

News in brief

◆ **The United States views the process that made Ebrahim Raisi Iran's president-elect as "pretty manufactured,"** US State Department spokesman Ned Price said on Monday, repeating the US view that Iran's recent election was neither free nor fair. "Our Iran policy is designed to advance US interests and that is regardless of who is chosen as Iran's president in a ... process that we consider to be pretty manufactured. This was not a free and fair election process," Price told reporters in a telephone briefing.



US views election of Iran's Raisi as 'pretty manufactured'

◆ **Saudi Arabia's foreign minister discussed with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief** "the importance of imposing the necessary mechanisms for a rapid and comprehensive inspection of all Iranian nuclear sites," the foreign ministry wrote in a tweet on Monday. Prince



Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, who is on an official visit to Vienna, also discussed with IAEA's Rafael Grossi "stopping Iranian policies and violations of international laws and norms that destabilize the security and stability of the region and the world," the ministry added.

◆ **Israel's Defence Ministry and defence contractor Elbit Systems Ltd are developing** an airborne laser weapon to shoot down drones and other flying targets, officials said on Monday, predicting a prototype would be ready by 2025. They said the as-yet unnamed laser weapon could be incorporated in Israel's multi-tier air defences, which include the Iron Dome system for downing short-range rockets and the David's Sling and Arrow systems against ballistic missiles.

Israel says it is developing airborne laser to down drones



◆ **China's longest-serving ambassador to Washington, Cui Tiankai,** said yesterday he will be leaving his post after eight years, amid strained relations between the world's two largest economies. Cui,



Qin Gang set to be named China's new ambassador to US

known for his more congenial, diplomatic manner, is expected to be replaced by Qin Gang, a trusted aide of President Xi Jinping known for his sharp retorts to criticism of China. China's foreign ministry declined to comment on Tuesday on who would succeed Cui, but sources with knowledge of the matter have told Reuters that Qin is expected to take over. Qin, 55, a foreign ministry vice minister, had served Xi as his chief protocol officer between 2014 to 2018. During two stints as foreign ministry spokesman from 2006-2010 and 2011-2014, Qin was known for striking an assertive posture, often making sharp comments in defence of China.

Row erupts as Kuwait parliament approves budget in tense session

● **Parliamentary guards entered the hall to restore order**

● **Opposition lawmakers occupied seats reserved for ministers**

● **Ministers stood at an entrance to the hall after MPs took their seats**



Picture courtesy of newspaper24

Reuters | Kuwait

Kuwait's parliament approved the 2021-22 state budget in a tense session that managed to temporarily break a deadlock with the government that has blocked reforms in the Gulf state.

But chaos broke out after the vote, supported by 32 out of 63 lawmakers in attendance including 50 elected members and government ministers. Parliamentary guards entered the hall to restore order as opposition and pro-government MPs quarrelled.

The session had gone ahead despite opposition lawmakers

once again occupying seats reserved for ministers, a tactic they have used in recent weeks to try to highlight their demand to question the prime minister.

Speaker Marzouq al-Ghanim called for a special session to discuss the budget at a time when the OPEC nation is trying to boost state finances and support an economy that shrank 9.9% in 2020 due to low oil prices and the coronavirus pandemic.

The budget, proposed by the government in January, had projected 23.05 billion dinars (\$76.65 billion) in expenditure for the fiscal year that started

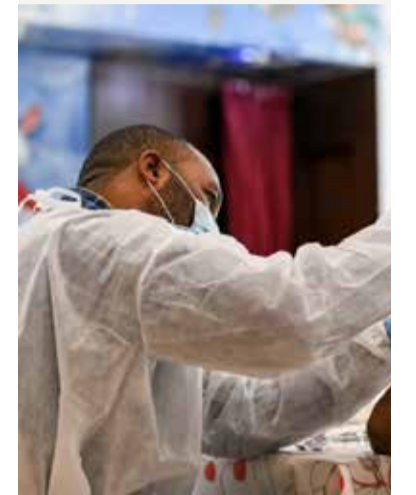
on April 1, and a deficit of 12.1 billion dinars.

"We have the right to request a special session because all regular sessions have been disrupted," Ghanim said.

Ministers stood at an entrance to the hall after MPs took their seats and some lawmakers had rapped on tables to try to disrupt the discussions.

Lawmakers want to question Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah over the constitutionality of a motion passed in March delaying any questioning of the premier until the end of 2022 along with other issues such as corruption.

Free COVID-19 for tourists in



A man receives a dose of a vaccine against t Paul's Church in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Em

Reuters | Dubai

Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, is offering tourists free COVID-19 vaccinations that were previously restricted to UAE citizens and residency visa holders.

