

Egypt to reopen cafes, places of worship, shisha ban stays

Author:

AFP

ID:

1592924100948125700

Tue, 2020-06-23 14:18

CAIRO: Egypt will partially reopen cafes, restaurants, places of worship, cinemas and sporting clubs on Saturday, relaxing a lockdown to curb the spread of coronavirus, Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouli announced.

A night-time curfew was imposed in late March restricting movement from 8 p.m. to 6 am, but it has been eased in recent weeks.

The curfew will run from midnight to 4am, Madbouli said in a televised address Tuesday, announcing a slew of decisions taking effect on 27 June.

"We have the ability to move past this pandemic with the best results at hand and the minimum number of losses," he said.

The prime minister said cafes and restaurants will restart operations at a reduced capacity of 25 percent in the first phase of relaxing the lockdown. They will be allowed to remain open to customers until 10 pm, while shops can operate until 9 at night.

Madbouli warned that shisha (water-pipe) smoking, a popular social activity among Egyptians, is still banned to prevent the spread of the disease.

He also said daily services in mosques and churches in the deeply religious country will resume, but weekend services, which attract large congregations, remain suspended.

Cinemas, cultural centers and sports clubs will reopen at 25-percent capacity to ensure social distancing, while public transport running times are to be extended.

Beaches and public parks remain out of bounds.

"We all have to live with the pandemic... We have been trying to balance between opening up the country and maintaining the necessary health measures," Madbouli said.



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Arab FMs press Ethiopia for talks on Nile dam
Over 100 Saudi doctors on a medical mission to fight COVID-19 in Egypt

[Israeli police say Palestinian shot dead at checkpoint](#)

Tue, 2020-06-23 17:43

JERUSALEM: A Palestinian driver died Tuesday after he was shot by an Israeli policeman at a checkpoint in the West Bank in what police said was an attempted attack on Israeli military personnel. Israeli police said the driver attempted to run over a member of the paramilitary border police at the checkpoint east of Jerusalem and an officer at the scene opened fire at the vehicle. The driver later died of his wounds and the border police officer suffered minor injuries, police said.

Police did not immediately release video of the incident, and there was no way to independently verify the account. But police released a photo that appeared to show the vehicle after it had collided into the checkpoint. In recent years, Israel has seen car-ramming attacks, shootings and stabbings carried out mostly by lone Palestinian attackers with no apparent links to armed groups. Palestinians and human rights groups have also accused Israeli security forces of using excessive force, or in some cases opening fire at cars that merely lost control. Tuesday's incident came as the Israeli government says it is advancing plans to annex parts of the occupied West Bank in line with the Trump administration's Mideast plan as early as July 1. The Israeli annexation proposal has outraged the Palestinian leadership, which has rejected the Trump plan out of hand, and drawn condemnation from much of the international community.



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Israel's Netanyahu mulls two-phase West Bank annexation – report

Iran to send black boxes from downed Ukrainian airliner to France, enter reparation negotiations

Mon, 2020-06-22 22:18

PARIS: Iran will send the black boxes from a downed Ukrainian airliner to France for analysis, the countries said on Monday.

Iran shot down the Ukraine International Airlines flight on Jan. 8 with a ground-to-air missile, killing 176 people, in what Tehran later acknowledged as a "disastrous mistake" by forces on high alert during a confrontation with the United States.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will send the black box of the Ukrainian airplane to France in the coming few days in order to read its information," Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said, according to the official IRNA news agency.

France's BEA air accident investigation agency is known as one of the world's leading agencies for reading flight recorders.

Zarif made the comments in a phone call with Canadian Foreign Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne. Canada had 57 citizens on board.

Champagne said in a statement that Zarif had committed to sending the flight recorders to France without further delay.

He also said Iran had "agreed to enter into negotiations for reparations" but gave no details. Champagne has consistently pressed Iran to compensate the families of victims.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said in February that Kiev was not satisfied with the size of compensation Iran had offered.

The fate of the cockpit voice and data "black box" recorders was the subject of an international standoff after the plane was shot down, with Ukraine demanding access.

Iran says the coronavirus crisis has contributed to delays in a probe by its Air Accident Investigation Board.

Tehran has been sending mixed messages about where the black boxes may be read. Last week, Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami said they would be sent to Ukraine.



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Iran says Canada's complaint over Ukrainian plane crash lacks legal basis

[**Saudi Arabia intercepts barrage of drones launched by Yemen's Houthi militia**](#)

Mon, 2020-06-22 22:04

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia intercepted on Monday a barrage of explosive drones launched by the Iran-backed Houthi militia in Yemen.

Arab coalition spokesperson, Col. Turki Al-Maliki, said that the Houthi militia "launched a number of unmanned (booby-trapped) drones at civilians and civilian objects in the Kingdom," adding that several of them were

intercepted by the coalition forces and the rest are being pursued.



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Yemen government and southern separatists agree to ceasefire, talks in Saudi Arabia
Saudi proposes framework to end standoff between allies in southern Yemen – sources

[Turkey arrests four suspected of spying for France: report](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1592851157572251900

Mon, 2020-06-22 18:24

ISTANBUL: Turkey has arrested four of its nationals on suspicion of spying for France on conservative and religious groups, a pro-government newspaper reported on Monday.

The news came as tensions between the two NATO members have increased over

their different positions on Libya and a recent incident between their naval warships in the Mediterranean.

According to the Sabah daily, Metin Ozdemir, a former employee of the French consulate's security service told police he had gathered intelligence for the French intelligence service, the DGSE.

Ozdemir told police he had delivered information on 120 people, including imams, in return for monthly payments and the promise of a place in the French Foreign Legion, the paper reported.

Passing himself off as a member of the so-called Daesh group, he says he recruited three men: an employee of an Istanbul water company, a telecommunications worker and the manager of an Istanbul hotel.

The spy cell was put to work gathering information on conservative associations, religious groups and Diyanet, the public body that supervises religious affairs, Sabah reported.

After falling out with his French handlers Ozdemir approached the Turkish authorities, it added. The four men were arrested and will face trial at an unspecified date.

There has been no independent confirmation of Sabah's story, but it has emerged at a time when relations France and Turkey are particularly strained. Turkey, which backs the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli in the ongoing conflict in Libya, has repeatedly accused France of favoring GNA rival, Khalifa Haftar, although Paris has denied this.

The two nations had a heated exchange last week after a naval incident in the Mediterranean in which France accused Turkish frigates of "extremely aggressive" behavior toward a French ship.

Turkey denied the accusation, saying the French vessel was at fault, and NATO has opened an investigation into the incident.



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NATO probing France-Turkey naval incident: Stoltenberg Turkey ready for fast reconstruction in conflict-torn Libya, official says