

News in brief

◆ **Germany will enable multiple citizenship and simplify the process of acquiring German nationality**, according to a coalition deal yesterday. "As a rule, naturalization should be possible after five years, with special integration achievements after three years," the document said. The current time requirement for naturalization is eight years which could be cut to six years in special integration cases, the agreement said.



Germany to simplify naturalisation process for immigrants

◆ **Apple Inc issued yesterday alert messages to at least six Thai activists and researchers** who have been critical of the government, warning it believed their iPhones had been targeted by "state-sponsored attackers", according to activists and the alerts reviewed by Reuters. Apple and Thailand's Digital Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Apple warns Thai activists "state-sponsored attackers" may have targeted iPhones



Prajak Kongkirati, a political scientist at Bangkok's Thammasat University, said he had received two

emails from Apple warning it believed his iPhone and iCloud accounts had been targeted, along with a "threat notification" on his Apple account.

◆ **European Union ambassadors approved the renewal of sanctions on four Chinese officials** and one Chinese entity on Wednesday as part of an extension of a human rights blacklist, two diplomats said. The decision, which will formally be adopted early next month, puts in jeopardy a

EU extends human rights sanctions, including on Chinese officials



Chinese-EU investment agreement signed in late December 2020. The EU added the four Chinese officials, including a top security director, to its sanctions list in March over accusations of human rights abuses in China's Xinjiang region. Beijing responded with its own sanctions on Europeans.

◆ **Lebanon has yet to give the IMF its estimate of losses in the financial system** as discussions on the issue continue, but is working hard to sign a memorandum of



Lebanon has yet to give IMF figure for financial losses, central bank governor says

understanding with the Fund by year-end, governor Riad Salameh said on Tuesday. Disagreements in Lebanon over the size of the losses and how they should be distributed torpedoed IMF talks last year. The central bank, banks and political elite rejected figures set out in a government plan that was endorsed by the IMF at the time. The issue has obstructed attempts to chart a way out of the crisis that has devastated Lebanon since 2019, sinking the currency by more than 90%, causing poverty to skyrocket and leading many Lebanese to emigrate.

UAE holds talks with Taliban Kabul airport - foreign diplo

● **UAE bid competing against Qatar, Turkey - sources**

● **Kabul airport gives influence in Afghanistan**

● **UAE maintained some ties with Taliban - sources**

Reuters | Dubai



Taliban forces patrol at a runway a day after U.S troops withdrawal from Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan



A Qatari security force member patrols near a plane carrying passengers bound for Qatar

The United Arab Emirates has held talks with the Taliban to run Kabul airport, according to four sources with knowledge of the matter.

UAE officials have held a series of discussions with the group in recent weeks to discuss operating the airport that serves as landlocked Afghanistan's main air link to the world, the foreign diplomats based in the Gulf region told Reuters.

The Qataris have been helping run the Hamid Karzai International Airport along with Turkey after playing a major role in evacuation efforts following the chaotic US withdrawal in August, and have said they are willing to take over the operations.

Yet the Taliban has not yet formalised an arrangement with Qatar, the four diplomats said.

A senior Emirati foreign ministry official said the UAE, which previously ran Kabul airport during the US-backed Afghan republic, "remains committed to continuing to assist in operating" it to ensure humanitarian access and safe passage.

Abu Dhabi also aided recent evacuation efforts.

The Taliban and Qatari authorities did not respond to request for comment.

Two of the diplomats said the Taliban has also sought financial assistance from the UAE, though they added it was not clear if this was related to the airport discussions.

The Emirati foreign ministry

official, Saleem Al Zaabi, director of international security co-operation, did not respond to a question on whether the UAE was considering providing financial help to the Taliban.

Airport intelligence

One key issue that's still to be resolved between the Taliban and potential airport operators is who would provide security at the site, the four diplomats said. The Tal-

iban say they do not want foreign forces in the country following their return to power after two decades of war.

Still, Qatari special forces are presently providing security within the airport's perimeter, the diplomats added, while Taliban special forces were patrolling areas outside.

So far countries have been reluctant to formally recognise the Taliban's government, accusing the group of backtracking on pledges to uphold the rights of women and minorities.

German parties set to announce coalition deal to end

● **Three parties reach a coalition deal in Germany**

● **Olaf Scholz close to taking over as chancellor**

Reuters | Berlin



Acting German Chancellor Angela Merkel receives a bouquet from acting German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz

Social Democrat Olaf Scholz was preparing to take over as German chancellor after agreeing

a coalition deal yesterday that aims to modernise Europe's largest economy, accelerate its green

transition and bring the curtain down on the Angela Merkel era. The centre-left Social Demo-

crats (SPD) said they would present their three-way agreement with the ecologist Greens and the libertarian Free Democrats (FDP) at a news conference at 3 p.m. (1400 GMT) in Berlin following two months of talks.

The deal will install Germany's first three-way federal coalition government since the 1950s and end 16 years of Merkel-led conservative government, marking a new era for relations with Europe and the rest of the world.

Iran's top nuclear negotiator holds talks in UAE

Reuters | Dubai

Iran's top nuclear negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani met with senior Emirati officials yesterday during a visit to the United Arab Emirates, state news agency WAM reported, in a rare visit that comes as Abu Dhabi moves to reduce tensions with Tehran.

WAM said Bagheri Kani, who is Iran's deputy foreign minister, met with the diplomatic adviser to the UAE president, Anwar Gargash, and Emirati minister of state for foreign affairs Khalifa Shaheen Almarar.

The discussions stressed the importance of strengthening relations "on the basis of good neighbourliness and mutual respect", working for greater regional stability and prosperity and developing bilateral



Ali Bagheri Kani arrives at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), in London, Britain

economic and commercial ties, WAM said.

The visit comes ahead of the expected resumption of talks

between global powers and Iran in Vienna on Monday to try to revive a 2015 nuclear pact, which Gulf states have criticised

for not addressing Tehran's missile programme and regional proxies.

Gargash earlier this month said that the UAE was taking steps to de-escalate tensions with Iran.

Senior Iranian and Gulf officials told Reuters last week that a top UAE delegation would visit Tehran soon.

US President Joe Biden wants to negotiate a return to compliance with the nuclear deal that his predecessor Donald Trump quit in 2018, re-imposing sanctions. Iran, which denies pursuing nuclear weapons, responded by resuming building its stockpile of enriched uranium.

Saudi Arabia launched direct talks with Iran in April. Riyadh has described the talks as "cordial" but said they remained largely exploratory.

COVID-19 Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1 USA	48,835,216	796,319	259,303,379
2 India	34,535,763	466,584	
3 Brazil	22,038,731	613,240	
4 UK	9,932,408	144,137	5,187,721
5 Russia	9,434,393	267,819	
6 Turkey	8,624,580	75,443	Recovered: 234,595,946
7 France	7,450,691	118,653	
8 Iran	6,092,822	129,280	New cases +275,478
9 Germany	5,488,209	100,254	
10 Argentina	5,317,633	116,415	New deaths +4,515
11 Spain	5,103,315	87,866	
12 Colombia	5,052,733	128,188	267,819
13 Italy	4,942,135	133,330	
14 Indonesia	4,254,443	143,766	

Figures as of closing

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	352,123		20,052		293,374	38,697
Saudi Arabia	549,590	+34	8,828	+1	538,702	2,060
UAE	741,643	+73	2,145	+1	736,423	3,075
Kuwait	413,177		2,465		410,471	241
Oman	304,514	+5	4,113		299,938	463
Qatar	242,518	+143	611		240,046	1,861