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A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Something justifiable when Beirut at crossroads'

'France role likely to increase in future Lebanon political scene'

"JUST 48 hours after the disastrous Beirut explosion, French President Emmanuel Macron was in the streets of Beirut embracing and reassuring people: 'Lebanon is not alone'. Then he said in his press conference, in Arabic: 'Ahebeck Ya Lebanon' (I love you, Lebanon). For their part, the Lebanese people sent a petition via the Internet signed by 60 thousand Lebanese requesting him to return the French Mandate to Lebanon," columnist and attorney *Riyad Al-Sanea'a* wrote for *Annahar* daily.



Al-Sanea'a

"Macron was listening to the Lebanese, angry at their politicians, with attentive ears. It seemed as if he was more interested than anyone else in solving Lebanon's problems. Macron wants to reinforce the impression among the Lebanese and others that France is still the father and the terms of reference.

"The frustration and loss that appears on the faces of Lebanon's youth, men and women, was the most prominent motive for sticking to anything and searching for any savior, regardless of the objectivity of the request and the capabilities of the savior, Macron or someone else.

"And with a logic that seemed unusual, at least in the language of diplomacy; Macron asserted that the French aid will not be delivered to the corrupt, as if it is expressing a lack of confidence in the current government.

"Once again, under the crowd's chants of cheering at the front, enthusiasm took Macron to the brink of diplomacy, where he said that he came to express solidarity with the people, to provide aid and medicine, and to discuss the issue of corruption.

"France and Lebanon are linked by close relations dating back to the 16th century, when an agreement was reached between King Francois I and the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman Al-Qanouni, (during the time when Lebanon was part of the Ottoman Khelafat), regarding placing the Christians of the East under the protection of France.

"Sultan Suleiman Al-Qanouni actually enjoyed a good relationship with the King of France, but he felt a kind of tutelage over France, whose king sought the help of the Ottomans to protect him from attacks by the Spanish.

"Since then, France has supported Lebanon, striving for its stability, development, and preservation of civil and constitutional life, moving away from sectarianism, and ensur-

ing that Christians and others practice their religious rituals without restriction or exposure from others.

"Upon the conclusion of the visit, the French President called for an 'international investigation' to be conducted into the Beirut port explosion, while the Lebanese military judiciary announced the start of a campaign of arrests and interrogations in connection with the port explosion last Tuesday.

"An open and transparent international investigation must be conducted to prevent matters from being hidden first and to prevent suspicion," Macron said at a press conference.

"The French measure seems very courageous, as the Lebanese prevented their ministers, who went to the streets in order to inspect the effects of the explosion; it is Macron who toured without Lebanese ministers accompanying him and received complaints from people and support, which indicates that the French love for Lebanon has exposed the popular anger of politicians.

"Therefore, it is not surprising that France will turn into a major player in the Lebanese internal political scene in the future, especially with the presence of a great Iranian influence in Lebanon through Hezbollah.

"However, as long as Lebanon is currently at a historical crossroads, in my own opinion, resorting to France at least to guarantee a sustainable development, culture and global progress under a French patronage, shall represent something justifiable."

Also:

"The wounded Lebanon, and its defeated people, has been afflicted with politicians who they do not love or are loved by," columnist, the general manager of Scope Satellite TV Channel and former MP *Talal Al-Saeed* wrote for *Annahar* daily.

"These are the same politicians who used to shift this people from one misfortune to another. In other words, immediately following the exit from one calamity, these politicians cast them into another, as such, we pray to Almighty God to heal this people, cure their patients, and bestow His mercy upon their dead and compensate them for their losses.

"From the horror of the explosion of Beirut, the bodies of the dead went flying in the air, and distant buildings collapsed.

"We pray to Almighty God to help this persecuted people and its country which has never tasted the flavor of stability for a long time. This people is currently suffering due to hunger, poverty, unemployment and to make matters worse all this happens in the midst of the corona pandemic to such an extent the

country's hospitals is not in a position to accommodate all.

"The economic deficit, and the decline of the price of the lira against the dollar, will eat the savings of the ordinary Lebanese people, and eliminate the middle class, so those who survive the crisis will be either the rich or poor.

"Then the dollar disappeared from the market by a man-made action, so the rich and the poor are equal, and unemployment worsened until conditions tightened for the people to go out to the street to protest, or to express their opinion, and yesterday's terrible explosion destroyed all hope of life for the Lebanese people.

"Even if the explosion had not happened the day before 'yesterday', it would have on another day, since the politicians had stored them to destroy Lebanon and its people one day.

"It is the government that became weak and no longer protected its people, not only the current government, but even previous governments, and unless the government is strong, the people will not rally around it.

"In other words, the Lebanese politicians are destroying their country by their own hands, while the poor pay the price. Every Lebanese is currently searching for a country to migrate to looking for a strong local party in the wake of the government weakness and inability to provide the necessary protection for its people.

