

News in brief

◆ **Iran extended COVID-19 curbs in Tehran and across the country on Monday as health authorities said they were recording a death from the virus every four minutes.** Some hospitals had run out of beds to treat new patients, the head of the national coronavirus task-force told state TV. “Our doctors and nurses are tired. I urge everyone to respect the protocols,” Alireza Zali said.



Iran reports COVID-19 death every four minutes

◆ **China will impose sanctions on Lockheed Martin, Boeing Defense, Raytheon and other US companies** it says are involved in Washington’s arms sales to Taiwan, a foreign ministry spokesman said on Monday. Zhao Lijian told journalists that China was acting to protect its national interest, but did not spell out what form the sanctions would take. The U.S. State Department has approved the potential sale of three weapons systems to Taiwan, including sensors, missiles and artillery that could have a total value of \$1.8 billion, the Pentagon said last week. “To safeguard our national interests, China decided to take necessary



China to impose sanctions on US firms over Taiwan arms sales

measures and levy sanctions on US companies such as Lockheed Martin, Boeing Defence, and Raytheon, and those individuals and companies who behaved badly in the process of the arms sales,” Zhao said.

◆ **Pakistan’s first metro line began operations Monday in the eastern city of Lahore following years of delays. Stretching 27 kilometres and dotted with more than two dozen stations,**



Pakistan opens first metro line after years of delays

the Chinese-backed “Orange Line” will cut travel time across the perennially congested city in Punjab province from two-and-a-half hours by bus to 45 minutes on the metro. “This project will provide world-class facilities to the public in Lahore,” Punjab’s chief minister Usman Buzdar said during an inauguration ceremony Sunday. The metro cost approximately 300 billion rupees (\$1.8 billion).

◆ **Kurdish authorities in northern Iraq said on Monday they had foiled a plan to attack foreign diplomats in their autonomous regional capital of Erbil, more than a year after the killing of a Turkish consular official there.**

Kurdish officials say they foiled attack on diplomats

In a statement, the Kurdistan regional government’s top security agency said the attack was planned by people linked to the PKK Kurdish separatist group that has waged a decades-long insurgency in neighbouring Turkey.

◆ **American jailed for attempt to overthrow Vietnam government** returned to his home in California, a family spokesman told Reuters on Monday. Michael Nguyen, who was born in Vietnam in 1964 and lived in the United States since childhood, was detained in July 2018 on suspicion of anti-govt activities.

A US citizen sentenced last year to 12 years in a Vietnamese jail for attempting to overthrow the state, has been released and returned to his home in California, a family spokesman told Reuters on Monday.

COVID-19 Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1 USA	8,899,991	230,582	43,546,092
2 India	7,940,120	119,403	
3 Brazil	5,395,920	157,226	Deaths
4 Russia	1,531,224	26,269	1,161,789
5 France	1,138,507	34,761	Recovered:
6 Spain	1,110,372	34,752	32,036,227
7 Argentina	1,090,589	28,896	New cases
8 Colombia	1,015,885	30,154	+220,053
9 Mexico	891,160	88,924	New deaths
10 Peru	888,715	34,149	+2,871
11 UK	873,800	44,896	
12 South Africa	715,868	18,968	
13 Iran	574,856	32,953	
14 Italy	542,789	37,479	

Middle East

Figures as of closing

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	106,540		6,199		98,903	1,438
Saudi Arabia	345,232	+357	5,313	+17	331,691	8,228
UAE	126,234	+1,111	480	+3	120,750	5,004
Kuwait	122,317	+682	749	+3	113,391	8,177
Oman	113,354	+422	1,190	+16	99,668	12,496
Qatar	131,432	+262	230		128,343	2,859

Saudi-Led coalition says intercepted drone launched by Yemen’s Houthis

Reuters | Dubai

The Saudi-led military coalition engaged in Yemen said yesterday it intercepted and destroyed an explosives-laden drone launched by the Iran-aligned Houthi movement towards Saudi Arabia, Saudi state TV reported.

In recent days the coalition said it had intercepted and destroyed several explosive-laden drones launched by the Houthis.

The Western-backed coalition intervened in Yemen in March 2015 after the Houthis ousted the internationally recognised government from power in the capital, Sanaa, in late 2014.

Seven held after British military boards oil tanker in English Channel

AFP News

British soldiers on Sunday boarded an oil tanker off England’s south coast and detained seven suspects, the defence ministry said, after the crew were forced to take shelter from stowaways who threatened them. The alert was raised for the welfare of the crew of the Nave Andromeda tanker around 1000 GMT after they were forced to retreat to a safe area.

AFP News

Female passengers flying from Qatar were subjected to invasive searches after a premature baby was found abandoned in an airport bathroom, in procedures the Australian government on Monday described as “grossly disturbing” and “offensive”.

A number of women -- including from Australia -- were removed from their flight and examined for signs of childbirth after the baby was found in a bathroom at Hamad International in the Qatari capital.

Australia’s government yesterday condemned the October 2 incident, which only came to light after Australian passengers spoke out, and said concerns had been lodged with Qatar.

“This is a grossly, grossly disturbing, offensive, concerning set of events. It is not something that I have ever heard of occurring in my life,” Foreign Minister Marise Payne said.

“We have made our concerns very clear to the Qatari authorities at this point,” she said, adding that the matter had also been referred to Australian Federal Police.

A source in Doha briefed on the incident said that officials “were forcing women to undergo invasive body searches -- basically forced Pap smears,” an internal examination of the cervix.

Passenger Wolfgang Babeck said women returned to his flight from Doha to Sydney in a “shell-shocked” state, having been told to remove clothing from the lower half of their

bodies for an examination by a female doctor.

“All of them were upset, some were angry, one was crying, but basically nobody could believe what happened,” the commercial lawyer said, adding he thought the incident could be “a violation of international law”.

That flight, Qatar Airways’ QR908 to Sydney, was four hours late departing Doha as a result, according to air traffic website Flightradar24. It is not clear how many flights were involved.

In an official statement, Doha’s Hamad International airport confirmed a broad outline of events, without providing details of the procedures, or the number of women and flights involved.

“Medical professionals expressed concern to officials about the health and welfare of a mother who had just given birth and requested she be located prior to departing,” the statement said.

“Individuals who had access to the specific area of the airport where the newborn infant was found were asked to assist in the query”.

It is understood that in addition to the Australians, one French woman was also affected, according to one official.

Some of the group received assistance and mental health support while spending the last two weeks in quarantine, under rules put in place by Australian authorities to contain the spread of coronavirus.

A report from the Qatari authorities about the incident is “imminent” according to

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A number of women were removed from the flight after giving birth in a bathroom at Hamad International in Doha.

Payne, who admitted Australian officials were made aware of the situation by passengers “at the time of the flight”. The incident could damage Qatar’s reputation as it prepares to

Mike Pompeo in India on first leg of Asian tour

● The trip is part of the latest US effort to bolster allies

● Pompeo is due to travel to Sri Lanka and the Maldives

Reuters | New Delhi

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo landed in India yesterday, the first leg of a five-day Asian tour aimed at strengthening strategic ties in the face of growing Chinese influence across the region.

Pompeo was met at New Delhi airport by US Ambassador Kenneth Juster, according to a pool report.

Pompeo is due to meet India’s Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on Monday evening, before he and U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper hold a joint summit with Jaishankar and In-



Pompeo and his wife Susan disembark from an aircraft upon their arrival at an airport in New Delhi

dian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday. Later that day, Pompeo and Es-

per will call on India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi, according to a draft itinerary of the trip released by India’s foreign ministry. The trip is part of the latest U.S. effort to bolster allies against an