

News in brief

◆ **Indonesia's fisheries minister was arrested Wednesday in a sweeping bust over allegations of graft linked to exporting baby lobsters, the anti-corruption agency said.** Edhy Prabowo was nabbed early Wednesday along with his lawmaker wife, Iis Rosita Dewi, at Jakarta's international airport as they returned from a trip to the United States. The couple were among 17 people arrested on allegations that they took bribes for issuing permits to export the crustaceans, investigators said.



Indonesia minister busted in baby lobster graft case

◆ **Chinese President Xi Jinping yesterday congratulated Joe Biden on winning the Nov. 3 US presidential election**, voicing hope the two countries could promote a healthy and stable development of bilateral ties, the official Xinhua news agency reported. In his congratulatory message to

China's Xi congratulates Biden on US election victory



Biden, Xi said healthy ties between the world's two biggest economies were not only in the fundamental interests of their two peoples but

also expected by the international community, Xinhua reported. China's foreign ministry congratulated Biden on Nov. 13, nearly a week after many U.S. allies had, holding out as Trump, who is still challenging the election results, refused to concede defeat.

A car with slogans scrawled on its sides crashed into the gate of German Chancellor Angela Merkel's office in Berlin on Wednesday

Car crashes into gate of German leader's office

and police said they were unsure of the driver's motive. Dozens of police and a fire engine rushed to the scene after the vehicle, with "Stop Globalisation Politics" written in white on one side and "You damn killers of children and old people" on the other, hit the gate, a Reuters photographer said. Police said they had taken a 54-year-old man into custody and had questioned him. "We don't know if psychological or other reasons motivated the driver," a police spokesman told journalists outside the building.



Judges hearing the case against four defendants in the 2014 downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine rejected on

MH17 judges reject request to investigate alternative crash scenarios

Wednesday a defence request for more time to investigate alternative explanations for the crash. MH17 was flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur when it was shot down by a missile fired from territory held by pro-Russian rebels during fighting with Ukrainian government troops, international investigators say. All 298 people on board were killed, two-thirds of them Dutch nationals.

UAE halts new visas to citizens of 13 states

Reuters | Dubai

The United Arab Emirates has stopped issuing new visas to citizens of 13 countries, including Iran, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan, according to a document issued by a state-owned business park.

A source briefed on the matter said the visas had temporarily stopped being issued to Afghans, Pakistanis and citizens of several other countries over security concerns, but did not provide details of those concerns.

The document, sent to companies operating in the park, cited an immigration circular that came into effect on Nov. 18.

The document said applications for new employment and visit visas had been suspended for nationals - those outside the UAE - of 13 countries that also included Somalia, Libya and Yemen until further notice.

The ban also applies to citizens of Algeria, Kenya, Iraq, Lebanon, Tunisia and Turkey, it says.

It was not clear if there were any exceptions to the ban.

The UAE's Federal Authority for Identity and Citizenship had no immediate comment when contacted by Reuters.

Last week, Pakistan's foreign ministry said the UAE had stopped processing new visas for its citizens and those of some other countries, but that those already holding valid visas were not affected and could still enter the UAE.



The skyline is seen with the Burj Khalifa as ships dock at Port Rashid, in Dubai



Fighting corona in style

Japanese trend-setters can now protect against the coronavirus in luxurious style with opulent masks adorned with diamonds and pearls for a cool million yen (\$9,600) each. Cox Co's Mask.com chain began selling the hand-made masks last week, with the aim of cheering up people and spurring sales in a fashion industry depressed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The diamond masks are embellished with a 0.7 carat diamond and more than 300 pieces of Swarovski crystal, while the pearl masks contain some 330 Japanese Akoya pearls.

Nearly 100 whales die after mass stranding in New Zealand

Reuters | Wellington

About 100 pilot whales and bottlenose dolphins have died in a mass stranding on the remote Chatham Islands, about 800 km (497 miles) off New Zealand's east coast, officials said yesterday.

Most of them were stranded during the weekend but rescue efforts have been hampered by the remote location of the island. New Zealand's Department of Conservation (DOC) said in total 97 pilot whales and three dolphins died in the stranding, adding that they were notified of the incident on Sunday.

"Only 26 of the whales were still alive at this point, the majority of them appearing very weak, and were euthanised due to the rough sea conditions and almost certainty of there being great white sharks in the water which are brought in by a stranding like this," said DOC Biodiversity Ranger Jemma Welch.



World agonises over infections approaching

● **The holiday weekend is expected to fuel a surge of infections in the United States**

● **Daily US deaths from COVID-19 surpassed 2,000 for the first since May**

● **The death toll reached 2,157 on Tuesday - one person every 40 seconds - with another 170,000 people infected**

● **Hopes for a successful vaccine, boosted by Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Moderna, have given world stock markets a lift**

Reuters | Paris/Berlin

Countries around the world agonised over new coronavirus curbs ahead of Christmas and other holidays as global infections approached 60 million on Wednesday and U.S. officials pleaded with Americans to stay home over Thanksgiving.

The holiday weekend is expected to fuel a surge of infections in the United States, which leads the world with soaring COVID-19 infections and the daily toll on



People wearing protective coverall work at coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Warsaw

Tuesday climbing above 2,000, the highest 24-hour tally since early May.

"All the Thanksgiving travel ensures no one will catch us, either," said Dr. Tatiana Prowell of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

"The US 'each person for himself' mindset is killing hundreds of thousands of us. Devastating to watch," Prowell said on Twitter.

Hopes for a successful vaccine, boosted by Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Moderna, have given world stock markets a lift.

But an approved vaccine is un-

COVID-19: Countries worst affected

| Country | Total cases | Total deaths |
|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1 USA | 12,978,833 | 266,285 |
| 2 India | 9,254,364 | 135,144 |
| 3 Brazil | 6,127,819 | 170,199 |
| 4 Russia | 2,162,503 | 37,538 |
| 5 France | 2,153,815 | 50,237 |
| 6 Spain | 1,614,126 | 43,668 |
| 7 UK | 1,538,794 | 55,838 |
| 8 Italy | 1,455,022 | 51,306 |
| 9 Argentina | 1,381,795 | 37,432 |
| 10 Colombia | 1,262,494 | 35,677 |
| 11 Mexico | 1,060,152 | 102,739 |
| 12 Germany | 967,403 | 15,054 |
| 13 Peru | 952,439 | 35,685 |
| 14 Poland | 924,422 | 14,988 |

Global tally

60,349,260

Deaths

1,419,296

Recovered:

41,740,070

New cases

+255,728

New deaths

+5,452

Figures as of closing

Middle East

| Country | Total cases | new cases | Total deaths | New Deaths | Total recovered | Active cases |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Egypt | 113,742 | | 6,573 | | 102,103 | 5,066 |
| Saudi Arabia | 356,067 | +326 | 5,825 | +14 | 344,787 | 5,455 |
| UAE | 162,662 | +1,297 | 563 | +4 | 151,044 | 11,055 |
| Kuwait | 141,217 | +422 | 871 | +1 | 134,033 | 6,313 |
| Oman | 122,579 | | 1,391 | | 113,856 | 7,332 |
| Qatar | 137,851 | +209 | 237 | +1 | 134,950 | 2,664 |

Mutations not making coronavirus

Reuters | London

The COVID-19-causing coronavirus is mutating as it spreads around the world in the pandemic, but none of the mutations currently documented appears to be making it able

In a study using a global dataset of virus genomes from 46,723 people with COVID-19 from 99 countries, researchers identified more than 12,700 mutations, or changes, in the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

"Fortunately, we found that none of these mutations are



Outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COV