

**4** Interior Ministry opens two new sites in Jleeb to receive violators

Indulgence period for residency violators to leave during 1 to 30 of april 2020

#Depart Safely

The Ministry Of Interior: Opening two new headquarters in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh to receive the violators.

Tomorrow, Sunday 5/4/2020, will be the Opening of two new headquarters in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh Area to receive all nationalities of residency violators who want to leave the country, in accordance with Ministerial Resolution No. 288/2020.

**15** Quibi launching 'on the go' streaming amid lockdown

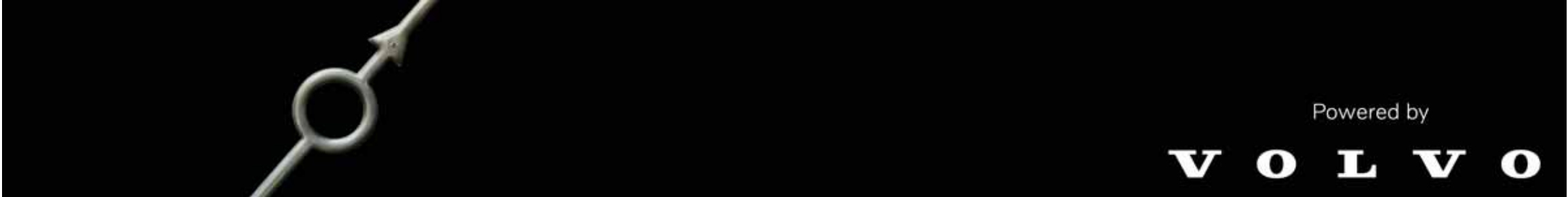
Quibi

**16** Many residents take coronavirus surveillance into their own hands

Many residents are taking coronavirus surveillance into their own hands, with some using bicycles to monitor their surroundings.

**20** Liverpool blasted over furlough, players facing £200m wage cut

Liverpool players are facing a £200m wage cut due to furlough.



# Lockdown of expat areas eyed amid 77 new coronavirus cases

Dubai imposes lockdown • Trump: Toughest week ahead • Global deaths top 60,000

Op-Ed

## All hands on deck to fight a once in a lifetime pandemic

By Antonio Guterres  
Secretary-General of the United Nations

Only by coming together will the world be able to face down the COVID-19 pandemic and its shattering consequences. At an emergency virtual meeting last Thursday, G20 leaders took steps in the right direction. But we are still far away from having a coordinated, articulated global response that meets the unprecedented magnitude of what we are facing.

Far from flattening the curve of infection, we are still well behind it. The disease initially took 67 days to infect 100,000 people; soon, 100,000 people and more will be infected daily. Without concerted and courageous action, the number of new cases will almost certainly escalate into the millions, pushing health systems to the breaking point, economies into a nosedive and people into despair, with the poorest hit hardest. We must prepare for the worst and do everything to avoid it. Here is a three-point call to action - based on science, solidarity and smart policies - for doing just that.

First, suppress transmission of the coronavirus. That requires aggressive and early testing and contact tracing, complemented by quarantines, treatment, and measures to keep first responders safe, combined with measures to restrict movement and contact. Such steps, despite the disruptions they cause, must be sustained until therapies and a vaccine emerge. Crucially, this robust and cooperative effort should be guided by the World Health Organization, a member of the United Nations family: countries acting on their own - as they must for their people - will not get the job done for all.

Second, tackle the devastating social and economic dimensions of the crisis. The virus is spreading like wildfire, and is likely to move swiftly into the Global South, where health systems face constraints, people are more vulnerable, and millions live in densely populated slums or crowded settlements for refugees and internally displaced persons. Fuelled by such conditions, the virus could devastate the developing world and then re-emerge where it was previously suppressed. In our interconnected world, we are only as strong as the weakest health systems.

Clearly, we must fight the virus for all of humanity, with a focus on people, especially the most affected: Women, older persons, youth, low-wage workers, small and medium enterprises, the informal sector and vulnerable groups. The United Nations has just issued reports documenting how the viral contagion has become an economic contagion, and setting out the financing needed to address the shocks. The International Monetary Fund has declared that we have entered a recession as bad as or worse than in 2009.

