate freely in accordance with international law," the Foreign Office said in a statement.

◆ **The death toll from last month's floods in the central Chinese province of Henan rose to 302 as of yesterday**, officials said, triple the figure of 99 that was reported last week, with most of the fatalities reported in the provincial capital Zhengzhou. In Zhengzhou, a city of 12 million that lies along the Yellow River, the death toll was 292, including 14 who perished when a subway line was flooded. In total, 39 people died in underground areas in Zhengzhou including garages and tunnels.



◆ **A preponderance of evidence proves the virus that caused the COVID-19 pandemic leaked from a Chinese research facility**, said a report by US Republicans released yesterday, a conclusion that US intelligence agencies have not reached. The report also cited "ample evidence" that Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) scientists - aided by US experts and Chinese and US government funds - were working to modify coronaviruses to infect humans and such manipulation could be hidden. Representative Mike McCaul, the top Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, released the report by the panel's Republican staff. It urged a bipartisan investigation into the origins of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic that has killed 4.4 million people worldwide. "We now believe it's time to completely dismiss the wet market as the source," said the report. "We also believe the preponderance of the evidence proves the virus did leak from the WIV and that it did so sometime before September 12, 2019." The report cited what it called new and under-reported information about safety protocols at the lab, including a July 2019 request for a \$1.5 million overhaul of a hazardous waste treatment system for the facility, which was less than two years old.

Republican report says coronavirus leaked from China lab

COVID-1:9 Countries worst affected

| | Country | Total cases | Total deaths | Global tally |
|----|-----------|-------------|--------------|--------------------|
| 1 | USA | 35,771,553 | 629,387 | 199,253,018 |
| 2 | India | 31,708,870 | 425,082 | |
| 3 | Brazil | 19,938,358 | 556,886 | |
| 4 | Russia | 6,312,185 | 160,137 | |
| 5 | France | 6,146,619 | 111,885 | |
| 6 | UK | 5,902,354 | 129,743 | |
| 7 | Turkey | 5,747,935 | 51,428 | |
| 8 | Argentina | 4,935,847 | 105,772 | |
| 9 | Colombia | 4,794,414 | 120,998 | |
| 10 | Spain | 4,447,044 | 81,486 | |
| 11 | Italy | 4,355,348 | 128,068 | |
| 12 | Iran | 3,940,708 | 91,407 | |
| 13 | Germany | 3,778,719 | 92,175 | |
| 14 | Indonesia | 3,462,800 | 97,291 | |

Figures as of closing

Middle East

| Country | Total cases | new cases | Total deaths | New Deaths | Total recovered | Active cases |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Egypt | 284,311 | | 16,528 | | 230,699 | 37,084 |
| Saudi Arabia | 527,877 | +1,063 | 8,259 | +10 | 508,994 | 10,624 |
| UAE | 683,914 | +1,537 | 1,956 | +5 | 661,156 | 20,802 |
| Kuwait | 398,538 | | 2,328 | | 385,401 | 10,809 |
| Oman | 297,122 | +287 | 3,868 | +18 | 280,423 | 12,831 |
| Qatar | 226,540 | +150 | 601 | | 223,995 | 1,944 |

Bahrain's Biodiversity Strategy must change gears

BY KOTA SRIRAJ



The Kingdom of Bahrain has always strived to achieve sustainable economic growth that is in conformity with environmental protection and judicious use of natural resources while ensuring that a stringent check is kept on air and water pollution. The effective government policies and steadfast commitment towards environment has ensured that the stellar economic prosperity of the island nation has not compromised with the many rare species and environmental ecosystems found in Bahrain. This has helped sculpt Bahrain's unique environmental culture and biodiversity on the global arena. But as times change and challenges increase on account of the pandemic and worsening climate change conditions, Bahrain must have a re-look at its biodiversity strategy. This can help the nation insulate its precious biodiversity bank against latest set of man-made threats.

Bahrain's first ambitious National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) was drafted in 2007 which later received some much-required revisions between 2013 and 2015. In fact, Bahrain was one of the very first nations in the region to respond to the initiative launched by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) calling for embracing the "Ecosystem Based Approach" on the national and regional levels. Furthermore, in 2016 Bahrain worked closely with the United Nations to ensure proper alignment of its NBSAP with the UN's Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDG's). Bahrain is also the first country in the region to establish a "Clearing House Mechanism" for biodiversity, which is essentially a biodiversity database, and an obligation under the Convention on Biological Diversity. With so much of commendable track record to safeguard biodiversity, Bahrain is without doubt effectively implementing its NBSAP.

