Communications and Transport

AIRPORTS AND SERVICES

Coronavirus

Algeria: Algeria has announced plans to suspend flights and ships to and from Europe over fears of the spread of the coronavirus (Covid-19). Prime Minister Abdelaziz Djerad tasked the transport minister with the temporary suspension of all air and sea trips to and from the continent starting on March 19th, the official *APS* news agency reported on the 16th.

"This exceptional suspension, which is recommended by the national health authorities, will be coupled with arrangements to evacuate our nationals who are currently in the concerned countries," *APS* quoted the prime minister's statement as saying.

The World Health Organisation (**WHO**) has declared Europe as the current coronavirus epicentre. *(BBC Monitoring 16/3)*

Egypt: Egypt is suspending all flights, international and domestic, from March 19th – 31st as part of measures to combat the spread of Covid-19, Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouli said in a press conference on the 16th. The prime minister also said all tourist and educational facilities will be disinfected during the suspension period.

On March 15th, the Egyptian Health Ministry confirmed 16 new cases of coronavirus, bringing the total number of cases to 126, the *Youm7* news website reported. *(BBC Monitoring 16/3)*

Kenya: Kenya's High Court has ordered the country's national carrier, Kenya Airways, to temporarily suspend all flights from **China** because of the coronavirus outbreak, the website of *The Star* newspaper reported.

"Justice James Makau issued the ruling following a case filed by the Law Society of Kenya. He [the judge] said the matter is of great public interest," the website said.

The court also ordered the government to trace, account, re-examine, and quarantine in a military facility all the passengers who arrived aboard Chinese flights on February 26th. *(The Star, Nairobi 28/2)*

Morocco: On March 15th, Moroccan authorities suspended all international flights in a bid to limit the spread of the virus. The state news agency *MAP* cited a statement by the Foreign Ministry as

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Ethiopia

Boeing Crash Report

Ethiopia's probe of 2019's Ethiopian Airlines crash found that Boeing did not provide sufficient pilot training for the 737 MAX and that crucial flight software was flawed, according to an interim report published on March 9th.

The crash of the Nairobi-bound Boeing 737 MAX six minutes after take-off on March 10th, 2019, killed all 157 people on board, triggering the global grounding of the MAX and the worst crisis in Boeing's history.

It followed the October 2018 crash of a 737 MAX operated by Lion Air in **Indonesia**, which killed 189 people when it crashed moments after leaving Jakarta airport.

Both accidents saw uncontrolled drops in the aircraft's nose in the moments before the planes crashed, which investigators have blamed on the model's anti-stall flight system, the Manoeuvring Characteristics Augmentation System, or MCAS.

A preliminary report by Ethiopian investigators released in April 2019 said the crew of Flight 302 repeatedly followed procedures recommended by Boeing but were unable to regain control of the jet.

The new interim report says that the design of the MCAS system "made it vulnerable to undesirable activation".

The report also states that training provided by Boeing on the 737 MAX "was found to be inadequate".

Boeing officials "look forward to reviewing the full details and formal recommendations that will be included in the final report" from Ethiopian investigators, Gordon Johndroe, Boeing's vice president for media relations, said in a statement on March 9th.

In February, a **US** congressional committee said Boeing made missteps and withheld information about the 737 MAX and that federal regulators failed to provide proper oversight, resulting in a "fundamentally flawed" aircraft.

After Ethiopia's preliminary report was released in April 2019, Boeing executives insisted on the "fundamental safety" of the 737 MAX but pledged to take all necessary steps to ensure the jets' airworthiness.

The report was released one day before the first anniversary of the crash.

Relatives of many of the victims, who hailed from more than 30 countries, flew to Ethiopia and attended a memorial ceremony at the crash site on March 10th. *(©AFP 9/3 2020)*

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saying that flights were suspended "until further notice".

Moroccan authorities have announced a ban on any public gatherings of more than 50 people and cancelled all sports, cultural and artistic events across the country "until further notice". *(BBC Monitoring 14, 15/3)*

Rwanda: Rwanda's national carrier RwandAir has suspended all flights to Mumbai, **India**, after the Indian authorities announced new measures to close the border and all consular services for about a month over coronavirus concerns.