We need a comprehensive multilateral response amounting to a double-digit percentage of global Gross Domestic Product. Developed countries can do it by themselves, and some are indeed doing it. But we must massively increase the resources available to the developing world by expanding the capacity of the IMF, namely through the issuance of special drawing rights, and of the other international financial institutions so that they can rapidly inject resources into the countries that need them.

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By B Izzak and Agencies

KUWAIT: The ministry of health reported 77 new coronavirus cases yesterday, 74 of whom are expatriates, raising the number of cases to 556 and one death. The ministry also reported six new recoveries, raising the total number to 99. The new cases include three Kuwaitis, 58 Indians, eight Pakistanis, three Bangladeshis, two Egyptians and one Iranian. Of the 456 cases receiving treatment at the ministry, 17 are in intensive care units, six in critical condition.

A Cabinet meeting headed by Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh discussed late Saturday the issue of placing a number of densely-populated expat areas under total lockdown following a rise in the number of coronavirus cases among expats. No decision was announced after the meeting, which also discussed expanding the partial curfew hours and other measures. It also discussed the second phase of repatriation of Kuwaitis from abroad, which is expected to commence this week.

MP Mohammad Al-Dallal said that the spread of the disease among

## MoE: E-learning optional, classes to resume in Aug

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Education Minister Dr Saud Al-Harbi presided over the ministry's undersecretaries' council meeting Saturday morning to discuss a mechanism to implement the Cabinet's decision approving the resumption of the current school year (2019-2020) in

## Iraqis rally to help needy families as economy falters

BAGHDAD: On an abandoned sidewalk in Baghdad, under strict government curfew to contain the novel coronavirus, a handful of volunteers with masks and gloves make food packages for needy families. "What we're doing is a humanitarian duty towards society, and anyone who can afford it



NAJAF: Iraqi paramedics in full hazmat gear pray over the coffin of a 50-year-old victim of the COVID-19 virus before her burial at a cemetery specifically opened for such deaths on April 3, 2020. — AFP

expatriates rings warning bells, which requires taking decisive actions like imposing a lockdown, especially in areas heavily populated by expatriates. He also called for speeding up the process of sending home thousands of expatriate workers living illegally in the country or those who are stranded here with no jobs.

The government has repeatedly said that the options of imposing a total curfew or placing certain expat-dominated areas under lockdown are being considered by the Cabinet and could be imposed when necessary. A large number of expatriates have tested positive for the deadly disease in the past few days. On Saturday, the ministry of health reported its first coronavirus death of an Indian who had been in the intensive care unit. The virus has spread especially among Indians, with some 170 of them among the 479 cases announced by Kuwait.

A number of opposition MPs meanwhile said they will reject a government-sponsored draft law allowing the government to borrow KD 20 billion over the next 10 years, partly to plug the budget deficit expected to

Continued on Page 16

foreign schools through e-learning.

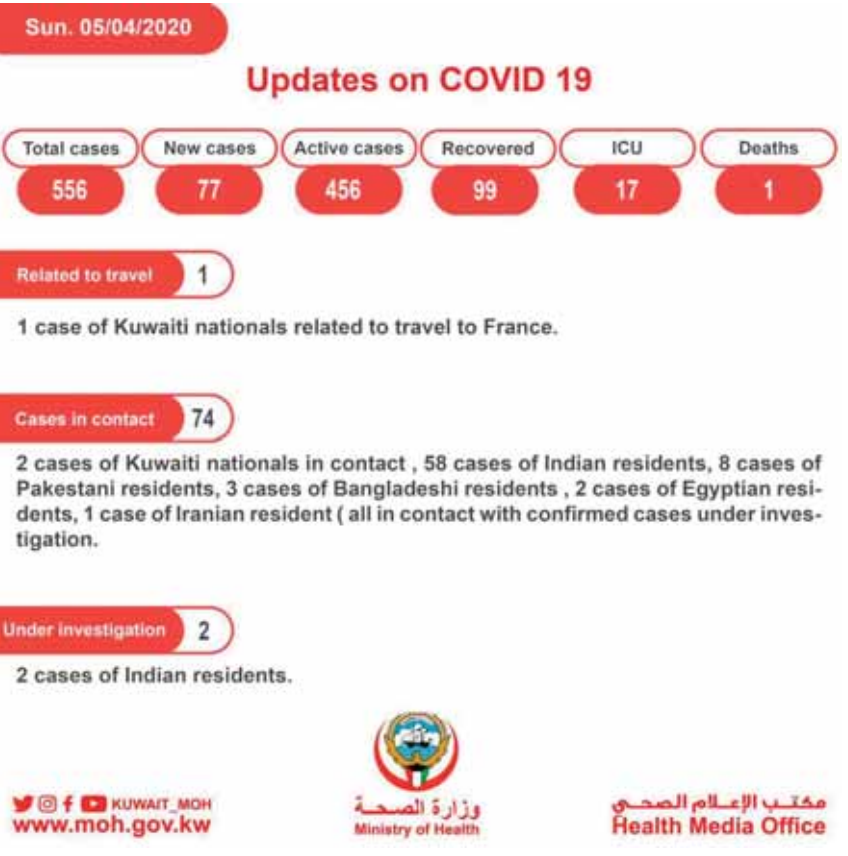
According to the ministerial decision issued in this regard, foreign private schools will be allowed to resume the 2019-2020 academic year using online and e-learning platforms, which will be optional subject to parents' approval, while parents who refuse will be allowed to have their children resume studies once schools reopen as planned by the ministry on August 4 to undergo a 5- to 6-week course after signing a special affidavit.

