

Local

Kuwait lists 435 new COVID cases, no deaths

Total cases up to 157,399, deaths at 947

KUWAIT: Kuwait listed 435 new coronavirus infections and no virus-related deaths yesterday, taking the total to 157,399 and 947 respectively, the health ministry said. Kuwait had announced 530 new cases and one death on Friday. Meanwhile, the health ministry announced 349 recoveries yesterday, compared to 268 on Friday, raising total recoveries to 150,678.

The number of patients hospitalized stood yesterday at 5,774, including 48 in intensive care units, according to ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad. This is down from 5,688 on Friday, although the number of ICU patients remained the same, according to ministry data. Dr Sanad also revealed yesterday that

health workers conducted 8,651 swab tests over the previous 24 hours, and 10,862 the day before, bringing the total up to 1,389,294.

Meanwhile, the health ministry posted further explanations on COVID-19 vaccine certificate yesterday. In a post on their Twitter account, the ministry showed that once a person receives both doses of the vaccine, they will receive a vaccination card, a text message with a link to the vaccination report, and a digital vaccine certificate on the 'Mosafer' app. Health Minister Dr Basel Al-Sabah had said Thursday that this digital certificate will be made available in case it becomes required for travel to certain countries in the future.



349 recoveries in 24 hours



435

إصابة جديدة
NEW CASES
الإجمالي
157,399

48 إجمالي الحالات
في العناية المركزة
TOTAL SERIOUS CASES



0

حالة وفاة جديدة
NEW DEATHS
الإجمالي
947

5,774 إجمالي الحالات
التي تتلقى العلاج
TOTAL ACTIVE CASES



349

حالة تعافي جديدة
NEW RECOVERIES
الإجمالي
150,678

8,651 مسحة جديدة
NEW TESTS
الإجمالي
1,389,294

حرصاً على سلامتكم، تنصح وزارة الصحة بتجنب السفر في الوقت الحالي.



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KUWAIT: Firemen battle a blaze reported in Shuwaikh yesterday.



Coastguard arrests 10 attempting to enter Kuwait

KUWAIT: Coastguards arrested 10 people who entered Kuwait illegally through Abdullah Port yesterday. Police headed to the scene after receiving a call about a number of people jumping out of a boat and into territo-

rial waters. People were able to arrest nine men, who admitted that they came from Iran on a boat that dropped them off and turned back. Coastguards were able to arrest the boat's sailor while he was on his way back to

Iran. The suspects, all Iranian, were taken to the proper authorities for further action.

Separately, firemen battled a blaze reported in a sanitary ware showroom in Shuwaikh yesterday, Kuwait Fire Force said. The flame spread over a 5,000-square-meter area, but firefighters managed to control the fire's spread and bring it under control. No injuries were reported, Kuwait Fire Force noted, adding that an investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire.



Two Iranian infiltrators who were caught.

WhatsApp delays data share update...

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obligation on its users. Several Turkish state organizations - including President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's media office - switched to Turkcell telecom's new messaging service BiP in response.

The terms of service tweak also put WhatsApp in the crosshairs in Italy and India, where a petition has been filed in a Delhi court. WhatsApp's notice to users lacked clarity and its privacy implications need to be carefully evaluated, Italian data protection agency GPDP said in a post at its website. GPDP said it has shared its concerns with the European Data Protection Board and reserved the right to intervene in the matter.

Facebook has come under increasing pressure from regulators as it tries to integrate its services. The EU fined the US social media giant \$110 million

(then \$120 million) for providing incorrect and misleading information about its 2014 takeover of WhatsApp concerning the ability to link accounts between the services. Federal and state regulators in US have accused Facebook of using its acquisitions of WhatsApp and Instagram to squelch competition and filed antitrust lawsuits last month that aim to force the company to divest them.

User privacy fears have been mounting, with Uber careful to stress that a change in app terms taking effect on Jan 18 has nothing to do with sharing data. Encrypted messaging app Telegram has seen user ranks surge on the heels of the WhatsApp service terms announcement, said its Russia-born founder Pavel Durov. "People no longer want to exchange their privacy for free services," Durov said without directly referring to the rival app.

Encrypted messaging app Signal has also seen a huge surge in demand, helped by a tweeted recommendation by billionaire tech entrepreneur Elon Musk. WhatsApp has sought to reassure worried users, even running full-page newspaper adverts in India, proclaiming that "respect for your privacy is coded into our DNA". —AFP

Commission said all vaccines ordered by the bloc for the first quarter would be delivered on time. But ministers from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Sweden said in a joint letter that the situation was "unacceptable" and "decreases the credibility of the vaccination process".

Lebanon hit new daily records of 44 coronavirus deaths and over 6,000 new infections Friday, the second day of a lockdown aimed at preventing the country's creaking healthcare system from collapsing. The country of six million recorded 6,154 new infections over the past 24 hours, the health ministry said, as hospitals in Beirut reached full capacity.

The announcement came as the American University of Beirut's medical center, one of the country's top facilities, said that its intensive care units, COVID-19 units and emergency room were all full. "We are unable to find beds for even the most critical patients," it said in a statement. — AFP

transfer of power. Trump, who was impeached for a record second time in the wake of the Congress storming, has also broken with more discreet protocol by refusing to invite Biden and his wife Jill Biden to the White House for a traditional cup of tea in the Oval Office.