There is no indication that the change applies to Dubai, the most populous emirate, or the other five emirates that make up the UAE.

Visitors with visas issued by Abu Dhabi and passport holders eligible for tourist visas when they arrive in the UAE through Abu Dhabi can book free vaccines, according to information provided by the Abu Dhabi Health Services Company (SEHA), which operates the emirate's public health infrastructure.

Holders of expired residency or entry visas are also eligible for free vaccinations, Abu Dhabi Media Office said on June 11.

Job losses and travel restrictions during the pandemic mean some people's residency visas have expired or have been cancelled when

Covid-19 death after liver disease may reveal difference in care: study

AFF | Paris

A survey of people hospitalised for Covid-19 found those with chronic liver disease and a history of alcohol abuse were 80 percent more likely to die from the virus and less likely to receive life-saving intubation.

In research to be presented this week at the International Liver Congress, researchers based in France analysed the national database of 259,000 Covid patients admitted to hospitals in 2020.

Some 16,300 of those had been previously diagnosed with chronic liver disease.

The average rate of death among all patients hospitalised with the virus was 15 percent. Among those with chronic liver disease, however, the rate jumped to nearly a quarter.

But while previous studies had looked at liver failure as a factor in the severity of Covid, this study found that mortality could be linked to which patients were placed on ventilation.

According to the study, patients who suffered alcoholism, advanced cirrhosis or liver cancer and showed higher Covid-19 morbidity and were less likely to have been intubated.

Patients with milder liver problems -- from chronic liver disease unrelated to alcohol abuse, organ transplants and



Previous research has shown that people with chronic liver disease are less likely to be intubated in intensive care

viral hepatitis for example -- were not at heightened risk for Covid-19 mortality but received ventilation at a greater rate.

"Our results suggest that a limitation of the therapeutic effort may have contributed to the excess mortality of patients with a liver-related complication and of patients with alcohol use disorders," the study said.

Thomas Berg, incoming president of the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL), told AFP the findings reflected a trend in care for liver patients that pre-dates the pandemic.

'Important study'

A 2013 US survey of 300 people with mild and advanced liver diseases found the majority of respondents perceived a

stigma against their diagnosis.

"Most patients are willing to talk about it if they have a cardiac disease or cancer," Berg said, "but when it comes to liver disease there is always the perception it is self-inflicted, related to drugs or alcohol."

The national survey is the largest that has looked at the question of how likely chronic liver disease patients are to survive a coronavirus infection.

France's universal access to hospital care means a wide range of Covid patients were represented, and analysts could look back at 10 years of records from the national discharge database to determine comorbidities.

"It's an important study because the data is coming from a natural registry and the data is quite robust," said Berg.

COVID-19 Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1 USA	34,420,001	617,483	179,678,535
2 India	30,002,691	389,661	
3 Brazil	17,969,806	502,817	Deaths
4 France	5,757,798	110,778	3,891,089
5 Turkey	5,375,593	49,236	Recovered:
6 Russia	5,350,919	130,347	164,369,239
7 UK	4,651,988	128,008	New cases
8 Argentina	4,277,395	89,490	+137,834
9 Italy	4,254,294	127,322	New deaths
10 Colombia	3,968,405	100,582	+2,382
11 Spain	3,764,651	80,689	
12 Germany	3,730,774	91,025	
13 Iran	3,117,336	83,217	
14 Poland	2,879,030	74,858	

Middle East

Figures as of closing

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	277,797		15,898		206,053	55,846
Saudi Arabia	475,403		7,691		457,128	10,584
UAE	613,993		1,763		592,984	19,246
Kuwait	340,967		1,877		321,293	17,797
Oman	252,609	+2,037	2,782	+41	221,250	28,577
Qatar	221,119	+189	584	+1	218,584	1,951

Elephant in

Thai family gets reape

AFF | Bangkok

Some families living in a jungle may be fearful of things going bump at night, but for one household in Thailand, the sight of an elephant rummaging through their kitchen was not a total shock.

"It came to cook again," wrote Kittichai Boodchan sarcastically in a caption to a Facebook video he shot over the weekend of an elephant nosing its way into his kitchen.

Likely driven by the midnight munchies, the massive animal pokes its head into Kittichai's kitchen in the early hours of Sunday, using its trunk to find food.

At one point, it picks up a plastic bag of liquid, considers it briefly, and then sticks it in its mouth -- before the video cuts out.

Kittichai and his wife live near a national park in western Thailand, by a lake where wild elephants often bathe while roaming in the jungle.

He was unperturbed by the mammoth mammal, recognising it as a frequent visitor as it often wanders into homes in his village where it eats, leaves and shoots off back into the jungle.

The elephant had actually destroyed their kitchen wall in May, he said, creating an open-air kitchen