In a bid to ensure effective control on schools, the ministry has prepared a special form for parents' approval to have their children resume studies online, according to decision number 14550/2020 issued by the assistant undersecretary for private education

should do the same," said Abu Hashim, an Iraqi businessman in his fifties packing non-perishable goods outside a lonely storefront in the Iraqi capital's east.

The health ministry says COVID-19 has killed 56 Iraqis and infected more than 800 others. But many suspect the real numbers to be much higher, as only a few thousand people from a population of 40 million have been tested. In a bid to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus pandemic, authorities have imposed a countrywide lockdown, ordering schools and most shops shut. While the government is still paying salaries and pensions to millions, Iraq's

Continued on Page 16



## People are still getting married amid lockdown

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: As part of the government's precautionary measures to limit the spread of the coronavirus, wedding ceremonies have been banned at all ballrooms and even in private places. Yet it seems that this crisis hasn't stopped some people from getting married, especially as the justice ministry's documentation department is still operating partially. According to a statement published by the head of the documentation department, around 10 marriages are registered daily. No divorces have been registered as that section is not operating currently.

Dr Dawood Binessa, a Kuwaiti malaach (someone who officiates a marriage), is against holding marriages presently. "I believe that marrying in this time is contradictory to what the government is demanding - to limit social gatherings. I wonder how people can control the number of invitees when holding these marriages," he told Kuwait Times.

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Dawood Binessa



# ‘Second chance’ for undocumented Filipinos, other nationals for amnesty on April 26-30

## Amnesty rejected for violators with outstanding dues, court cases

Pandemic Diaries

### Lemon squares

By Jamie Etheridge

etheridge@kuwaittimes.com

Yesterday I made lemon squares. I rarely cook and never bake, but it was after the curfew and I had a craving for something lemony and tart. So I searched online and found what seemed like a no-fail, easy recipe. I collected the ingredients and with the help of my eight-year-old daughter, whipped up the eggs, sugar, lemon and butter into a frothy, gooey yellow filling and poured this over some crushed cookies in a pan. In half an hour the entire house smelled of fresh lemons and sugar, and when they came out of the oven, all of us rushed to take a bite. The lemon squares turned out less than perfect. They were sweet and squishy, not as tart as I'd hoped. But nonetheless completely satisfying.

This may seem odd, talking about lemon squares in the middle of a global pandemic. Such things seem unimportant and unworthy of discussion even in normal times, much less when people are dying en masse all over the globe and we are all hiding in our homes, trying to stay safe and flatten the spread of this terrible virus.

But I mention the lemon squares on purpose. I spend anywhere from 8-10 hours online daily. Just monitoring events in Kuwait and around the globe and staying aware of all the latest developments can be all-encompassing and all-encompassing. I'm guessing many of you spend your days repeatedly checking your phone, social media and your favorite news sites to get the latest news. Unfortunately, most of it is bad and likely to get worse.

