



3 Missing child's body found washed ashore after a week



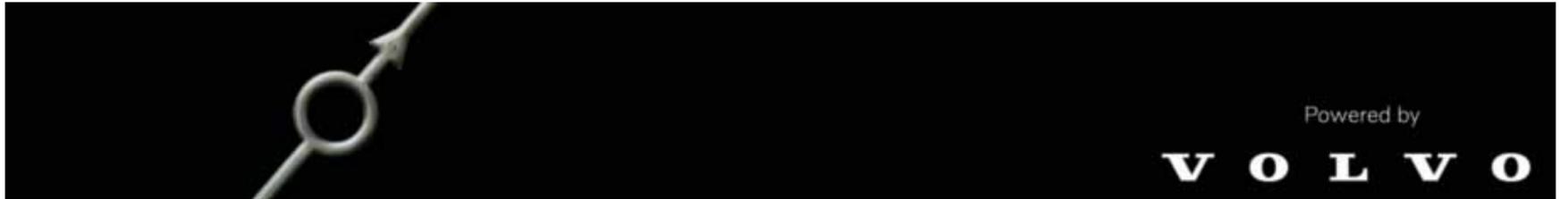
5 Dozen US senators plan to oppose Biden certification



13 Afghan dairy entrepreneur walks tightrope to stay afloat



16 COVID-hit City still too good for Chelsea



Kuwait to suspend direct flights to and from Britain

Direct flights planned from banned countries for Kuwaitis • Saudi reopens borders

SAMA grants Tamam region's first micro-financing license

Bader Al-Kharafi: Tamam is a sharia-compliant platform offering micro-finance in less than 5 minutes through a mobile app

RIYADH/KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading mobile telecom innovator in seven markets across the Middle East and North Africa, announced that Tamam Financing Company (Tamam), the financial technology (fintech) subsidiary of its operation in Saudi Arabia, has been officially licensed by the Saudi Central Bank (SAMA) to provide micro-financing services to consumers across the kingdom.

Commenting on the licensing of Tamam, Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Zain KSA Vice-Chairman and Tamam Chairman, said: "We are extremely proud of the teams at Zain Group, Zain KSA and Tamam in the successful delivery of this innovative sharia-compliant service that provides consumer micro-finance in less than five minutes through a mobile app." Fintech services remain largely under-penetrated



Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Zain KSA Vice-Chairman and Tamam Chairman

in the Middle East, so the establishment of the first consumer micro-financing platform in Saudi Arabia represents a fantastic opportunity for growth. (See Page 8)

KUWAIT: Kuwait is suspending direct commercial flights to and from Britain as of Wednesday, Jan 6 at 4:00 am until further notice, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said yesterday. Meanwhile, Kuwait is planning to operate limited flights for Kuwaiti citizens from a number of countries with which it has halted flights for more than four months now to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

The flights will be operated by Kuwait Airways. Instructions have been issued to open reservations for flights from the banned countries for Kuwaiti nationals, their first-degree relatives and domestic workers, DGCA Director General Yousef Al-Fouzan confirmed to Kuwait Times. Kuwait has banned direct flights from 35 countries over COVID-19 concerns.

On Saturday, three Cabinet ministers monitored safety measures at Kuwait International Airport as commercial flights resumed after a brief suspension



KUWAIT: (From left) Minister of State for Services Affairs Abdullah Marafi, Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh and DGCA President Sheikh Salman Al-Hmoud Al-Sabah visit Kuwait International Airport as flights resumed on Saturday. — KUNA

aimed to stem the spread of a new strain of the coronavirus. The decision to reopen Kuwait's land and sea borders, in addition to resuming commercial passenger air traffic, was made as more information was collected on the

new COVID-19 variant believed to be more transmissible than the initial strain, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh told KUNA.

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News in brief

Man stabbed, run over

KUWAIT: A 33-year-old man, Abdullah Al-Khalifa, died on Saturday at Adan Hospital after being stabbed four times inside a diwaniya in Qusoor and then run over by a car on Wednesday. The interior ministry said it had arrested the main suspect, a police officer, and three other perpetrators. Khalifa was buried yesterday at Sulabikhat cemetery.

