

World celebrates Eid

● **Worshippers perform Eid prayers, socially distanced and masked**

Reuters | Jakarta

Masked and socially distanced to fight the coronavirus, believers around the world held prayers yesterday to mark the festival of Eid al-Adha, with mosques at reduced capacity and some praying in the open air.

In Istanbul, worshippers held Eid al-Adha prayers at Hagia Sophia for the first time since the historic building was reconverted to a mosque this month following a court ruling revoking its status as a museum that drew criticism from Western countries.

In Lebanon, devastated by economic crisis, many found it hard to afford traditional Eid customs. In Tripoli, the country's second city, there were no decorations or twinkling lights, and no electricity to power them.

Instead, a large billboard read: "We're broke."

Around the world, the festival had to fit in with the realities of the coronavirus.

In Indonesia, the religious ministry asked mosques to shorten ceremonies, while many cancelled the ritual of slaugh-



Worshippers take part in the Eid al-Adha prayers outside Hagia Sophia in Istanbul

tering livestock and distributing meat to the community.

Instead sheep, goats and cows were being killed in abattoirs to mark the 'Feast of the Sacrifice', celebrated to commemorate Prophet Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Ismail at God's command.

"This year's Eid al-Adha is very different from previous years because we need to follow health protocols as we perform prayers, like maintaining social distancing," said Devita Ilhami, 30, who was at the Sunda Kelapa mosque in Jakarta.

She said they had to bring

their own prayer mats, with markers on the ground to show where they should be laid.

Elsewhere in Asia, believers including in Thailand and Malaysia prayed in or outside mosques wearing masks.

In Malaysia, while some mosques cancelled the ritual of slaughtering livestock, 13 cows were killed in the traditional way, but under rules limiting the number of animals and people at the Tengku Abdul Aziz Shah Jamek mosque in Kuala Lumpur.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani attended prayers in Ka-

bul. Islamist Taliban militants say they will observe a three-day ceasefire for the holiday, offering some respite from weeks of violence.

In India, where Eid will be celebrated mostly from today, several states have eased coronavirus restrictions to allow worshippers to gather in mosques in limited numbers.

"Only small groups of worshippers will be allowed into mosques," said Shafique Qasim, a senior cleric at the Nakhoda mosque in the eastern city of Kolkata.

News in brief

Car bomb kills at least 17 in Afghanistan

◆ At least 17 people were killed in a car bomb explosion in Afghanistan as crowds shopped ahead of the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha, officials and a medic said.

"Seventeen bodies and 21 wounded people were brought to our hospital," Sediqullah, a senior doctor at a hospital in the city of Puli Alam in Logar province, told AFP. The interior ministry confirmed the blast, which came on the eve of a three-day ceasefire between the Taliban and Kabul.



◆ Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro said he was taking antibiotics for an infection that left him feeling weak, chucking in an online video about "mold" in his lungs, having spent weeks in isolation after catching

Bolsonaro says he has 'mold' in lungs

the novel coronavirus. "I just did a blood test. I was feeling kind of weak yesterday. They found a bit of infection also. Now I'm on antibiotics," Bolsonaro said in a livestream video, without elaborating on the infection. "After 20 days indoors, I have other problems. I have mold in my lungs," he said, referring to nearly three weeks he spent at the official presidential residence.

◆ At least nine people were killed after a minibus crashed in Crimea in the early hours of Friday, authorities in the Russian-annexed peninsula said.

The driver of the microbus, which was carrying tourists from the southern Russian city of Krasnodar, fell asleep at the wheel and crashed into a large truck near a village northeast of the regional capital Simferopol, Russian news agencies reported. Seven people died on the spot, while another two died as they were being treated for their injuries. Another nine people were injured.



◆ Preliminary tests to explain the reason for hundreds of mysterious elephant deaths in Botswana point to a naturally occurring toxin as a probable cause, a senior wildlife official said. It was highly unlikely that an infectious disease was behind the shocking deaths of at least 281 elephants, added Cyril Taolo, acting director of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks. Officials had been struggling to establish the cause of death more than two months after the first carcasses were spotted.



◆ A wildfire fanned by soaring temperatures tore through a pine forest in southwestern France, burning down at least one house and forcing dozens to flee their homes.

"At the end of my street the flames were approaching the homes and they were very strong -- we all jumped in our cars," a resident of the coastal Anglet municipality near tourism hotspot Biarritz told AFP. Around 100 firefighters and two water bombers tried to beat back the fire, which consumed one home and around 40 hectares (100 acres) of the Chiberta forest by 10:30pm, the local prefecture said.