We are living through a historical moment of momentous import, a global pandemic that has completely stopped modern civilization in its tracks and left all of us shell-shocked and reeling. Even as we continue with our daily lives when and where we can, working from home, e-learning for the kids, cooking, cleaning or socializing via Zoom, life may go on, but it definitely is not as before. We are living in a strange, bizarro world, and this strangeness, coupled with the daily grind of grim facts and disheartening news from around the globe, can take its toll.

There is no escaping the reality of the world we are faced with now...but we can take a break every now and then, pretend that it's Saturday afternoon and the kids are bored and "hey, let's make dessert." And that's why I made lemon squares. Nothing huge, nothing expensive, nothing dramatic. Just a few ingredients, some effort in the kitchen with the kids, and a tasty dessert at the end that equals a few moments of normal.



KUWAIT: A long line of Filipino amnesty applicants wait outside a school turned into a center to receive residency violators.—Photo by Ben Garcia

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: As the grace period for Filipino amnesty applicants concluded yesterday, they still have a 'second chance' in the last five days of the month-long amnesty period granted by the Kuwaiti government to all nationalities in April. As of Saturday, the number of amnesty takers according to the interior ministry stands at 1,400, apart from the Saturday count, which was 482 (444 females and 38 males).

Philippine Embassy Welfare Officer Attorney Llewelyn Perez said applications of a number of undocumented Filipinos were rejected at the amnesty processing sites for various reasons. "Unfortunately, some Filipinos were rejected, including those who have outstanding dues owed to local banks, individuals and telcos. They are not permitted to leave. Those with outstanding cases in the court are also being rejected," she said.

Overall, according to Perez, the five-day amnesty period given to undocumented Filipinos went smoothly and peacefully. "The Philippine Embassy and all Filipinos in Kuwait would like to thank the Kuwaiti government for their generosity. We are grateful to all who assisted us. The Kuwaiti authorities helped and dedicated their time to make the process run smoothly. Filipinos also demonstrated discipline and we thank them as well for their utmost cooperation despite the danger, God forbid, of the coronavirus. Thank you Kuwait for this," she said.

Bella, not her real name, is an amnesty applicant who was turned down when she went yesterday at the venue. "I came here at the advice of my friend. Since I have two kids in the Philippines, I want to be with them during this pandemic. I have a KD 2,500 loan at the bank - I've not paid a single dinar yet. In fact it was not my loan - I only acted as a guarantor for my colleague. Now I have a travel ban and cannot get an iqama because of that. I wanted to take advantage of this amnesty, but I was rejected," a sobbing Bella told Kuwait Times. She went there with her luggage as advised by the embassy and was waiting for her friend to pick her up again.

Several Filipino males who couldn't avail of the amnesty were stranded at the gate of the center. "I have a UAE residency visa, since I work there. Since there are no flights to Dubai, I tried this amnesty route, but I wasn't accepted. My Kuwait visit visa expired two weeks ago," said Jerry, who was at the gate waiting for private transport.

Residency violators in Kuwait have been granted a 30-day period to leave Kuwait without paying fines or airfare from April 1-30. Violators are received from 8 am till 2 pm according to the following dates and nationalities: Philippines (April 1-5, 2020), Egypt (April 6-10), India (April 11-15), Bangladesh (April 16-20), Sri Lanka (April 21-25), other nationalities (April 26-30, 2020).

est conditions resulting from spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Moreover, the two ministers pondered means of boosting mutual cooperation in facing repercussions and ways of containing the pandemic.

Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Sabah also received a phone call on Saturday from Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign and Security Affairs, discussing current developments related to spread of the novel coronavirus. The phone talks dealt with mutual cooperation for facing fallout and repercussions of the coronavirus. Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad renewed the State of Kuwait's stance that calls for coordinated international efforts to face the pandemic.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired on Saturday the sixth meeting of the team tasked with arranging return of Kuwaiti nationals who have remained abroad amid the current and ongoing coronavirus crisis. The session, held at headquarters of the Cabinet Secretariat General at Seif Palace, was attended by Chairperson of Kuwait Red Society (KRCs) Dr Hilal Al-Sayer and his peer of Kuwait Airways, Yousef Al-Jassem. Participants in the meeting tackled means of completing urgent measures for dealing with priorities of facing repercussions of the virus crisis and followed up on coordination with concerned authorities.—KUNA

IN MY VIEW

### Staying home is a blessing

By Abdellatif Sharaa

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Staying at home longer than usual caused me to have daydreams and night dreams, and between them a nightmare or two. I thank Allah Almighty for giving me the bounty of being optimistic even in the darkest of times, and always the end comes as I longed for or close to that. As I said in an earlier article, I resorted to reading books I had for a long time but did not have the chance to open them, and now the chance has arrived.

