

# Nine suspects accused of human trafficking face trial

Vice ring suspects forced foreign women to engage in prostitution

● **Investigations revealed that a criminal group, which exploited the women and forced them to engage in prostitution.**

● **Travel procedures were facilitated for the victims who returned to their country; further probe is still ongoing.**

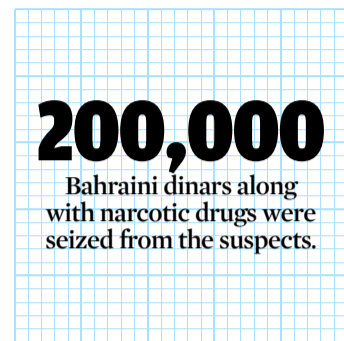
Manama

Chief Prosecutor, Nawaf Al Awadhi, said that the Public Prosecution has completed its investigations into the case of trafficking in foreign girls and illegally de-

priving them of their liberty, adding that nine suspects will stand trial on March 3 at the High Criminal Court.

The Kazakh Consulate reported that one of its female nationals had been tortured in order to force her into prostitution, and accordingly the anti-human trafficking police launched investigations, which led to identifying the victim, as well as 20 other ones who were also exploited and forced into prostitution.

Investigations revealed that a criminal group, headed by a Bahraini suspect and comprising four Kazakh women, exploited the girls and forced them to engage in prostitution, while another foreign defendant would receive the girls upon their arrival in the country, and transfer them to the clients.



All suspects were arrested, and the proceeds of the crime resulting from trafficking in victims, including a sum of approximately BD200,000 and narcotic drugs, were seized.

The Public Prosecution listened to the statements of the victims and ordered them to be placed in the shelter centre to receive the necessary medical and psychological care, Mr Al

Awadhi said, adding that the victims underwent medical tests and the Forensic Lab examined the seized items.

The Public Prosecution also questioned the defendants, confronted them with seized items, and ordered that they be remanded in custody, ahead of their referral to the criminal trial to receive the most severe punishment inflicted on trafficking in persons criminals, including prison terms and fines.

As per the law, the suspects will be obliged to pay all expenses, including the expenses of returning the victim to their home countries.

On the other hand, travel procedures have been facilitated for the victims who returned to their country based on their will and at the expense of the state.

# Credit rating downgrade chance over virus threat

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Gulf countries such as Bahrain and Oman could be at risk of a credit rating downgrade by if the coronavirus crisis continue to drag, according to a major credit rating agency S and P.

If the coronavirus epidemic continue to deepen, countries such as Bahrain and Oman could take a hit, according to S and P.

"If you exclude the investment proceeds from the sovereign wealth funds, every single Gulf economy is running pretty substantial underlying fiscal deficits," he added.

"You have pretty high break even oil prices," he said, singling out Oman and Bahrain. "They do stand out."

According to the IMF, Bahrain's fiscal break even oil price is projected to be 91\$ per barrel while Oman's is \$87.60 a barrel.

"Bahrain is working very hard to diversify and find non-oil revenues," he said.

"But they are where they are in terms of regional exposures, and the key export of this part of the world is clearly crude oil," he added.

The coronavirus epidemic has already disrupted economic growth in China and a further spread to other countries

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could derail a "highly fragile" projected recovery in the global economy in 2020, the International Monetary Fund has warned.

In a note for G20 finance ministers and central bankers, the global lender mapped out many risks facing the global economy, including the disease and a renewed spike in US-China trade tensions, as well as climate-related disasters.

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said the outbreak was a stark reminder of how unforeseen events could threaten a fragile recovery, and urged G20 policymakers to work to reduce other uncertainties linked to trade, climate change and inequality.

"Uncertainty is becoming the new normal," Georgieva wrote in a blog posted on the IMF website. "While some uncertainties — like disease — are out of our control, we should not create new uncertainties where we can avoid it."

## Role of volunteers in tackling corona threat stressed



Dr Amin led the open meeting with BRCS volunteers.

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The Bahrain Red Crescent Society (BRCS) has held an open meeting with its volunteering members, during which their role in spreading awareness on how to prevent coronavirus was emphasised.