◆ A South Korean marine major-general was relieved of his command after the military failed to prevent a man's illegal defection back to the North, officials said. The man's departure only came to light when Pyongyang -- which insists it has not had any coronavirus cases -- announced at the weekend that a "runaway" who had returned across the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone was suspected of having the disease. Defections from the South to the North are extremely rare, and doubly so across the DMZ, which divides the peninsula and is one of the world's most secure borders.

'Trump would benefit from talks': Iran's Khamenei says won't negotiate with US

AFP | Karachi

Iran will not open talks with the United States that will only benefit Donald Trump, supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said yesterday, insisting the US president's sanctions policy had failed.

Decades-old tensions between Tehran and Washington have soared in the past year or so, with the sworn enemies twice appearing to come to the brink of war. The tensions have been building since 2018, when Trump withdrew the United

States from a landmark nuclear accord and unilaterally reimposed crippling sanctions.

"There is no doubt that sanctions are a crime," Khamenei said in a televised speech.

"But the smart Iranian has made the best use of this attack,

this animosity and benefited... by using sanctions as a means to increase national self-reliance."

Khamenei said Western "think-tanks admit that the maximum pressure (policy) of sanctions and US force has not succeeded".

Children carry COVID-19 virus, small study finds

AFP | London

Children younger than five carried major amounts of coronavirus in their upper respiratory tract, a small study published showed, raising new questions about whether kids can infect others.

Data on children as sources of coronavirus spread are sparse, and early reports did not find strong evidence of children as major contributors to the deadly virus.

Understanding the transmission potential in children will be key to developing public health guidelines, said the researchers who published the study in the journal JAMA Pediatrics.

Their analysis suggests the young children had a viral load 10-fold to 100-fold greater than adults in their upper respiratory tracts.

Viral loads in older children with COVID-19 are similar to levels in adults. This study found greater amounts of viral nucleic acid -- the genetic codes for proteins to produce new viruses -- in children younger than 5 years.

India extends suspension of international flights till Aug 31



Aircrafts are seen parked at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai
PTI | New Delhi

India's aviation regulator DGCA yesterday said the suspension of scheduled international flights to and from the country has been extended till August 31 amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The suspension of scheduled international commercial services was till July 31. In the wake of the pandemic, overseas flights were suspended in late March, while cargo flights and those approved by the DGCA have been permitted to operate.

In a statement, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said the government has decided to 'extend the suspension on the Scheduled International Commercial Passenger Services to/from India up to

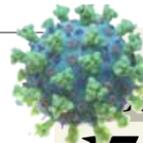
2359 hours IST of 31st August'.

However, this restriction would not be applicable for international all-cargo operations and flights specifically approved by the DGCA.

During the suspension period, more than 2,500 repatriation flights by foreign carriers to uplift stranded passengers to/from India have been approved, the statement said.

Under the Vande Bharat Mission, Air India and Air India Express have uplifted 2,67,436 stranded passengers, and other charters have uplifted 4,86,811 stranded passengers during May 6 to July 30 period, it added.

As part of allowing gradual movement of passenger traffic amid the pandemic situation, 'Transport Bubble' agreements have been signed with the US, France, and Germany.



Global

COVID-19 Cases: **17,631,804**

Deaths: **679,675**

Recovered: **11,028,671**

New cases: **+168,307**

New deaths: **+3,712**

Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	New deaths	Total Deaths
USA	4,669,504	+748	156,033
Brazil	2,625,612	+230	91,607
India	1,696,780	+765	36,551
Russia	839,981	+161	13,963
South Africa	482,169		7,812
Mexico	416,179	+639	46,000
Peru	407,492		19,021
Chile	355,667	+80	9,457
Spain	335,602	+2	28,445
UK	304,204	+197	46,119
Iran	303,181	+226	16,766
Pakistan	286,020	+32	5,951
Colombia	278,305		9,810
Saudi Arabia	275,905	+26	2,866

Middle East

Figures as of closing

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases	Serious, Critical	Tot cases/1m pop
Saudi Arabia	275,905	+1,686	2,866	+24	235,658	37,381	2,033	7,916
UAE	60,506	+283	351	+2	53,909	6,246		6,112
Kuwait	66,957	+428	447	+2	57,932	8,578	134	15,661
Oman	79,159		421		61,421	17,317	187	15,473
Egypt	93,757		4,774		38,236	50,747	41	915
Qatar	110,695	+235	174	+3	107,377	3,144	77	39,424