One of the books is titled 'Why do I say these things?' by Jonathan Ross, which I bought at Queen Alia Airport in Jordan on July 19, 2009 (it is a habit of mine to write the date on any book when I purchase it). I mentioned the book not to get into it, but to borrow its title! Why do I say "stay at home", in agreement with the community of healthcare professionals? Staying at home has started to keep COVID-19 infections to a minimum, which is very important, but there are many more things one may benefit from.

I remember when we went to Cancun, Mexico for vacation some time ago, and got stuck because one airline went bankrupt and thousands of tourists could not return home. Hotel rooms were scarce, but luck struck, as the agency we dealt with was a wise one, and booked us in a newly-constructed five-star hotel there, a vindication for me as all my friends and their families were frustrated and angry as I kept telling them to take heart and stay calm, because good things will come at the end.

That is why I say now that no matter how long this adverse situation will take, it will end, and it will end leaving behind lessons to learn and prepare better, as the biggest surprise of all things was that the developed world was the worst hit by the pandemic - very strange! They are supposed to be the kings of technology, industry, medical development and crisis management, or are they? They found they were short on life "sustaining" equipment, such as a simple mask or ventilator! Sad, really sad.

We must follow intellect and not emotion, like when we saw top officials speaking about the discovery of a potential cure for the disease, only to retract their words and damping the hopes of millions, making matters worse in the process.

Let us all be realistic at all times and behave with logic and common sense, and not only follow government instructions with their dos and don'ts - we must be proactive in our homes, buildings, neighborhoods and workplaces. Our behavior in front of others will lead them to do the same, at least towards us, until it becomes a habit they follow, which is something good for all. We are now at the top of the hill with this pandemic, and all that is left is to climb it down gradually and safely. May God bless you all!

"We all have dreams. But in order to make dreams come into reality, it takes an awful lot of determination, dedication, self-discipline and effort." — Jesse Owens

## Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has so far recorded 556 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), in addition to one death. With the exception of 17 cases in intensive care, all infected cases are in stable condition and are recovering in quarantined locations designated by the government for this purpose, while 911 have been discharged from quarantine after exhibiting no symptoms during their 14-day quarantine period, the Ministry of Health confirmed. Meanwhile, 99 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, the ministry said. There are 456 people receiving treatment and 2,474 quarantined as of yesterday. Kuwait is taking measures to test Kuwaitis coming from infected areas for potential infection, as it has already tested thousands of people. Meanwhile, Kuwait requires all expatriates who arrived from travel on March 1 and beyond to visit Kuwait International Fairground where the Ministry of Health has set up a center at Hall 6 to test people for possible infection.

### Curfew

Kuwait enforced a country-wide curfew from 5:00 pm to 4:00 am until further notice. Earlier, the government decided to close all shopping malls, beauty salons and barber shops as part of its measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The government also allowed restaurants to host a maximum of five people at a time and in case there are lines, the distance must be at least one meter between people.

### Operating businesses

The following activities are allowed to operate out-

side of the curfew period between 5:00 am and 4:00 pm:

- 1- Various types of foodstuff and supplies stores and markets.
- 2- Pharmacies.
- 3- Various types of restaurants.
- 4- Cooking gas branches.
- 5- Co-ops' family needs branches.

Meanwhile, the following industrial and craft activities, which are licensed by the Public Authority for Industry (PAI), are allowed to open:

- 1- Food.
- 2- Petrochemicals.
- 3- Gases.
- 4- Plastic.
- 5- Cardboard and paper.

### Precautions

All arrivals to Kuwait from all countries are to be placed under compulsory institutional quarantine for 14 days, during which the person is monitored, and prescribed health procedures are applied, the health ministry said. Kuwait halted all commercial flights until further notice. Authorities also announced a public holiday in the country from March 12 to April 9, with work resuming on April 12, while entities providing vital services will remain open.

