



3 Exodus of foreigners could impact Kuwait's economy



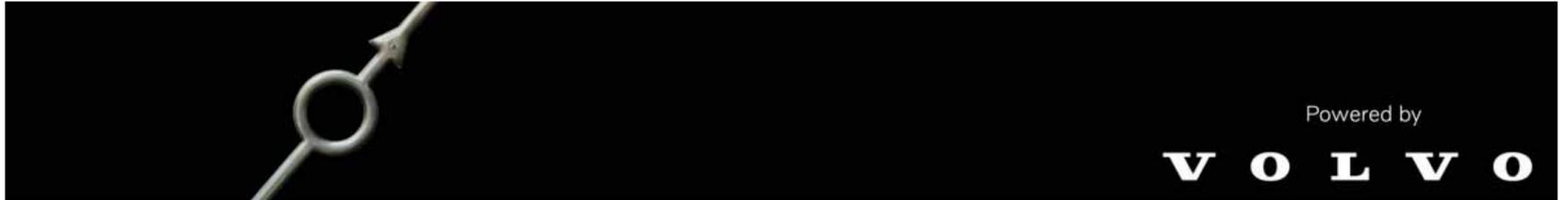
8 UAE workers fret over future in virus economy



13 TikTok app gave rural Indian women fame, fun and more



14 Sole in one! Players get a kick out of 'footgolf'



Kuwait outlines safety rules for resumption of air travel

Qatar allows citizens and residents to travel and return anytime

KUWAIT: The civil aviation authority has presented a set of rules for the safe resumption of air travel, as Kuwait prepares to open its airport for commercial flights next month while assuaging travel concerns of coronavirus-wary passengers. The protocols encompass measures including random testing of passengers arriving at and departing from Kuwait International Airport, Saleh Al-Fadaghi, deputy director general for airport affairs at the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), said in a statement. The new rules mandate all travelers to wear protective facemasks and keep a hand sanitizer in their possession, besides strictly abiding by social distanc-

ing guidelines, he said. As per the new guidelines, departing passengers are required to provide negative COVID-19 test results before boarding their flights (details on where to undergo the tests have not been made available as of now). Passengers are also instructed to keep hand luggage to a minimum. Fadaghi explained manual checks of tickets have now been scaled back as a result of the pandemic in favor of the more popular digital e-tickets, whose scanning requires no physical contact.

The new measures call on passengers to be present at the airport no less than four hours before departure to ensure a smooth and convenient jour-

ney, added the official. Commercial flights at Kuwait International Airport will resume from Aug 1 after a four-month hiatus, part of a three-stage resumption plan starting at no more than 30 percent capacity.

Meanwhile, Qatar yesterday relaxed restrictions aimed at controlling the novel coronavirus, allowing citizens and permanent residency holders to travel outside the country and return at any time, and residents outside the country to return starting Aug 1. The government communications office (GCO) said arrivals from low-risk countries are required to take a coronavirus test at the airport and sign a formal pledge to adhere to quarantine at home for a week,

state news agency (QNA) reported on its twitter account, citing a statement from GCO.

GCO said the list of low-risk countries will be published on the Ministry of Public Health's website and will be reviewed every two weeks. Travellers from low-risk countries who have obtained COVID-free certificates from an accredited testing center within 48 hours of travelling will not have to take a test at the airport. The measures come as the third phase of a four-phase plan to lift coronavirus restrictions starts at the beginning of August. Qatar has reported 10,7430 coronavirus cases so far, with 160 deaths and 10,4191 recovered. — Agencies

Fears in India as Kuwait looks to cap expat numbers

KUWAIT/KOCHI/NEW DELHI: With no job or savings, Indian electrician Shibhu Clemance had hoped to return to work in Kuwait - until he learned of a proposal to drastically cut back on migrants in the country. The 38-year-old, who lost his job in February due to the coronavirus pandemic, is among more than a million Indians in Kuwait, the largest expat group in the Gulf country of 4.4 million.

But after the coronavirus hit oil prices and local jobs, the country is considering new limits that could force about 800,000 to leave and slash their remittances - a crucial lifeline for families back home. The proposal is in a new bill that would cut the total number of migrant workers in the country by 40 percent and require that the number of Indians should not exceed 15 percent of the Kuwaiti population.

"I came to the Gulf and toiled hard to provide a better life for my children. The COVID-19 crisis and now the new Kuwait law have shattered my dreams," Clemance told Reuters by phone from Mangal. Before he lost his job in February, he sent 40,000 Indian rupees (\$530) to his wife and two children who live in a cramped house in the southern Indian state of Kerala with his in-laws and six other relatives.

Without a home of his own in Kerala and with little hope of finding work in a state that has been receiving India's largest influx of returning migrants, Clemance fears going back to his family. The government has yet to approve the bill, but the prime minister said last month he wants to cut the expat population of about 3 million.

National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem has proposed a gradual reduction in foreign workers, starting with a 5 percent cut in numbers and indicated the country needed fewer low-skilled migrants. Parliament will finalize the bill before the current session ends in October, before sending it to the government for approval.