"Anyway, Lebanon needs to be assisted for the sake of its people, because the people are innocent and they deserve all assistance.

"In other words, during these critical circumstances, Lebanon, should not be left alone, because this country under the current situation will not be able to put the ordeal behind them."

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"There has been increased talk in the last phase about the need to accelerate dealing with the demographic imbalance after the COVID-19 crisis exposed many negative aspects caused by the residency dealers who flooded the country with marginal and random labor. They brought thousands of expatriates via fake companies and projects and then left them to face their unknown fate. Some of them succeeded in getting work and others continued looking for a livelihood. At the same time, these people put pressure on the services provided by the government including health, electricity and water services", *Meshari Mulfi Al-Metraqah* wrote for *Aljarida* daily.

"In fact, any discussion on this subject is frustrating due to which the problem has not been resolved for years. The National

Committee for Addressing Demographics was established five years ago, but nothing has been achieved on the ground. Government officials are talking about remedying the imbalance in the demographics but this will take many years. This means the absence of will and seriousness in facing this big problem, leaving not only the door open for residency trading but also other doors to bring in unqualified workers to the country through sub-companies that bring them to work in government, small and medium enterprises.

"The demographic crisis is closely related to the spread of unemployment among Kuwaitis, as expatriates have dominated for years many jobs that could have been taken up by citizens. Although the state is striving to implement the Kuwaitization policy, there are many government agencies that are still tweeting out of the flock. They employ expatriates instead of Kuwaitis and bring in labor from abroad despite the presence of thousands who registered at the Civil Service Commission for employment. This raises confusion and surprise about the seriousness in facing crucial issues like dysfunctional demographics and cunning jobs for the citizens.

"Kuwait is facing a real challenge in the future, as the population at present is 4.8 million, of whom Kuwaitis represent 1.45 million or 30 percent and non-Kuwaitis 3.35 million or 70 percent. This highlights a major imbalance in the demographics.

"We need to embark on immediate reform before it is too late. It should begin with stopping the recruitment of workers from abroad and setting standards to be based on competence, skill and need. It is necessary to apply the quota system so that one nationality does not dominate the expatriate workers. Thus, the path is clear and the solutions are there.

"However, the question remains - Will the government take this matter seriously and work hard to solve this fateful problem? Or will the story remain suspended for many years such that the demographic crisis will remain even after the COVID-19 crisis passes?"

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"The minister of interior and the undersecretary -- one or both of them -- must be aware of the importance of putting an end to name tampering, which is taking place in front of the eyes of the Ministry of Interior," columnist *Talal Al-Saeed* wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"You will find the name of the policeman, non-commissioned officer, or even the officer written on his military uniform completely different from his real name on the civil ID. "Someone chooses a family name, a tribe,

or a surname as he likes and goes to 'Tailors in Sharq', then puts it on the right side of his suit, and there is no account or watchdog, so if you want to complain or report about it, you are reporting a person who does not exist -- this military or that whose name is completely different with the civil ID!

"If we go further than that, the basis for granting citizenship to his father is the name that came in the official papers, and naturalization was made on the basis of it, but if he was writing it on his official suit as his real name, then this is a clear fraud, the nationality investigation unit must re-investigate the granting of citizenship.

"According to his name, which he cherishes and writes it willingly on his uniform, he does not deserve citizenship in the first place. Thus, he would have presented dangerous information on a gold plate to the competent authorities, and admitted without coercion to forgery.

"The Ministry of Interior must summon those groups of forgers through the nationality investigation unit, and ask about the names that they wrote on their chests at 'Tailors of Sharq', and thus the results will astonish the investigators."

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"The controversial Malaysian Fund case lurked behind a group of old and new issues, which have become almost common," columnist *Iman Jawhar Hayat* wrote for *Al-Qabas* daily.

"Now, controversy is being raised over the issue of the appointment of a woman as a judge, and some extremist claimants have rejected this decision with flimsy and superficial arguments that were previously used to address the right of women to run for the elections and be elected.

"Then, these opponents became the beneficiaries of the deficient reason and religion, as described by the so-called perfectionist, whose preoccupation in this period is flirting with their electoral bases, or perhaps they are just a tool to distract the public from more important matters!

"Women's equality is one of the 17 goals approved by the United Nations to reach economic growth that takes into account the social, environmental and demographic dimensions, and to achieve the expected sustainable development by the year 2030.

"In September 2015, Kuwait committed itself to implementing these goals completely and without exception, and they were approved by the Kuwaiti Parliament, and for which workshops and conferences were held."

— Compiled by Zaki Taleb

We're forced to work in severe hot and humid weather, laments manual labor

Contractors, employers violating 11am-4 pm ban rule

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 11: A number of construction workers lamented the circumstances that force them to work under severe weather conditions such as high temperatures and humidity, reports Al-Qabas daily.