State departments have been on high alert to take precautions against the potential spread of the virus. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has taken measures to make sure that facial masks, hand sanitizers and other goods remain accessible to the public.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education has suspended classes for March at all public and private schools (for both students and teaching staffs): first from March 1 to March 12, and later extended it until March 29, before eventually suspending schools until August for grade 12 and October for other stages. Kuwait suspended issuing entry permits and visas unless those issued through diplomatic missions.

### Hotlines

- The Ministry of Health has set the following hotlines to receive inquiries about the coronavirus 24/7: 24970967 - 96049698 - 99048619.
- The Education Ministry set the following hotlines to receive inquiries on school closures related to the anti-coronavirus measures:
  - 24970967 (24/7 hotline)
  - 51575591 (Capital Educational Zone)
  - 51576117 (Hawally Educational Zone)
  - 51576576 (Farwaniya Educational Zone)
  - 51577055 (Jahra Educational Zone)
  - 51577655 (Ahmadi Educational Zone)
  - 51577951 (Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Zone)
  - 51578171 (Religious Studies Department)
  - 51588599 (Private Education Department)
  - 51592515 (Services Department)
  - 51594544 (Public Relations Department)

### Medicine delivery

Kuwait's Ministry of Health (MOH) launched a new medicine delivery service for people in Kuwait, which they can use to order medications to be delivered dur-

ing curfew hours. The medications will be delivered within 72 hours after the order is submitted. To place an order, patients should send a WhatsApp to the numbers for the hospitals and medical centers as listed below. The patient should include their name, Civil ID number, hospital or clinic file number, mobile phone number and the medicine needed to the following numbers:

- Amiri Hospital: 50880699
- Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital: 50880755
- Farwaniya Hospital: 50880852
- Adan Hospital: 50880908
- Jahra Hospital: 50881066
- Sabah Hospital: 97632660
- Jaber Hospital: 96992079
- Ibn Sina Hospital: 99613948
- Chest Hospital: 99258749
- Razi Hospital: 97633487
- Kuwait Cancer Control Center: 96735242
- Psychiatric Hospital: 97350113
- Physiotherapy Hospital: 99824037
- Maternity Hospital: 98559531
- As'ad Al-Hamad Dermatology Center: 98514508
- Zain Hospital: 97552031
- NBK Hospital: 96931761
- Al-Rashed Allergy Hospital: 94162470
- Infectious Diseases Hospital: 96989164
- Palliative Care Hospital: 94024786
- Sabah Al-Ahmad Urology Center: 90952469
- KFH Addiction Treatment Center: 94169363



## Local

# Zain supplies Al-Zour Quarantine Center with telecom and networking digital infrastructure

In collaboration with Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company



KUWAIT: Zain Kuwait's Chief Enterprise Business Officer Hamad Al-Marzouq with Zain and KIPIC teams at the project's site.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its collaboration with the Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC), a subsidiary of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), to supply the quarantine center project at Al-Zour area - that is executed by KIPIC - with a telecommunications and networking digital infrastructure. The collaboration came to support the country's tremendous efforts in these exceptional circumstances to fight the spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Kuwait.

Zain's collaboration with KIPIC came as part of its commitment towards the nation during this crisis, ultimately reflecting the Kuwaiti private sector's role in shouldering the oil sector for the nation's wellbeing. This is especially true in such times of crisis, where the Kuwaiti society's strength and unity are at their highest.

#### Advanced solutions

Zain offered a wide range of advanced solutions and services as per the highest international standards to build an integrated digital infrastructure for telecommunications and networking at the Al-Zour Quarantine Center project, which is fully executed by KIPIC. This came with the aim of allowing the quarantine's residents to benefit from wired and wireless telephone services, as well as high speed Internet services to communicate with their families while they reside at the center. In addition, the services will be used by the Ministry of Health's medical and administrative staff while they operate at the center to serve their personal and professional needs.

Under directives from the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), the Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) executes the Al-Zour Quarantine Center project to serve the needs of the Ministry of Health (MoH) in regards to fighting the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Kuwait. This initiative comes as part of KIPIC's social responsibility and commitment towards the nation during this crisis. The center features a capacity of up to 1,600 beds, and is equipped with all necessary and vital facilities as per MoH's requirements, including check-up rooms, recovery units, quarantine units, clinics, a laboratory, a pharmacy, and more.