Indians working in Kuwait sent home almost \$4.6 billion in 2017, about 6.7 percent of the country's total incoming remittances that year, according to World Bank data. But a global recession in the wake of COVID-19 has decimated jobs and slashed cash flows. The World Bank estimates remittances to India will drop by 23 percent from \$83 billion last year to \$64 billion this year.

For Litty Shibhu, Clemance's wife, managing the household and taking care of her large family without the monthly transfer from Kuwait has been tough. "We are in real trouble since the money stopped coming... Every day Shibhu calls me and shares his sorrows. I'm planning to sell my gold to help him," the 29-year-old said. "We will virtually be on the street if my husband is compelled to return. I can't even sleep thinking about this." — Reuters

Pilgrims vie for hajj; king chairs cabinet

RIYADH: A Jordanian couple in Saudi Arabia burst into tears of joy to be among the chosen ones for next week's scaled-down hajj pilgrimage, but countless rejected applications have stirred resentment. For the first time in modern history, millions of pilgrims outside Saudi Arabia have been barred from the hajj - a key pillar of Islam and one of the world's largest mass gatherings - because of a coronavirus surge.

The dramatically curtailed hajj pilgrimage in the holy city of Makkah has drawn a huge rush of applicants. Saudi

officials said residents from 160 countries competed in the government-run lottery that many described as an opaque selection process - bringing elation to up to 10,000 people while leaving the vast majority disappointed.

Late Tuesday, Saudi King Salman chaired a virtual cabinet meeting from a hospital office, a day after he was admitted due to gall bladder inflammation, the Saudi Press Agency reported. The cabinet held a virtual meeting, chaired by King Salman "from his office at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital in Riyadh," SPA said on Twitter. In the meeting, the cabinet discussed arrangements for the forthcoming hajj pilgrimage. The report was accompanied by footage from the spacious office in the hospital where the king presided over the meeting from

Continued on Page 2



RIYADH: A handout picture provided yesterday shows King Salman bin Abdulaziz chairing a virtual cabinet meeting from his office at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital late Tuesday. — AFP

Airborne virus likely infectious

WASHINGTON: Scientists have known for several months the new coronavirus can become suspended in microdroplets expelled by patients when they speak and breathe, but until now there was no proof that these tiny particles are infectious. A new study by scientists at the University of Nebraska that was uploaded to a medical preprint site this week has shown for the first time that SARS-CoV-2 taken from microdroplets, defined as under five microns, can replicate in lab conditions.

This boosts the hypothesis that normal speaking and breathing, not just coughing and sneezing, are responsible for spreading COVID-19 - and that infectious doses of the virus can travel distances far greater than the six feet (two meters) urged by social distancing guidelines. The results are still considered preliminary and have not yet appeared in a peer-reviewed journal, which would lend more credibility to the methods devised by the scientists.

The paper was posted to the medrxiv.org website, where most cutting-edge research during the pandemic has first been made public. The same team wrote a paper in March showing that the virus remains airborne in the rooms of hospitalized COVID-19 patients, and this study will

Continued on Page 2



MEXICO CITY: A city gardener works next to a mural showing a health worker wearing a facemask with the symbol of fictional superhero Superman on Tuesday, amid the novel coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

Pakistanis risk plasma transfusions

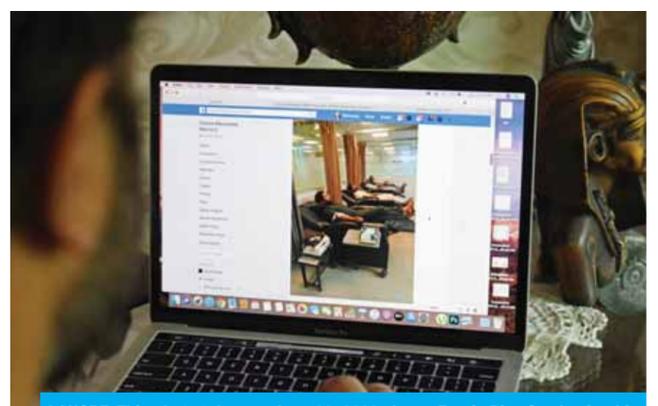
ISLAMABAD: Pakistanis with COVID-19 are risking their lives and navigating a shady black market to get blood plasma transfusions, despite scant medical proof about the remedy's effectiveness. Convalescent plasma treatment, where the antibody-rich part of the blood from a recovered patient is transfused to a coronavirus sufferer, is growing in popularity across Pakistan amid widely circulating claims of success on social media.

Like some other nations, Pakistan is conducting medical trials on the treat-

ment, which has shown promising signs but is far from proven. But with lengthy wait times and uncertain access, people are turning to the black market and private clinics, where there are no guarantees about the safety or origin of the blood product. "It's all born out of desperation because everyone wants to believe there is an answer to this (coronavirus) question," Fareeha Irfan, a public health specialist, told AFP. "It is easy to exploit the people who are not very well versed in what's going on in the scientific world. It is very easy to coerce them."

Pakistan has declared about 260,000 cases of coronavirus and some 5,500 deaths. With low testing rates, the true figure is thought to be considerably higher.

Continued on Page 2



LAHORE: This photo taken on June 28, 2020 shows Zoraiz Riaz Syed using his laptop as he runs the Facebook group "Corona Recovered Warriors" consisting of former COVID-19 patients at his home. — AFP