The Bahrain Red Crescent board member Dr Fawzi Amin started the meeting by praising the government efforts to prevent the virus.

He noted the preparations made by the Kingdom to face any emergency cases through training the medical and health personnel, and equipping the quarantine areas in a number of hospitals and centers, and dealing with cases, which has been suspected so far with a high professionalism, expressing reassur-

ance about the official statements confirming that Bahrain is free of Coronavirus so far.

"We in (BRCS) are ready to provide aid and assistance if requested, and to complete the governmental efforts exerted, especially as we have a great knowledge of how to deal with disasters, pandemics and disease outbreaks in different regions around the world," said Dr Amin during the meeting.

Dr Amin explained that the aim of the meeting with the volunteers is to make sure that they are ready to provide the necessary medical and health assistance upon request, and provide them with the information and skills necessary to deal with emergency cases.

"When qualified and trained medical and health teams are concerned with dealing with

Coronavirus patients, trained volunteers can cover the shortage in this field by providing ambulatory and health services to patients and reviewers in hospitals and health centres," Dr Amin added.

During the meeting, Dr Amin presented a list of reliable sources of information about the spread of Coronavirus and how to deal with it in a way that helps to combat the rumors that usually accompany such major global events.

He explained that the International Federation of the Red Crescent and Red Cross put three scenarios to deal with this virus, one of them at the level of China, and the other in the event that the virus spreads very quickly in the neighbouring countries of China, and the last scenario in the event that the virus turns into a

global pandemic.

Dr Amin stressed that the focus of the union is to support poor African countries in the event of an invasion by the virus, and ways to provide support to the health sector in these countries, which is already suffering from weakness and declining services, adding that the federation provided 32 million Swiss francs for this purpose.

The meeting, which was attended by the Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health at the Ministry of Health and a member of (BRCS) Board Dr Mariam Al Hajeri, stressed the role of volunteers in the application and dissemination of the instructions circulated by the Ministry of Health regarding the prevention of Coronavirus, and its symptoms and how to deal with suspected cases of infection.

## Rare honour



Bahraini Dentist and Owner of Aesthetica Dental Centre Dr Reem Al Shaiba received a Master's of Aesthetics and Restorative Dentistry from the University of Manchester, becoming the first Bahraini dentist to receive such a specialised certification in this field from this renowned University. On this occasion, Dr Reem was received by the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the United Kingdom Shaikh Fawaz bin Mohammed Al Khalifa at the Kingdom's Embassy in London, where HE the Ambassador congratulated her on the unparalleled scientific achievement, wishing her all the best in utilising it to serve the health sector in Bahrain.

## Concerns rise over fake gold in Saudi Arabia

Jeddah

A video posted on Twitter by a member of the Precious Metals Committee explaining the ways some gold manufacturers manipulate weight of gold and diamonds has attracted significant attention in Saudi Arabia, raising the question of the authenticity of gold in the Kingdom.

In the video, Mohammed Azooz said cover-ups have made many

Saudi gold sellers lose power over the market, and that industry was being controlled by non-Saudis.

In the video, he explained how some people circumvented customs and sneak gold into the country, especially during the Hajj season to target pilgrims.

The Arabic translation of #cheating\_in\_jewelry has been trending in Twitter for a few days, and several people posted about the issue, blaming those who were selling fake gold to pilgrims as



Local gold markets have seen stagnation in recent times, because of the increasing price of gold on international stock markets.

pure gold.

This is not the first time the fake gold issue has been raised. The World Gold Council previously suspended its activities in the Kingdom following claims that some jewelry manufacturers mixed glass with gold. Former Minister of Commerce and Industry Abdullah Zainal rejected the accusations at the time, described them as "grave and dangerous."

Local gold markets have seen stagnation in recent times, because

of the increasing price of gold on international stock markets.

The price of one kilogram of 24 karat (k) gold in the Kingdom can reach SR185,000 (\$46,700).

Gold and economic experts say that the movement in gold prices depends on numerous factors such as political and economic events around the world, the price of the US dollar in banks, black markets, as well as the supply and demand trends in global stock markets.