

[UAE records 1,077 new COVID-19 cases, 2 deaths](#)

Author:

Mon, 2020-12-21 22:37

DUBAI: The UAE on Monday recorded 1,077 new cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and two related deaths.

Officials from the country's Ministry of Health and Prevention said the total number of cases since the pandemic began had reached 194,652, with the death toll now running at 639.

It was also announced that over the previous 24-hour period, 845 people had recovered after contracting the virus, taking the total number of recoveries to 169,840.

During daily inspection tours, Dubai Economy issued a warning to one establishment for not adhering to anti-COVID-19 measures, but 421 other businesses inspected were found to be compliant.

Etihad Airways said that it would require all passengers arriving from the UK to provide a negative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test taken within 72 hours of their departure time, following an announcement from the UAE's National Emergency Crisis and Disasters Management Authority.

"Etihad is the only airline in the world requiring 100 percent of its passengers to show a negative PCR test before traveling and again on arrival into Abu Dhabi, ensuring peace of mind for all on board," Abu Dhabi's national carrier said in a statement on its website.

Meanwhile, the UAE was ranked among the top countries in world for its efficiency in dealing with the repercussions of the COVID-19 epidemic and the speed of its recovery phase.

According to a recent Global Soft Power Index questionnaire issued by UK-based Brand Finance, the Emirates ranked first in the Middle East and 14th globally in dealing with the virus outbreak.

Elsewhere, Kuwait recorded 230 new COVID-19 cases, upping the total for the country to 148,209, with the death toll reaching 922 after one new fatality was registered.

تعلمن [#وزارة_الصحة](#) عن تأكيد إصابة 230 حالة، وتسجيل 216 حالة شفاء، و حالة وفاة واحدة جديدة بـ [#فيروس_كورونا_المستجد](#) COVID-19، ليصبح إجمالي عدد الحالات 148,209 حالة pic.twitter.com/4xKYmV9U1E

– (@KUWAIT_MOH) [December 21, 2020](#) – وزارة الصحة – الكويت

Oman's Health Ministry confirmed 264 new cases and one death, moving the totals to 127,931 and 1,489, respectively.

[#Statement](#) No. 249

December 21, 2020 pic.twitter.com/Tugn5eValo



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[Brand Finance](#)

[dubai economy](#)

[Polymerase Chain Reaction \(PCR\)](#)

[National Crisis and Disaster Management Authority](#)

[Iraq's cabinet approves 2021 draft budget of \\$103 bln](#)

Mon, 2020-12-21 21:11

BAGHDAD: Iraq's cabinet on Monday approved a 2021 draft budget of 150 trillion Iraqi dinars (\$103 billion) as the country wrestles with a major economic and financial crisis due to low crude prices. The budget deficit would be estimated at 63 trillion dinars (\$43 billion), two government sources said.

Draft 2021 budget is based on a world oil price of \$42 a barrel, sources said.

(\$1 = 1.450 Iraqi dinars)



Main category:
[Middle-East](#)

[Morocco, Israel to seal normalization with first direct flight](#)

Author:
Mon, 2020-12-21 20:12

RABAT: Jared Kushner, US President Donald Trump's son-in-law and advisor, is due to arrive Tuesday in Morocco from Israel on the first direct commercial flight between the two countries since they normalised ties.

The flight from Tel Aviv to Rabat is seen as highly symbolic after Morocco announced on December 10 a "resumption of relations" with Israel.

It also aims to showcase the achievements of the Trump administration in Middle East diplomacy, weeks before Trump is replaced at the White House by

President-elect Joe Biden.

Morocco became the third Arab state this year, after the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, to normalise ties with Israel under US-brokered deals, while Sudan has pledged to follow suit.

In return, the US president fulfilled a decades-old goal of Morocco by backing its contested sovereignty in Western Sahara.

The move infuriated the Algerian-backed pro-independence Polisario Front, which controls about one fifth of the desert territory that once was a Spanish colony.

Kushner will be heading an American delegation, and during his visit to Rabat a series of agreements will be signed between Morocco and Israel, according to officials.

