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Joy, sacrifice as mosques reopen in 'model' areas

Panel seeks opinion over rent relief • Meetings to debate population imbalance



KUWAIT: The imam leads Dhuhr prayers at Bilal Mosque in Siddiq yesterday after some mosques reopened for the first time after three months of closure due to the coronavirus outbreak. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Mosques in so-called modern residential areas reopened their doors to worshippers for the first time following three months of unprecedented closure due to the coronavirus outbreak. To celebrate the occasion, Islamic charity organizations slaughtered 100 sheep and distributed the meat to the needy. Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs Mohammad Al-Afasi said mosques in commercial, market and heavily-populated areas will remain closed for the time being.

Mosques opened for Dhuhr (noon) prayers amid strict health precautionary measures. Worshippers must wear facemasks and social distancing between rows and worshippers must be strictly observed. Worshippers must bring their own mats so they do not come in contact with mosque carpets.

Mosques will open five minutes before prayer time and close 10 minutes after prayers. In the first phase, no Friday prayer will be held except at the Grand Mosque in Kuwait City. The ministry of Islamic Affairs asked the defense ministry to sanitize all mosques before they are reopened.

The National Assembly's legal and legislative committee yesterday sought the opinion of the justice ministry and

the Supreme Judicial Council about proposals on how to deal with payment of rent during the coronavirus crisis, head of the committee said. MP Khaled Al-Shatti said the committee discussed a number of proposals and found there are different opinions from the landlords and representatives of businesses affected by the virus.

Shatti said that the panel had previously settled the issue of residential rent by proposing a provision that prevents landlords from evicting tenants during the crisis if they fail to pay rent on time. The provision however does not propose any reduction in residential rent.

The landlords union meanwhile rejected any reduction in residential rent because tenants have been using the leased real estate, but offered a 50 percent cut to commercial shops for up to three months because tenants were prevented from using their shops due to shutdowns.

Residential tenants have been calling for some reduction in rent because many of them have either lost jobs or had their salaries reduced because of the coronavirus crisis, rendering them unable to pay rent. Some landlords have volunteered to cut rent by more than 30 percent.

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News in brief

Bahrain activist freed

MANAMA: Bahraini rights activist Nabeel Rajab, who played a key role in 2011 anti-government protests, was freed from jail Tuesday after serving time over tweets critical of the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen. "Nabeel has been released and he is on his way home now," his lawyer Mohammed Al-Jishi told AFP, adding that Rajab would serve the remaining three years of a five-year sentence in an "alternative" or non-custodial setting. — AFP

UAE plane lands in Israel

JERUSALEM: UAE carrier Etihad Airways sent its second flight to Israel in less than a month Tuesday, carrying medical aid to help the Palestinians tackle the coronavirus pandemic, witnesses and officials said. Tuesday's aircraft bore for the first time the logo of the Arab carrier, a source with knowledge of the flight told AFP. But Palestinian premier Mohammed Shtayyeh said the Palestinians had not been informed about the flight. The Palestinians rejected a similar UAE shipment of medical supplies on May 19, saying it had not been coordinated with them. — AFP (See Page 8)

Emirates lays off thousands

DUBAI: Emirates, one of the world's biggest long-haul airlines, laid off hundreds of pilots and thousands of cabin crew on Tuesday as it manages a cash crunch caused by the coronavirus pandemic, five company sources said. More redundancies were expected at Emirates this week including both Airbus A380 and Boeing 777 pilots, the sources said on the condition of anonymity. The workforce of 4,300 pilots and nearly 22,000 cabin crew could shrink by almost a third from its pre-coronavirus levels, three of the sources said. An airline spokeswoman told Reuters some employees had been laid off. — Reuters

Tributes, calls for justice at Floyd funeral

HOUSTON: Houston said farewell to George Floyd in a rousing hometown funeral Tuesday, with poignant tributes and calls for justice for the 46-year-old African American whose death "touched the world" and ignited global protests against police brutality and racism. Politicians, civil rights activists and celebrities joined in sharing memories of the man they called a "gentle giant" after his golden casket was carried into the sanctuary by six

pallbearers in masks, as a row of police officers stood at attention and saluted.

Civil rights leader Al Sharpton delivered a fierce eulogy, punctuated by the deep chords of a church organ, in which he accused President Donald Trump of showing indifference over Floyd's death, and sending police a signal of impunity. "We are fighting wickedness in high places!" Sharpton thundered, uttering the phrase over and over as he accused Trump of "scheming on how you can spin the story rather than how you can achieve justice."

"You sit now trying to figure out how you're going to stop the protest, rather than how you're going to stop

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HOUSTON: People watch as a horse-drawn hearse containing the remains of George Floyd passes by during a funeral procession on Tuesday. — AFP

Future of flying: Masks, checks, long check-ins

SINGAPORE: Cabin crew in protective suits, health certifications for passengers, mandatory face masks, and longer check-in times. This is the new reality of mass air travel. As people dream of taking to the skies once more, they face the prospect that changes to curb the spread of coronavirus will be even more challenging than those brought in after the 2001 terror attacks in the United States.

In addition to the strict security measures commonplace around the world since then, passengers will now encounter a barrage of checks for COVID-19. "Before the pandemic, we were told to arrive two hours before the flight. This time we had to be at the airport at least four hours before flying," said Indonesian Suyanto after taking a domestic route in late May. There were multiple queues and screenings before he could even check in at the airport, he added.

Passengers in the country must declare a reason for flying, provide documentation proving they are virus-free, undergo multiple screenings, and offer details of their movements on arrival. "It was more



WUHAN, China: This photo taken on May 29, 2020 shows a flight attendant wearing a facemask as she checks the body temperature of boarding passengers next to the door of the plane at Tianhe Airport. — AFP

tiring and expensive. With these kinds of strict rules, I think people will think twice before travelling," said the 40-year-old, who had to pay double the usual fare for his short flight as some seats were left empty for social distancing.

As the aviation industry attempts to find a way forward, experts warn the impact of the pandemic will be far-reaching. "9/11 created a new environment for the entire travel industry in terms of security," explained Shukor Yusof from Malaysia-based

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Arab mission to Mars designed to inspire youth

DUBAI: The first Arab space mission to Mars, armed with probes to study the Red Planet's atmosphere, is designed to inspire the region's youth and pave the way for scientific breakthroughs, officials said Tuesday. The unmanned probe Al-Amal – Hope in Arabic – is to blast off from a Japanese space center on July 15, with preparations now in their final stages.

The project is the next giant step for the United Arab Emirates, whose colossal skyscrapers and mega-projects have put it on the world map. The UAE sent its first astronaut into space last year and is also planning to build a "Science City" to replicate conditions on Mars, where it hopes to build a human settlement by 2117.

Omran Sharaf, the mission's project manager, said that apart from the ambitious scientific goals, the mission was designed to hark back to the region's golden age of cultural and scientific achievements.

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