During an interview with the daily, several workers affirmed that their eagerness to earn their livelihood forces them to yield to the timings set by the contractors or employers even if the timings fall

within the banned period during the day, which exposes them to severe suffering due to the severe weather conditions.

Regarding the continued violation by some business entities of the law that prohibits outside work during the period between 11:00 am and 4:00 pm, the workers of a project stressed that they are forced to work during this period.

They explained that they were isolated in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Khaitan areas throughout the coronavirus

crisis. After the lockdown ended, they returned to work but are required to work more within less time in order not to fall into the contractual fines window.

The workers said, "We do not bear the fines of the violations imposed by the Public Authority for Manpower. The contractor or the company is referred for investigation after the inspection team visits the site. However, the workers are incapable of doing anything in this regard in the end.

Meanwhile, a source from the National Center for Occupational Safety affirmed that efforts are ongoing to ensure the requirements for employment are applied.

He said the most prominent violations are recorded in the new construction areas such as West Abdullah Al-Mubarak area in addition to industrial zones or ongoing construction sites.

The sources explained that there is a large percentage of projects, especially of the government, that are committed to the decision to ban work during the period between 11:00 am and 4:00 pm. However, many of such violations are committed by some subcontractors or construction workers working in private plots. The workers complain about the contractor's lack of commitment, but unfortunately most of their residences are not under the contractor who holds the contract.



Worshippers observing the SOPs, maintaining social distance, wearing masks, bringing own prayer mat at one of the mosques during prayer in a Kuwaiti suburb. Photo by Mohammad Morsi

Fees for patients outstanding: embassy

Kuwait, US medical centers discuss payment of dues

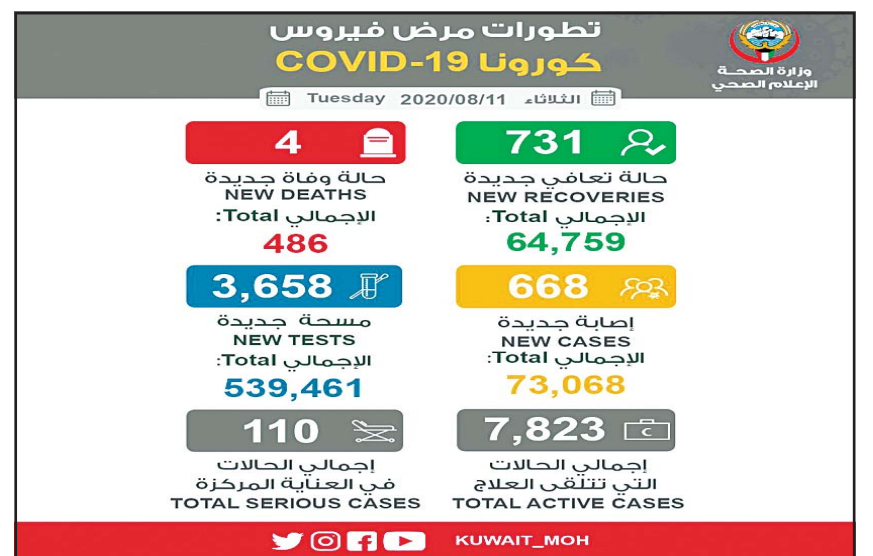
KUWAIT CITY, Aug 11: The US embassy in the country confirmed that Kuwait is in discussions with medical centers in the United States regarding the payment of fees for health services provided to Kuwaiti patients there, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

In an exclusive statement to the daily, the embassy pointed out that the United States government is helping facilitate talks about the

payment. It added: "We are looking forward to reaching a solution between the Kuwaiti government and the American medical centers, and we are confident of achieving that."

The embassy affirmed that the United States provides highly distinguished health care services. "We are proud to provide these vital services to many. The history of health care between the United States and

Kuwait goes back more than a century, through the establishment of the American Hospital in 1914. We are looking for ways to expand the volume of medical cooperation between our two countries, especially around coronavirus (covid-19). We look forward to discussing these opportunities for coordination between us in the next strategic dialogue," the embassy added.



Register till Aug 13 for salaries: ministry

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 11: The Ministry of Social Affairs announced that the 'Kuwaitis without salaries' committee which looks into affairs of citizens who were affected by the 'Corona' pandemic had until yesterday received 4,726 applications, and said the window for receiving applications will close next Thursday, Aug 13, 2020, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Abdulaziz Shuaib, confirmed the committee has members from several government agencies to examine

these requests and called on the affected citizens to register before the deadline.

He added, the electronic platform was established to receive citizens who were affected either due to the disruption of work, ending contracts, interruption of unemployment allowance, or failure to complete recruitment procedures due to stoppage of work in government agencies, pointing out that the committee will discuss all cases and put in place appropriate solutions in coordination with the concerned government authorities.