Al-Zour Quarantine Center features nearly 850 rooms that were all supplied with 5-star hotel facilities. The center also features private accommodation for the medical staff, doctors,

and nurses to prevent commuting to and from the location and minimize contact as much as possible. The accommodation is also supplied with the same hotel-class facilities of the quarantine's rooms, and the entire project will be handed over to MoH's Preventive Health Department very soon.

#### Together as one

During his visit to the project site, Zain Kuwait's Chief Enterprise Business Officer Hamad Al-Marzouq said: "our collaboration with the Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) today is nothing but a clear embodiment of the cherished Kuwaiti identity that sees Kuwaitis get together as one during times of crisis. Such partnerships between the oil and private sectors, especially during these times, remind us as organizations and individuals that we are all part of a single family that puts their hands together to protect our home and our people."

Marzouq added: "I am very proud of the great efforts exerted by Zain's team to make this partnership a success, especially during such difficult and exceptional circumstances. We were very keen on offering the most advanced essential telecom and networking services and solutions to serve citizens who will reside in the center, especially our students who were completing their education abroad and came back as part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' evacuation plan. We have listened carefully to the requirements of the Ministry of Health to cover all the technical and digital needs of the medical and administrative staff who will operate in the center. We hope we meet everyone's expectations and offered an added value to our serve our nation and protect the health of our community."

Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) Hatem Al-Awadhi said: "we express our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for this partnership with Zain to offer telecom infrastructure and high-tech services to meet the desired needs of this project."

Zain spares no efforts to achieve its comprehensive corporate sustainability and social responsibly strategy that closely focuses on supporting the public sector and shouldering public health initiatives. The company strongly believes that such partnerships help infuse a sense of responsibility into members of the society, and help support those who are in need of help.

“ Working together to protect our people ”



Zain Kuwait's Chief Enterprise Business Officer Hamad Al-Marzouq



Deputy Chief Executive Officer of KIPIC Hatem Al-Awadhi



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Zain Kuwait's Chief Enterprise Business Officer Hamad Al-Marzouq during a tour at Al-Zour Quarantine Center



## Local

**مهلة لمخالفين الإقامة للمغادرة**  
خلال الفترة من 1 إلى 30 أبريل 2020

#غادر بأمان

**وزارة الداخلية : افتتاح مقرين جديدين بمنطقة جليب الشيوخ لإستقبال المخالفين لقانون الإقامة**

ابتداء من يوم الأحد الموافق 5/4/2020، سيتم افتتاح مقرين جديدين بمنطقة جليب الشيوخ لإستقبال جميع الجنسيات من مخالفين قانون الإقامة الراغبين بمغادرة البلاد وفق القرار الوزاري 288 لسنة 2020 على أن يكون استقبال المخالفين من النساء بمدرسة رفيعة الاسلاميه الابتدائية - بنات-قطعة (4) شارع (200)، واستقبال المخالفين من الرجال بمدرسة نعيم بن مسعود الابتدائية - بنين-قطعة (4) شارع(250).

وذلك من الساعة (8 صباحا و حتى ( 2 ) مساء و دون دفع أية غرامات مالية مستحقة عليهم أو تحمل مصاريف و تكاليف رحلات الطيران، مع إمكانية عودتهم مره أخرى إلى البلاد.

f t i MOI\_KUW 112

**Indulgence period for residency violators to leave during 1 to 30 of april 2020**

#Depart Safly

**The Ministry Of Interior: Opening two new headquarters in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh to receive the violators.**

Tomorrow, Sunday 5/4/2020, will be the Opening of two new headquarters in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh Area to receive all nationalities of residency violators who want to leave the country, in accordance with Ministerial Resolution No. 288/2020.