60 illegal campsites razed

KUWAIT: The Municipality said yesterday it removed 60 illegal campsites off the Seventh Ring Road because they violated the health ministry's ban on camping in order to prevent gatherings to curb the spread of COVID-19. The Municipality's supervision team will immediately remove any campsite because it violates health restrictions, Faisal Al-Otaibi, director of cleaning and road construction for Ahmadi governorate, said in a statement. — KUNA

Egypt probes COVID deaths

CAIRO: Egypt said yesterday it had opened an investigation into the deaths of four COVID-19 patients in an intensive care unit allegedly due to lack of oxygen, which has sparked a public outcry. Since Saturday, numerous social media users have shared a video of patients in a hospital ward, with a voice heard saying "everyone is dead in intensive care". The 45-second video also shows Al-Husseiniya hospital staff apparently trying to revive patients. — AFP

Larry King hospitalized

WASHINGTON: Veteran talk show host Larry King has been hospitalized with COVID-19, US media reported Saturday. Citing a "source close to the family," CNN reported that King, one of the network's biggest stars, has been hospitalized for more than a week at Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. King, 87, has Type 2 diabetes and has had a long history of medical issues. — AFP

Nations race to inoculate; India OKs 2 vaccines

NEW DELHI: India approved the emergency use of two COVID-19 vaccines yesterday, as nations across the world raced to get their populations inoculated to beat back surging infection numbers. More than a year after COVID-19 first emerged it has killed 1.8 million people out of 84 million cases, and governments hope that recently approved vaccines can stop a cycle of economically crippling restrictions.

Yesterday, Britain became the latest country to warn of tougher measures to come, Prime Minister Boris Johnson admitting he was "reconciled" to the prospect hours after his country registered a new daily record of 57,725 COVID-19 cases. But he told the BBC "we can see the way ahead", revealing that 530,000 doses of the newly approved AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine will be available for use from today.

Britain has already vaccinated around one million people with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, and Johnson said he hoped tens of millions would get the new jab in the next three months.

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Resolution in balance ahead of Gulf summit

DOHA: The Gulf crisis, which has pitted regional players against Qatar, could be moving closer to resolution as the key countries prepare to meet in Saudi Arabia tomorrow.

Riyadh led a coalition of countries in the Gulf and beyond in 2017 to cut ties with Doha, over

charges it was too close to Tehran and backed radical Islamist groups. Qatar denies the claims.

Washington has intensified pressure on the nations imposing what Qatar calls a "blockade" to resolve the crisis, insisting Gulf unity is necessary to isolate US rival Iran as the curtain falls on Donald Trump's presidency. The row will top the agenda at today's meeting of leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council in the northwestern Saudi city of Al-Ula.

While Gulf sources say an agreement on further talks and limited confidence building measures is ready, not all of the boycotting countries have yet signed up. The GCC is a bloc that includes boy-

cotting countries Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, neutral Kuwait and Oman, and Qatar. After severing ties in June 2017, the Saudi-led alliance subsequently forced out Qatari expatriate residents, closed their airspace to Qatari aircraft and sealed their borders and ports, separating some mixed-nationality families.

The boycotting countries later issued a list of 13 demands for Doha, including the closure of pan-Arab satellite television channel Al Jazeera, undertakings on terror financing, and the shuttering of a Turkish military base in Qatar. Doha has not publicly bowed to any of the demands.

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Iraqis mourn commanders killed by US

BAGHDAD: Thousands of Iraqi mourners chanted "revenge" and "no to America" yesterday, one year after a US drone strike killed Iran's revered commander Qasem Soleimani and his Iraqi lieutenant Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis. Pro-Iranian supporters, many dressed in black, massed in Baghdad's central Tahrir Square to also condemn Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi as a "coward"

and an "agent of the Americans". The anniversary of the Baghdad drone strike - which brought Washington and Tehran to the brink of war in early 2020 - was also marked in recent days across Iran and by supporters in Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and elsewhere. The lead up to the commemorations of the Shiite commanders sharply heightened regional tensions in the weeks before US President Donald Trump, who ordered the killings, leaves the White House.

Iran has held a series of commemorative events for the "martyr" Soleimani, who has been immortalized in portraits, sculptures, ballads and an upcoming TV series.

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KOLKATA: A resident looks on as an artist applies finishing touches to a mural depicting frontline workers carrying a COVID-19 vaccine on Saturday. — AFP



BAGHDAD: Iraqi demonstrators rally in Tahrir Square yesterday to mark one year after a US drone strike killed Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani and his Iraqi lieutenant Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis. — AFP