Negotiations leading to Morocco's resumption of ties with Israel included the opening of a US consulate in Western Sahara, and US investments which Moroccan media described as "colossal".

At the same time Israel and Morocco are due to reopen diplomatic offices and activate economic cooperation between them.

Morocco closed its liaison office in Tel Aviv in 2000, at the start of the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising.

King Mohammed VI has said Morocco will remain an advocate for the Palestinians, but the Palestinians like the Polisario have cried foul and condemned the normalisation announcement.

Morocco has sought to temper the anger by insisting that relations with Israel are not new.

"The new agreement is merely the formalisation of a de facto partnership between Morocco and Israel dating back 60 years," said Moroccan media boss Ahmed Charai.

In a commentary published earlier this month in the Jerusalem Post, he said the two countries had a "shared history", adding that he was "overcome with pride and gratitude" when the deal was announced.

"It is indeed the case that the two states have assisted each other vitally for decades," Charai wrote.

"Not only did intelligence and security cooperation help Israel defend itself in the 1967 Six-Day War and Morocco win its Sahara war a few years later, quiet Moroccan diplomacy proved instrumental in fostering peace between Egypt and Israel," he added.

Morocco is home to North Africa's largest Jewish community, which has been there since ancient times and grew with the arrival of Jews expelled from Spain by Catholic kings from 1492.

It reached about 250,000 in the late 1940s, 10 percent of the national population, but many Jews left after the creation of Israel in 1948.

About 3,000 Jews remain in Morocco, and the Casablanca community is one of the country's most active.

Israel meanwhile is home to 700,000 Jews of Moroccan origin.

Although ties between the two countries were suspended in the year 2000, trade between Israel and Morocco was not.

Between 2014 and 2017 the volume of trade exchanges stood at \$149 million, according to statistics published by Moroccan newspapers.



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[Morocco](#)

[Israel](#)

Kushner to lead US delegation to Israel, Morocco

[US nuclear submarine passes through Strait of Hormuz](#)

Mon, 2020-12-21 19:49

LONDON: A US Navy nuclear submarine passed through the Strait of Hormuz on Monday and entered the Arabian Gulf in the latest show of military strength from Washington in the region.

The USS Georgia, which can carry dozens of land-attack cruise missiles, was accompanied by two guided-missile cruisers, the US Navy said.

The narrow waters of the Strait of Hormuz separate Iran from the Arabian Peninsula and are the route through which a large quantity of the world's crude oil supplies pass on ships. The strait has often been a flashpoint of regional tensions with Iran, with Tehran threatening to close the passage in previous escalations with the US and its allies in the Gulf.

JUST IN: [#USNavy](#)'s [#USSGeorgia](#) transits [#StraitofHormuz](#) with cruisers [#USSPortRoyal](#) and [#USSPhilippineSea](#). Georgia's presence in [@US5thFleet](#) demonstrates the fleet's ability to operate wherever international law allows. [#forcetobereckonedwith](#)

DETAILS <https://t.co/P0bIHE2XC6> pic.twitter.com/ys8cBbnm7k

– U.S. Navy (@USNavy) [December 21, 2020](#)

“As an inherently flexible maneuver force, capable of supporting routine and contingency operations, Georgia’s presence demonstrates the United States’ commitment to regional partners and maritime security with a full spectrum of capabilities to remain ready to defend against any threat at any time,” the US Navy said.

The US has flexed its military muscles in the Gulf in recent weeks to warn Iran and reassure America’s Gulf allies at a time of transition in Washington. The aircraft carrier USS Nimitz arrived in the Gulf in late November, and two B-52 bombers recently flew over the Middle East.

On Sunday, the head of US Central Command (Centcom), which oversees US forces in the region, said Washington is “prepared to react” if Iran carries out an attack to mark one year since the killing of Iranian commander Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

“We are prepared to defend ourselves, our friends and partners in the region, and we’re prepared to react if necessary,” Gen. Kenneth McKenzie said.

