

[Lebanon has avoided coronavirus worst case scenario, health minister says](#)

Author:

Sun, 2020-04-26 11:25

DUBAI: Lebanon's Public Health Minister Hamad Hassan has praised the way the government managed the coronavirus outbreak, saying it has avoided a "bad scenario" of mass infections and deaths, state-run National News Agency has reported.

The country's COVID-19 toll stood at 704 on Sunday – one of the countries with the lowest cases in the region. There have been 24 deaths from the virus so far.

Hassan said this figure was due to Lebanon's "cooperation and collaboration between the ministries concerned."

He said it was particularly notable given the country's "financial and catastrophic conditions," adding other more capable countries "have not been able to cope with the widespread of the disease."

But the Lebanese government should not be lenient, Hassan said, as it gradually eases down lockdown measures.



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Attackers lob explosive at Lebanon bank amid currency crisis Hariri blames Prime Minister Diab for Lebanon's economic crisis

UN chief slams Israel's 'unilateral' actions that harm Palestinians amid COVID-19 outbreak

Author:

Sun, 2020-04-26 10:27

DUBAI: The United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres has criticized Israel for its intention to annex parts of the West Bank, especially amid the coronavirus outbreak that poses risks to the fragile Palestinian community.

Guterres was responding to a letter penned by the Arab League Secretary General Ahmad Aboul Gheit warning Israel might exploit the pandemic to annex parts of the Palestinian territories, the Jordan News Agency reported.

The UN chief said such "unilateral Israeli actions" would jeopardize negotiations between the two groups, as well as kill other efforts of a peace deal.

Aboul Gheit had earlier urged the UN to take seriously Israel's actions against regional stability and security.



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Thousands demonstrate against Israeli coalition deal
Pompeo: West Bank annexation plans an 'Israeli decision'

[Jordan allows expats to leave without paying fines amid coronavirus pandemic](#)

Author:

Sun, 2020-04-26 09:08

DUBAI: The Jordanian government has agreed to waive all labor-related fines and fees for expat workers wanting to return to their home countries, state-run Jordan News Agency has reported.

The country's labor minister, Nidal Bataineh, has called on migrant workers to apply through Hemayah.jo, an online platform that coordinates their repatriation amid the coronavirus outbreak.

The application deadline is May 4.

Bataineh added fines and fees related to work permits will be waived, even for illegal migrant workers in the country.



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US pledges \$8 million aid in Jordan's coronavirus fightJordan mulls further easing of coronavirus lockdown, to reopen some public institutions

[Thousands demonstrate against Israeli coalition deal](#)

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By SHLOMO MOR | AP

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Sat, 2020-04-25 18:35

TEL AVIV, Israel: Several thousand Israelis on Saturday demonstrated against a unity government deal reached last week that leaves Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu in power as he prepares to go on trial for corruption charges. The protesters oppose having Netanyahu as prime minister as long as he is a criminal suspect. The protesters say the unity government agreement, which gives Netanyahu influence over the appointment of judges and legal officials, "crushes democracy" and is meant to rescue Netanyahu from his legal troubles. Netanyahu is scheduled to face trial next month on charges of fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes. He denies the charges.

The protest filled central Tel Aviv's Rabin Square, although demonstrators maintained distance from each other in line with health regulations in place for weeks meant to halt the spread of the coronavirus. Protesters, wearing face masks, waved Israeli flags and signs calling out Netanyahu for corruption.

Netanyahu and former military chief Benny Gantz, leader of the Blue and White party, signed the power-sharing agreement after weeks of negotiations for what they termed a "national emergency" government meant to steer the country through the coronavirus outbreak.

The agreement delivered Netanyahu a significant boost as he fought to hold on to power while fending off the corruption charges. His party will gain influence over judicial appointments, which could help Netanyahu if his case reaches the Supreme Court.

The deal requires the approval of both parties on key appointments, including the attorney general and the state prosecutor, granting Netanyahu veto power over the officials who hold sway over his legal fate.



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Lebanese must wear face masks despite coronavirus lockdown transition period

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Sat, 2020-04-25 21:53

BEIRUT: Lebanese people must wear face masks despite the country entering the transitional phase of its anti-coronavirus measures, Health Minister Hamad Hassan said.

A further eight cases were recorded in Lebanon on Saturday, raising the total number of cases to 704. Two further deaths have raised the death toll to 24. The Matn region is still recording the highest number of infections, with the number of cases in this area rising to 141. It is followed by Beirut, where the number of cases stands at 115.

The Ministry of Health is carrying out random laboratory PCR tests in various regions and the government is scheduled to ease its coronavirus measures, despite an extension of the general mobilization for another two weeks.

Hassan said during his tour to the southern suburbs of Beirut and the Bekaa that the transitional phase had started. "It is still necessary for the Lebanese to use face masks. They should continue to take precautions."

There were a further two deaths, raising the death toll to 24. One of them was a male in his sixties being treated at the Center Hospitalier Universitaire Notre Dame des Secours. He was from the town of Tula in Batroun District.

Lebanon's Grand Mufti opened the doors of Dar Al-Fatwa, which is Lebanon's religious authority for the Sunni community, on the second day of Ramadan due to the increase of people in need and public figures made donations at the headquarters.

The charity drive also provided an occasion for former heads of government to respond to a speech from Prime Minister Hassan Diab in which he slammed the governor of the Central Bank of Lebanon and his political opponents.

Former Prime Minister Fouad Siniora stressed the need for restoring the status of the constitution, the Taif Agreement which ended the civil war in Lebanon, "efficiency and merit" in bearing responsibility, and to subject everyone to accountability under constitutional frameworks.

He added: "How can the confidence of people be restored if we have not solved the file of judicial formations, and how can we win the trust of the Lebanese people if we have not implemented the electricity law that has been in place for 18 years?"

He said that the International Monetary Fund was the only way for countries to restore credibility.

Another former prime minister, Tammam Salam, said there needed to be awareness among officials who should avoid confrontation that only led to political uncertainty and speculation.

Former Prime Minister Saad Hariri, who blames Diab for the economic crisis, said what was going on was “floundering in the abyss of experimental ideas and searching for victims in politics, economy and administration.” The collapse occurred as a result of the delay in defining the paths of rescue since the first government of the present administration, he added, with the collapse continuing throughout the past few months. “In the decision-making rooms, it is proposed to change the identity of Lebanon at all levels, and the most dangerous thing in this scheme is the use of popular anger as fuel to burn the democratic, economic and social identity of Lebanon,” he warned.



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