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Kuwait reports 1,002 new COVID-19 cases, 6 deaths

MoI to enforce shop closures • Social gatherings root cause of spike in cases



KUWAIT: Maj Gen (Rtd) Abdulfattah Al-Ali, who is in charge of enforcing compliance with coronavirus measures, oversees the removal of campsites in Ahmadi governorate yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: Kuwait said 1,002 people tested positive for coronavirus with six related deaths reported yesterday, taking total COVID-19 cases to 172,996, while deaths increased to 975, according to the health ministry. The number of people hospitalized with the virus currently stands at 9,310, with 96 of them in intensive care units, according to ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad.

He added some 10,271 swab tests were conducted over the past day, taking total tests to 1,618,576. Sanad urged citizens and expatriates alike that abiding by health precautions, mainly following social distancing rules, is the only way to halt the spread of the virus. The ministry earlier reported 591 more people had recovered from the virus over the past day, raising total recoveries to 162,711.

The interior ministry yesterday said it will deploy security teams to assist authorities to implement decisions by the Cabinet to close commercial activities to counter the spread of the coronavirus. The ministry of commerce and the municipality will monitor the implementation of the closure of commercial shops and malls from 8 pm to 5 am and the total shutdown of health clubs, salons and barbershops.

Health ministry sources have warned against the continued hosting of social events and gatherings at diwanis, rest areas, stables and farms, adding that this behavior has contributed to the increase of coronavirus cases lately, in addition to hospital



admissions due to complications. "The ministry is monitoring the epidemic curve of the virus and the causes of infection periodically," said the sources, who were quoted in a report published by Al-Qabas Arabic daily yesterday. "It was noticed that most of the latest cases were due to lack of compliance with health protocols and attending social events held in diwanis and other places."

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News in brief

Kuwait bans live sheep exports

KUWAIT: The ministry of commerce and industry yesterday issued a ministerial decree banning the export and re-export of domestic and imported live sheep and goats for three months. The aim of the decision is to meet the needs of the local market. — KUNA

Iraq hangs 5 convicts

NASIRIYAH: Iraq yesterday hanged five people convicted on "terrorism" charges, security sources said, despite an international outcry over the country's execution record. The five men, all Iraqi, were executed at the Nasiriyah prison in Dhi Qar province. — AFP

Sitting US congressman dies

WASHINGTON: A Republican congressman from Texas who was being treated for COVID-19 has died, the first sitting member to lose his life after battling the coronavirus. House of Representatives lawmaker Ron Wright, 67, who had also suffered from cancer, died at a Dallas hospital. — AFP

Iran starts vaccination drive

TEHRAN: Iran began its COVID-19 vaccination campaign yesterday using Russia's Sputnik V jab to fight the Middle East's deadliest outbreak of the illness. The first doses were given to doctors and nurses, with recipients handed a blue card marked with "Sputnik V" and the date of the injection. — AFP

Dubai inoculates transport workers

DUBAI: Dubai has begun the mass vaccination of public transport workers. At a center of Dubai's Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) on Monday, dozens of drivers and other employees formed long lines for an AstraZeneca jab. RTA has already vaccinated some 20,000 employees. — AFP

Women in Kuwait launch their own #MeToo movement

KUWAIT: Women in Kuwait are defying conservative norms and a culture of "shame" to speak out against harassment for the first time, in a social media campaign sparked by a popular fashion blogger. Dozens of testimonies about being stalked, harassed or assaulted have emerged online, focused on the Instagram account "Lan Asket", Arabic for "I

will not be silent".

Kuwaiti fashion blogger Ascia Al-Faraj, who has more than 2.5 million social media followers, said in an explosive video uploaded last week that there is a "problem" in the country. "Every time I go out, there is someone who harasses me or harasses another woman in the street," she said in the emotionally charged video uploaded after a vehicle sped up to "scare" her while she was walking to her car. "Do you have no shame? We have a problem of harassment in this country, and I have had enough."

Faraj's video sparked a nationwide movement in a country where the #MeToo campaign that took off in the United States in 2017 did not make much

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UAE probe enters Mars orbit in first for Arab world

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates' "Hope" probe yesterday successfully entered Mars' orbit, making history as the Arab world's first interplanetary mission. The probe is designed to reveal the secrets of Martian weather, but the UAE also wants it to serve as an inspiration for the region's youth. "To the people of the UAE, to the Arab and Muslim nations, we announce the successful arrival to Mars orbit. Praise be to God," said Omran Sharaf, the mission's project manager.

Officials at mission control broke into applause after the probe entered orbit, visibly relieved after a tense half-hour as the probe carried out a "burn" to slow itself enough to be pulled in by Martian gravity, in what was the most perilous stage of the journey. Hope is the first of three spacecraft to arrive at the Red Planet this month after China and the US also launched missions in July, taking advantage of a period when the Earth and Mars are nearest.

The UAE's venture is also timed to mark the 50th anniversary of the unification of the UAE's seven emirates. "What you have accomplished is an honor for you, and an honor for the nation. I want to congratulate you," said Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed after entering the control room.

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DUBAI: Burj Khalifa is lit up in red as the UAE's "Al-Amal" probe successfully entered Mars' orbit yesterday. — AFP



WHO mission to China fails to find source of COVID

WUHAN: The WHO mission to China to uncover the origins of the coronavirus has failed to identify the source of the pandemic but the team yesterday ruled out the Wuhan lab-leak theory propagated by Donald Trump. Experts believe the disease - which has killed more than 2.3 million people worldwide - originated in bats and could have been transmitted to humans via another mammal.

World Health Organization foreign expert Peter Ben Embarek said identifying the animal pathway remains a "work in progress", and the absence of bats in the Wuhan area dimmed the likelihood of direct transmission. It was "most likely" to have come from an intermediary species, he said. He also backed up China's position that there was no evidence of "large outbreaks" in Wuhan before December when the first official cases were recorded.

Animals such as rabbits, ferrets and bamboo rats could be the intermediary, another team member Marion Koopmans added, saying they might be an "entry point" for further investigations. Liang Wannian, head of the China side of the joint mission, said animal transmission remained the likely route, but "the reservoir hosts remain to be identified".

Ben Embarek quashed the theory that a leak from a virology lab in Wuhan could have caused the pandemic. "The laboratory incident hypothesis is extremely unlikely," he said. It "is not in the hypotheses that we will suggest for future studies". — AFP