However times are changing fast and for worse. The ongoing pandemic that has ravaged the world since the beginning of 2020 has changed the narrative on how biodiversity conservation strategies must be developed and implemented. Bahrain must ensure that the erstwhile biodiversity strategies are suitably upgraded and implemented so that the recovery from covid19 is sustainable and resilient from the environmental point of view. Bahrain's very first implementable NBSAP was not only a testament to the nation's determination to protect its biodiversity, but also endeavoured to improve livelihoods and food security conditions. This was critical as the nation only had 3 per cent arable land. The strategy aimed to restore marine resources and fish stocks to safe and sustainable limits in addition to protecting agricultural lands from urban development which was become a growing problem for the rapidly developing nation. The new version of the biodiversity strategy must evolve keeping in mind the disastrous impact future pandemics can have both on human lives and the environment. Therefore the strategy must be able to pre-empt the future outbreak of zoonotic diseases by factoring in the risk factors and also protecting biodiversity from the diseases and viruses of the future.

The next chapter of the Bahrain's biodiversity protection strategy must contain essential elements such as steps to minimise human and animal interface, eliminating transmission points where the likelihood of viral spill over to humans is high, such as unhygienic commercial markets in wild animal meat and live animals. Additionally, better monitoring to ensure cessation of any type of wildlife commercialisation and parallelly conserving natural habitats can have an immense positive impact in preserving the valuable biodiversity of Bahrain in these trying times. Conserving natural habitats in turn require profound changes in human food production and human encroachment on remaining natural habitats. Incorporating the twin goals of pandemic prevention and nature conservation in the new version of strategy for biodiversity protection, may be a tedious process but will be quite rewarding.

The world is realising fast that an intact biodiversity is key to preventing future outbreak of viruses and diseases such as COVID19. A research survey published recently in The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) has concluded that an intact and healthy biodiversity actually protects against the emergence of new infectious diseases by keeping the handful of species most likely to spread diseases in check. The policies and strategies must be recalibrated to ensure that biodiversity is given sufficient importance and protection so that it does its job in preventing outbreak of more diseases. Nature is better at controlling the dangerous species that give rise to pandemic such as COVID19 all it needs is a healthy biodiversity to do this. Bahrain already has an excellent biodiversity conservation strategy in place, it just needs to factor in pandemic prevention aspects in the strategy to make it future proof.

Veteran Egyptian actress Azizk critical after contracting COVID, preparing for lung transplant

● Her family is yet to agree on the transplant



TDT | agencies

Veteran Egyptian actress Dalal Abdel Azizk reportedly is preparing for a lung transplant after her condition worsened due to complications from a COVID-19 infection.

An Archyde report, quoting informed medical sources, say the star actress, suffering from lung fibrosis, is also not aware of the death of her husband Samir Ghanem, who also had the infection.

The couple contracted the virus three months back and has been in treatment since then.

Archyde report also claims that her family is yet to agree on the transplant for fear of her recovery.

"Her family is afraid to agree to the lung transplant proposal due to the difficulty and danger of this process," the report adds.

Meanwhile, social media went abuzz with rumours of her death during the past few days.

Refuting rumours, Egyptian anchor Ramy Radwan, the husband of Azizk daughter and actress Donia Samir Ghanem, told the media that his mother-in-law's "situation is difficult, not easy, and there is no improvement...every little

surprise happens."

He urged news outlets and journos not to spread "news of death" without being "200% certain."

Understand "the circumstances of the family and the challenges they face," he said during his show DMC Evening.

The family, he said, is "trying to cross the bottleneck and a difficult stage, and please don't add wound on another wound."

Aziz was undergoing treatment in a private hospital but is now in a government hospital.

An Albawaba report claims that the ailing actress received a shocking bill for \$95,600 for her 90-day stay at the private hospital. The report, quoting unnamed medical sources, further confirms that decision to transfer her to a government hospital "was a pure family procedure."

Tunisia's powerful parliament speaker Ghannouchi leaves

● Ghannouchi, 80, has led opposition to last week's move by President Kais Saied to seize governing powers



● Ghannouchi was taken to hospital briefly on Saturday and later discharged

Reuters | Tunis

Tunisia's parliament speaker Rached Ghannouchi, head of the moderate Islamist Ennahda party that has had an influential national role for a decade, left the hospital hours after he was admitted on Sunday, two advisers said, in the midst of a major political crisis.

Ghannouchi, 80, has led opposition to last week's move by President Kais Saied to seize governing powers, dismiss the prime minister and freeze parliament, steps that the Ennahda leader quickly branded a coup.

His advisers did not say what was wrong with Ghannouchi, who was hospitalised for a week last month with COVID-19.

"After a few hours in the military hospital, Ghannouchi returned home and he is fine now," an advisor said.

Suppressed before the 2011 rev-

olution that introduced democracy, Ennahda has since then been the most consistently powerful political party, backing successive coalition governments and helping to agree the 2014 constitution.

However, economic stagnation, declining services and a public perception of increased corruption have dented its support and Saied's sudden declaration on Sunday appears to have widespread backing.

Ghannouchi, who was also taken to hospital briefly on Saturday and later discharged, faces internal dissent within Ennahda over both his handling of the immediate crisis and his strategic choices since the 2019 election.