*With AFP



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US B-52H bombers fly to Middle East in mission to deter Iran
US Navy official says 'uneasy deterrence' reached with Iran

[Yemeni riyal on rebound as people voice optimism over new government](#)

Author:

Sun, 2020-12-20 22:01

AL-MUKALLA: The Yemeni riyal has recovered by 20 percent after positive news about the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement and the formation of a new government, giving a long-awaited boost to the chaotic exchange market.

Local moneychangers told Arab News on Sunday that the Yemeni riyal bounced to 750 against the US dollar in the government-controlled areas, rising from 925 about 10 days ago, and reviving hopes about bringing the market under the government's control.

The riyal's rebound began on Dec. 11 when the Arab coalition announced the Yemen's internationally recognized government and the separatist Southern Transitional Council agreed to withdraw their forces from Aden and Abyan.

The exchange market was given another positive boost last week when Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi issued a presidential decree announcing the formation of a new government of 24 ministers, equally represented by southerners and northerners, including the separatists.

The formation of the government has ended more than a year of political wrangling and deadlock related to the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement, which was designed to defuse hostilities between the Yemeni government and the separatists.

The devolution of the Yemeni riyal during the past couple of years has pushed up prices of basic commodities and fueled public anger against the country's political establishment that had failed to address the problem.

At the same time, Yemen's new prime minister, Maeen Abdul Malik Saeed, said on Sunday that his government would return to Aden within a week after swearing in before the Yemeni president and winning a vote of confidence from parliament. Saeed told Al-Ayyam daily newspaper that his government would work "as hard as it could" to alleviate the suffering of the Yemenis and bring to life crumbled government bodies.

In southern Yemen, local officials and military commanders said on Sunday that government troops and separatists that had withdrawn from contested areas in Abyan and Aden began trickling into battlefields with the Iran-backed Houthis in the southern provinces of Abyan, Dhale and Lahj.

Fuad Jabari, Dhale front spokesperson, told Arab News that military forces that withdrew from Abyan have joined flashpoints in the province to reinforce fighters who fight off relentless attacks by the Houthis.

"The withdrawing forces have entered Dhale province accompanied by Saudi military officers. More military forces are on their way to the battlefields," Jabari said, adding that the Houthis have escalated attacks on southern resistance forces in the province since warring sides agreed to pull out of Aden and Abyan.

"The Houthis are using more advanced weapons nowadays. They replaced bomb drones with modern drones that fire missiles and moved back to their areas," he said.

People in Aden, the Yemeni city that had borne the brunt of sporadic deadly fighting between government troops and separatists, and other Yemeni cities voiced their optimism with the formation of a new government and urged new ministers to fix services and create jobs.

Hanan Al-Ameri, an activist from Aden, told Arab News that the new government should immediately return to Aden to address corruption in state bodies, long power cuts, severe shortages of drinking water and skyrocketing prices.

“Regarding our demands, we want the government to fix services and then give jobs to young people and empower them in local authorities. We demand a decent life, services and protecting our violated rights,” Hanan said.

Yemeni politicians and experts echoed the same optimism about the implantation of the Riyadh Agreement and the formation of a new government, arguing that the government has unified the Yemeni forces against the Houthis and ended enmities that ruined anti-Houthi forces.

Najeeb Ghallab, undersecretary at Yemen’s Information Ministry and a political analyst, told Arab News on Sunday that the Riyadh Agreement has managed to turn antagonism between warring factions into partnership.

“Riyadh Agreement has rebuilt the forces and sent reassurances to political parties that they would not be left out. It enables the Yemeni government to assert its control over the land, have unified military forces and speak with one voice with the international community,” Ghallab said, adding that the Riyadh Agreement proved that the Arab coalition is able to bring Yemenis together if they cut off ties with foreign forces such as Iran.

“It sends a message that Saudi Arabia and the UAE can bring peace to Yemen provided the Houthis sever ties with Iran,” he said.



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Prince Khalid bin Salman: Saudi Arabia continuing its policy to establish stability in Yemen
EU welcomes formation of Yemeni government, praises role of Saudi Arabia