On Friday, Vice President Mike Pence did make the gesture of telephoning his incoming counterpart Kamala Harris, a source said. Although this came only five days before inauguration day - and more than two months after the election - The New York Times said Pence offered his congratulations and belated assistance to Harris, describing the exchange as "gracious and pleasant". — AFP

Nepal team claim first winter ascent...

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The 10 Nepali climbers had earlier been spread across different teams, but formed a new group in order to claim the feat in Nepal's name.

Despite being famed for their climbing expertise, there has never before been a Nepali climber on the first winter ascent of a peak over 8,000 m. One of the triumphant climbers, Nirmal Purja, who is also known as Nimsdai, described it as a "very special moment". "The whole team waited 10m below the summit to form a group then stepped onto the summit together whilst singing our Nepalese National Anthem," wrote Purja in a social media post.

"We are proud to have been a part of history for humankind and to show that collaboration, teamwork and a positive mental attitude can push limits to what we feel might be possible." At least one of the climbers, Mingma Gyalje Sherpa, had planned to reach the summit without using oxygen.

The news sparked joy throughout Nepal, long used to watching foreign climbers seize the records. "For decades, Nepalis have assisted foreigners to reach the summits of the Himalayas, but we've not been getting

the recognition we deserve," said renowned Nepali climber Kami Rita Sherpa, who has climbed Everest a record 24 times. "The spotlight has always been on foreign climbers. It is wonderful that today on K2 ten Nepalis have made history and shown our bravery and strength."

Nepali guides, usually ethnic Sherpas from the valleys around Everest, are considered the backbone of the climbing industry in the Himalayas for bearing huge risks to carry equipment and food, fix ropes and repair ladders. "Sherpas are top climbers of the world, and it is a proud moment for us. But reaching the summit is only the first half. We hope now that they can all make it back down safely," warned Ang Tshering Sherpa, the former president of the Nepal Mountaineering Association.

One of the final technical difficulties to be overcome by the group was the dreaded "bottleneck", a narrow and steep passage where 11 people were killed in Aug 2008 in K2's worst known tragedy. Many climbers have died trying to reach the summit, while others were killed on the dangerous descent. Lockdowns and travel bans sparked by the coronavirus pandemic meant the summer climbing season last year was a bust in most of the popular climbing destinations in the region, such as Nepal.

With Pakistan's borders open and few other places to go, this winter an unprecedented four teams totalling around 60 climbers converged on the mountain. — AFP

India starts vaccine drive as global...

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US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer said shipments of its vaccines would slow for a period in late January. In hard-hit Europe, there are concerns that the Pfizer delays could further slow a vaccine rollout that has already faced heavy criticism. Pfizer, which jointly developed its vaccine with German company BioNTech, said EU countries could expect delayed deliveries in the coming weeks due to work being done at its plant in Belgium.

It promised that there would be "a significant increase" in shipments in March, and the European

Trump to leave town before...

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A mob then stormed Congress, halting proceedings underway to certify Biden's win.

For longer than anyone can remember, outgoing presidents have stood by their replacement on the Capitol steps, watching them take the oath - and in so doing showing visible support for the peaceful

Iran test-fires missiles on...

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Dubbed Great Prophet 15, the exercise also featured a drone attack on a missile defense system followed by the launch of a barrage of "new generation" surface-to-surface ballistic missiles. The war games come at a time of rising tensions with the United States in the final days of President Donald Trump's administration.

It was Iran's third military exercise in less than two weeks after a naval exercise in the Gulf of Oman on Wednesday and Thursday, and an army drone drill on Jan 5-6. The exercises started two days after Iran marked the anniversary of the assassination of revered Guards commander Qasem Soleimani, killed in a US drone strike in Iraq in January last year.

Meanwhile, the US Defense Department announced Friday that it would include close ally Israel in the area covered by its Middle East-focused Central Command. In another sign of the rapprochement brokered by President Donald Trump between Israel and Arab countries, the Pentagon said US military dealings with Israel

would no longer be handled by its European Command.

"We structure boundaries to best mitigate risk and protect US interests and partners," the Pentagon said in a statement. "The easing of tensions between Israel and its Arab neighbors subsequent to the Abraham Accords has provided a strategic opportunity for the United States to align key partners against shared threats in the Middle East."

That was mainly a reference to Iran, which the United States, Israel and Arab countries including leading power Saudi Arabia view as the leading security threat to the region. For decades at odds with its Arab neighbors over its treatment of Palestinians, Israel has over the past year broken barriers on open cooperation and communications with Gulf countries under the Trump-fostered Abraham Accords.

Moving it under the Central Command potentially makes security cooperation with the United States on regional matters easier, and could bring Israeli military officials in closer proximity to those of Gulf neighbors. But it could also complicate CentCom cooperation with Iran allies like Iraq, where the US retains 2,500 troops. "Israel is a leading strategic partner for the United States, and this will open up additional opportunities for cooperation with our US Central Command partners, while maintaining strong cooperation between Israel and our European allies," the Pentagon said. — AFP