The Indian government on March 11th suspended "all existing visas, except diplomatic, official, UN/international organisations, employment, project visas" until April 15th.

The suspension of RwandAir flights to India comes almost two months after the airline cancelled flights to and from the **Chinese** city of Guangzhou following the declaration of the coronavirus outbreak as global public health emergency. *(PANA, Kigali 13/3)*

South Sudan: South Sudan has suspended direct flights to and from **Egypt** and **Dubai** due to concerns about the spread of Covid-19, *Radio Miraya* said on March 14th. "The directive takes immediate effect and also restricts entry of travellers from all countries affected by the virus," the report said. *(Radio Miraya FM, Juba 14/3)*

Tunisia: Prime Minister Elyes Fakhfakh has announced the suspension of all flights to **Italy** and the total closure of its sea borders, in addition to a number of other measures, in a bid to stop the spread of coronavirus in the country.

The number of flights to several other countries has also been reduced. There will be one flight per day to **France**, the state-run *TAP* news agency reported on March 13th, and one per week to **Spain**, **Germany**, the United Kingdom (**UK**) and **Egypt**.

Several outlets and journalists also quoted him as announcing that all travellers would automatically be placed in isolation. *(BBC Monitoring 13/3)*

IN BRIEF

Algeria: Algerian state airline cabin crews have reportedly halted their strike after more than four days of walkout. Air Algerie's flight attendants resumed work on February 21st after interventions from both the Transport Ministry and President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, privately owned *Algerie Eco* news website reported the same day.

The ministry had called on the strikers, who started their unannounced industrial action on February 17th, to respect the decisions of justice and to "immediately" return to work. A court in

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Ports and Shipping

Burundi: The African Development Bank (**AfDB**) and the Burundian government signed on February 18th in Bujumbura two grant agreements for a total of €23.4m from African Development Fund (AFD) and the Transition Support Facility (TSF) in favour of the transport sector.

The AFD grant, for an amount of €17.3m, and the one from the TSF for €6.1m, will contribute to financing phase 1 of the Lake Tanganyika Transport Corridor Development Programme, which involves the renovation of the Port of Bujumbura.

This project, co-financed by the Burundian government and the AfDB, also benefits from a grant of €19.7m from the European Union (**EU**), which will be signed in the near future.

This project is particularly important for Burundi for several reasons: it aims to open up the country and to improve the capacity and efficiency of the Port of Bujumbura in order to improve regional connectivity; it aims to develop regional trade along the entire Lake Tanganyika corridor and its interconnection with existing regional trade corridors; it will also contribute to stimulating economic growth and improving the wellbeing of Burundian communities, said finance minister Domitien Ndihokubwayo, who hailed the support of the AfDB.

Stefan Nalletamby, the Bank's acting vice-president for the private sector, infrastructure and industrialisation, hailed the signing of the grant agreements and indicated that the project would help strengthen regional integration. *(afdb.org 21/2)*

Kenya: As Kenya announced its first case of coronavirus (Covid-19) on March 13th, the country was already reeling from the worst-ever performance at the port of Mombasa to date, as countries around the world tightened travel to contain the pandemic.

The port had received cancellation notices from 37 ships that were scheduled to call in March, while the fate of 104 others remained uncertain.

Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) managing director Daniel Manduku said even the few vessels that had called at the port earlier in February had reported low volumes, affecting cargo throughput.

The KPA boss said although they were yet to quantify the business loss, if the pandemic is not contained soon, they could expect a further reduction in the number of vessels, especially from **China**.

China is Kenya's single largest source market, accounting for about a fifth of its annual total imports. Chinese imports to Kenya in January-November 2019 amounted to $32.5m, or 20.3% of a $16bn import bill, slightly lower than $34.6m in 2018 on reduced imports of machinery for the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR).

Kenya is a regional transportation hub, serving as an entry point for imports into regional landlocked countries such as **Uganda**, **Rwanda**, **South Sudan**, **Burundi** and **DR Congo**. *(The EastAfrican 14/3)*

Piracy: Somali pirates have seized a United Kingdom(**UK**)-owned ship, according to a report by privately-owned *Dhacdo* website on March 10th.

