

WHO ends global Covid emergency

GENEVA: The Covid-19 pandemic, which killed millions of people and wreaked economic and social havoc, no longer constitutes a global health emergency, the WHO said late on Friday, warning that the threat remained.

It is “with great hope that I declare Covid-19 over as a global health emergency”, said World Health Organisation chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

The move came after the WHO’s independent emergency committee on the Covid crisis agreed it no longer merited the organisation’s highest alert level and “advised that it is time to

transition to long-term management of the COVID-19 pandemic”.

But the danger was not over, according to Dr Tedros, who estimated Covid had killed at least 20 million people, about three times the nearly seven million deaths officially recorded.

“This virus is here to stay. It is still killing, and it’s still changing,” he said. “The worst thing any country could do now is to use this news as a reason to let down its guard, to dismantle the systems it has built, or to send the message to its people that Covid-19 is nothing to worry about.”

The UN health agency first declared the so-called public health emergency of international concern over the crisis on January 30, 2020.

That was weeks after the mysterious new viral disease was first detected in China and when fewer than 100 cases and no deaths had been reported outside that country.

But it was only after Dr Tedros described the worsening Covid situation as a pandemic on March 11, 2020, that many countries woke up to the danger and began closing borders.

AFP