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# Kuwait gets 200,000 doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine

## Minister inspects health measures at Kuwait airport



KUWAIT: Minister of State for Services Affairs Abdullah Marafi, accompanied by President of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Hmoud Al-Sabah, inspects health measures at Kuwait airport yesterday. — KUNA

**KUWAIT:** The health ministry announced yesterday that 200,000 doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine against COVID-19 will arrive at dawn today. In a press statement, Assistant Undersecretary for Drug and Food Control Affairs Dr Abdullah Al-Bader said the ministry authorized the vaccine for emergency use based on a decision by the joint technical committee of the pharmaceutical and herbal medicines registration and control department and the public health department for the evaluation and registration of vaccines.

The first batch will arrive at dawn today in order to ensure that the ministry does not delay its vaccination program after verifying quality reports, evaluating the data of the product and ensuring that the principles of good manufacturing are applied at the factories producing the vaccine - according to international standards - to ensure quality in all manufacturing stages,

Bader added.

The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine requires storage at a temperature between 2 to 8 degrees Celsius. The vaccine has been approved by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the UK Medicines and Health Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) for use in people aged 18 and above.

Meanwhile, Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Minister of State for Services Affairs Abdullah Marafi inspected at Kuwait International Airport the latest regulatory and health measures following the Cabinet's decision that airlines should conduct polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests on all passengers arriving to the country.

In a statement to KUNA yesterday, Marafi said the task of checking passengers arriving at Kuwait International Airport will be assigned to airlines to ease the burden on health teams from Kuwait's ministry of health, which have exerted great efforts since the start of

the COVID-19 pandemic. The airlines, in cooperation with the country's ground services companies and local laboratories, will conduct PCR examinations of travelers arriving to the country, he added, underlining the health ministry will only monitor and supervise these swabs.

During Marafi's tour, he commended the great efforts by the health ministry and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) during this phase, which played a vital and clear role to confront the COVID-19 pandemic in various fields and sectors. He appreciated the efforts of officials at the airport, including members of the interior ministry and customs, as well as all workers at the airport to serve passengers, facilitate arrival procedures and ensure utmost health security. All travelers and workers in the airport buildings should abide by health controls and guidelines issued by MoH or DGCA, he pointed out. — KUNA

## Dubai announces alliance to speed vaccine delivery

**DUBAI:** Key transport hub Dubai yesterday announced an initiative to accelerate the delivery of coronavirus vaccines, particularly to developing nations, after the WHO warned against abandoning the world's poor. The Vaccine Logistics Alliance, which includes Dubai-based Emirates airline and global logistics giant DP World, is designed to "speed up distribution of COVID-19 vaccines around the world through the emirate".

The alliance will "support" the World Health Organization's Covax initiative to distribute two billion vaccine doses, the Dubai Media Office said in a statement, without specifying how many doses it would deliver. "The distribution will particularly focus on emerging markets, where populations have been hard-hit by the pandemic, and pharmaceutical transport and logistics are challenging," it said.

The United Arab Emirates, which includes Dubai and six other emirates, has administered vaccines to more than a quarter of its population, second only to Israel in the global race. The WHO has urged wealthy countries to avoid repeating past mistakes of hoarding medicines and vaccines, saying such behavior would only drag out the pandemic.

"We are all too aware of the challenges facing us globally in this pandemic and necessity to work together," the UAE's minister of state for foreign affairs, Anwar Gargash, said in a tweet. "Vaccine nationalism should not be tolerated in our common battle to defeat COVID," he said. Covax, the globally-pooled vaccine procurement and distribution effort, has struck agreements with manufacturers for two billion vaccine doses, and secured options on a billion more.

Dubai said the alliance will work with pharmaceutical manufacturers, forwarders, and government agencies to transport vaccines, some of which have to be kept at very cold temperatures. "Together, we are able to store a large volume of vaccine doses at a time and bring in and distribute vaccines to any point around the world within 48 hours," said Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Maktoum, Chairman of Dubai Airports and Emirates Airline. The UAE itself has suffered a spike in cases after the holiday period, after aggressively opening up to tourism. But it reported 2,948 new virus cases yesterday, the lowest number since Jan 11. — AFP

## WHO team visits Wuhan market at heart of outbreak

**WUHAN, China:** A team of WHO experts investigating the origins of COVID-19 yesterday went to a market in Wuhan where one of the first reported clusters of infections emerged over a year ago, with one member tweeting the visit was "critical" to understanding the virus. Members of the group arrived at Huanan seafood market - which has been sealed since January last year - driving into its barricaded premises as guards quickly blocked others from entering, according to AFP journalists at the scene.

The mission, delayed by China and

weighed down by political baggage, has a remit to explore how the virus jumped from animal to human. But with the fieldwork element of the trip in its early stages, World Health Organization officials have already played down expectations of finding the source of a virus which has killed over two million people and devastated the global economy.

Yesterday, the WHO team visited Huanan market and another wholesale one, as part of a long-planned trip closely monitored by the Chinese

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## Modi vows to pursue reforms after farmer riot

**NEW DELHI:** India will push on with sweeping agriculture reforms, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said yesterday, as he criticized last week's deadly riot in the capital following a long-running protest campaign by farmers. Thousands flooded New Delhi on Tuesday, driving tractors from border camps where they have been holding sit-ins since

Nov 26; but the rally turned into a rampage which left one person dead and hundreds of police injured.

Modi called the farmers' assault on a historic fort an "insult" to the national flag. His government has insisted that the agriculture sector needs to be modernized, but farmers fear the deregulation laws will place them at the mercy of big corporations that already dominate other industries.

In his first public comments on Tuesday's events, Modi stressed that the government remained "committed to modernizing agriculture". "The efforts of the government shall also continue in the future," the Indian leader said in his regular monthly radio address yesterday.

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## Car bombs kill 11 in north Syria

**AZAZ, Syria:** Car bombs killed 11 people including six civilians in two separate incidents in Turkish-held northern Syria yesterday, a monitoring group said. The first attack near a cultural center in the town of Azaz killed six civilians including a young girl, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. An AFP reporter at the scene saw a mangled car ablaze, black smoke billowing into the sky. A man rushed away from the site of the blast, carrying what appeared to be a child wrapped in a bloodied cloth.

In the second incident, a car bomb targeted a checkpoint of pro-Ankara rebels near the town of Al-Bab, killing five fighters, the Observatory added. Areas of northern Syria held by Turkish forces and

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WUHAN: Members of a World Health Organization team, investigating the origins of the COVID-19 coronavirus, visit the closed Huanan Seafood wholesale market yesterday. — AFP



NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the media upon arriving for the budget session at the parliament yesterday. — AFP



AZAZ, Syria: Civilians carry young victims at the scene of an explosion in this town in the rebel-controlled northern countryside of Aleppo province yesterday. — AFP