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Saudi Arabia reports first coronavirus death

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[Saudi Arabia](#) has reported its first death from the novel [coronavirus](#), a 51-year-old Afghani resident, while the [United Arab Emirates](#)' main airports in Dubai and Abu Dhabi said they would temporarily suspend all passenger flights from Thursday.

Saudi Health Ministry spokesman Mohammed Abdelali told a televised news conference on Tuesday that the fatality occurred on Monday night in Medina, where the man's health had deteriorated quickly after reporting to the emergency room.

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The kingdom took [drastic measures](#) early on to contain the disease, including halting international flights, suspending the Umrah year-round pilgrimage, closing mosques, schools, malls

and restaurants, and imposing a night-time curfew.

It recorded 205 new infections on Tuesday, bringing the total in the six-member Gulf Coordination Council (GCC) to more than 2,100, mostly in Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

Six people have died: three in Bahrain, two in the UAE and the latest in Saudi Arabia.

Kuwait, which has also imposed a curfew, arrested and will deport nine expatriates for violating the curfew, state news agency KUNA said.

The UAE, the region's tourism and business hub and a major air transit centre, has followed other Gulf Arab steps in trying to curb the spread of the virus, urging people to stay at home, but not announcing an official curfew or suspending work.

'Global problem'

The UAE, with 198 infections, had said on Monday that it would suspend all passenger flights after 48 hours and close malls, commercial centres, restaurants, cafes and open retail food markets for two weeks starting Wednesday.

But the latest announcements from Dubai and Abu Dhabi airports said the halt in passenger flights, including transit flights, would start as of 11:59pm local time (19:59 GMT) on Thursday.

Evacuation flights and cargo services continue.

Major carriers such as Emirates and Etihad Airways have said they [would halt](#) passenger flights as of Wednesday and temporarily cut staff wages.

The suspensions are likely to add more economic pressure on

Dubai, which does not have the oil and gas wealth of the capital Abu Dhabi.

Some stores at malls in Dubai, a major regional shopping destination, were shut ahead of the Wednesday closure deadline.

"This is a global problem. I don't know why they haven't closed [earlier]," an employee told Reuters News Agency.

Oman, with 84 coronavirus cases, announced it was suspending all domestic and international flights as of March 29, except cargo operations and flights to Musandam, an Omani enclave inside the UAE, according to state TV.