"Somali pirates have seized a ship carrying 2m barrels of the alcohol that kills germs, and 50,000 masks used against the coronavirus... The group have demanded a ransom of £50m," the website said, adding that "the UK government, which owns the ship, said it is ready to pay the ransom".

Privately-owned Puntland-based *Radio Daljir* website said the ship was hijacked on March 9th by attackers believed to be Somalis", and that the ship was attacked in the "Gulf of Aden".

Counter-piracy measures have proven fruitful off the Somali coast, with attacks having fallen dramatically to just eight in the five-year period between 2015 and 2019, a marked decrease from 358 between 2010 and 2014. *(BBC Monitoring 10/3)*

June. Flag carrier EgyptAir meanwhile said it would start operating a weekly flight between London and Sharm el-Sheikh later in March. *(©AFP 17/2 2020)*

Kenya: The Trump administration has warned airlines against overflying parts of the Kenyan airspace, citing possible terror threats, according to Kenyan newspaper *Daily Nation*.

In an advisory dated February 26th, the United States (**US**) Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) urged all US-registered airlines to be cautious while overflying the Kenyan airspace "due to the possibility of extremist/militant activity".The area includes the coastal towns of Malindi and Lamu, which are important tourism hubs.

The alert came on the heels of another one about a possible terrorist attack on a high-end hotel issued by the Kenyan police and the US embassy in Nairobi.

The FAA said it would review the alert by February 26th, 2021. The agency had issued a similar warning in February 2019.

Somalia-based militant group al-Shabaab has conducted many attacks on Kenyan soil, especially in counties along the vast and porous border with Somalia.

The US considers Kenya as a strategic ally in the region, but this alert by its agency could heavily impact the aviation and tourism sectors. *(Daily Nation 1/3)*

Senegal: Air Senegal has chosen London Stansted for its first ever United Kingdom (**UK**) service and will operate three flights a week starting on June 26th.The news has been welcomed by organisations and businesses in the region, who say the flight will give local firms the chance to develop new trade and investment opportunities.

The route will also benefit the 400,000 people in London Stansted's catchment area who currently travel to Dakar and other key African cities from other UK airports.

London Stansted's chief commercial officer Aboudy Nasser said the flight will provide people and businesses the opportunity to connect onto flights to several countries across Africa via its Dakar hub.

The airline will use an Airbus A321 on the route offering economy seats and fully reclining flat beds in business class. *(flyairsenegal.com 26/2)*

ROADS AND RAILWAYS
Cameroon – Republic of Congo

A new connection between the two nations opens up areas with economic potential.

Congolese President Denis Sassou Nguesso inaugurated on March 6th the road linking the town of Ketta to the border crossing of Ntam in Cameroon. The 300km road cost CFA francs 103m, pre-funded 90% by the African Development Bank (**AfDB**).

This work, which is part of the Brazzaville-Yaounde corridor, will contribute to connecting the Republic of Congo and

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the capital Algiers had issued an order for the strike to end, describing it as "illegal".

According to *Algerie Eco*, "the strike caused significant losses for Air Algerie and inconvenience for the thousands of passengers who were stranded at airports". Air Algerie suspended some 62 staff members during the industrial action, during which numerous flights were cancelled and the company was forced to hire two planes from the Tassili air carrier based in the country.

The strikers cited the main reasons for their walkout as "unresolved" demands for a pay rise and "the poor management of the company's human and material resources". *(BBC Monitoring 21/2)*

Egypt: Sharm el-Sheikh has welcomed the first **British** charter flights since 2015, when the Islamic State group (**IS**)'s bombing of a **Russian** airliner dealt a devastating blow to the Red Sea resort.

Britain halted flights to Sharm el-Sheikh following the attack, which killed all 224 people on board the plane that took off from the resort, long popular with British tourists.

After multiple airport inspections and visits by aviation security experts, Britain announced in October that it was lifting the flight restrictions.

"Sharm el-Sheikh airport received the first two direct charter flights... from London's Gatwick airport carrying 184 passengers and Manchester airport carrying 190 passengers," Egypt's civil aviation ministry said in a statement late on February 16th.

The flights were operated by Britain's biggest travel agency, TUI. The company has scheduled three flights a week between London's Gatwick Airport and Sharm el-Sheikh until late March, the statement said.

British budget airline easyJet said in January it would restart flights to the resort town in