**Women reception will be in Roufayda Al-Aslameya Primary School- Girls- block (4) steet (200).**

**Men reception will be in Naeem Bin Masod Primary School- Boys - block (4) street (250).**

And that is from (8) in the morning until (2) in the evening without paying any fines owed to them or bearing the cost of air tickets , with the possibility of returning again to the country.

f t i MOI\_KUW 112

**Ces mesures prennent fin le 30 avril 2020**

# Partez en sécurité

**Le Ministère de l'Intérieur vous informe qu'il y a deux nouveaux endroits pour accueillir les contrevenants issus de toutes nationalités : de 8h à 14h**

Les adresses :  
Accueil des contrevenants (hommes): Jleeb Ashoyoukh- École primaire Naeem Ben Masoud garçons - Bloc 4- Rue 250.  
Accueil des contrevenants (femmes): Jleeb Ashoyoukh - École primaire de Rafedah Alslamiya filles - Bloc 4 - Rue 200.

Nous vous accueillons tous les jours de la semaine

Les contrevenants peuvent partir sans payer de pénalités financières. Ils partent sans payer les frais de voyage et les billets d'avion. Ils ont la possibilité de revenir au Koweït. Nous avons des lieux pour accueillir les contrevenants jusqu'à leur départ et nous nous chargeons de leur fournir gratuitement repas et boissons.

f t i MOI\_KUW 112

**Para sa mga naninirahan na expat at nakapag labag sa batas, kayo ay pinahihintulutan na makaalis sa bansang ito mula april 1 hanggang 30, 2020.**

#Mag ingat kayo sa pag byahe nyo

**Ministry of Interior: Pagbubukas ng bagong dalawang tanggapan sa Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh na resepsyon para sa mga lumabag**

Bukas ng Linggo 5/4/2020 Pagbubukas ng bagong dalawang tanggapan sa Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh na resepsyon para sa lahat ng mga nasyonalidad na lumabag sa batas ng iqama na handang umalis ng bansa ayon sa desisyon ng ministro 288 taong 2020.

**Resepsyon para sa mga babae: Rufaida Al-Aslamia Primary School for Girls – Block 4, Street 200.**

**Resepsyon para sa mga lalaki: Naeem bin Masoud Primary School for Boys – Block 4, Street 250.**

Mula 8 AM hanggang 2 PM na kung saan ay makakaalis ng bansa nang walang mababayaran na anumang multa o mga gastos sa paglalakbay maging ang tiket sa eroplano, bukod dito ay posibleng makabalik muli sa bansang ito.

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**అవామా చట్టాన్ని ఉల్లంఘించిన వ్యక్తుల కోసం క్షమాపణ**  
ఏప్రిల్ 1 నుండి 30 వరకు 2020

#క్షమించా వెళ్ళండి!

**అంతర్జాతీయ వ్యవహారాల మంత్రిత్వ శాఖ: అవామా చట్టాన్ని ఉల్లంఘించినవారి కోసం రెండు కొత్త నివాస స్థలాలను జలీబ్ అల్-షుయౌఖ్లో ప్రారంభించారు.**

రేపు, 5/4/2020 నుండి (మంత్రివర్గ తీర్మానం 288 ప్రకారం- 2020) కువైట్ దేశం విడిచి వెళ్ళాలని కోరుకునే నివాస చట్టాన్ని ఉల్లంఘించిన వారు, అన్ని దేశాల ప్రజల కోసం జలీబ్ అల్-షుయౌఖ్లో రెండు కొత్త నివాస స్థలాలను ప్రారంభించడం జరిగింది.

**నివాస చట్టాన్ని ఉల్లంఘించినవారి (స్త్రీల) కోసం రుఫైదా అల్-అసలమియా ప్రైమరీ స్కూల్ - గర్ల్స్ - బ్లాక్ (4) స్ట్రీట్ (200), పురుషుల కోసం - నాఐమ్ బిన్ మసౌద్ ప్రైమరీ స్కూల్ - బాయిస్ - బ్లాక్ (4) స్ట్రీట్ (250)**

సమయం: ఉదయం 8:00 నుండి సాయంత్రం 2:00 వరకు వారు వెల్లింబాల్సిన జరిమానాలు చెల్లించకుండా, విమానాల ఖర్చులు మరియు ఇతర ఖర్చులను భరించకుండా, తిరిగి దేశానికి వెళ్ళే, మళ్ళీ కువైట్ తిరిగి రాగలిగే అవకాశం ఉంటుంది.

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**إقامه کی خلاف ورزی کرنے والوں کے لئے دی ہوئی مہلت 1 سے 30 اپریل 2020 تک ہے**

# باحفاظت واپسی

**وزارت داخلہ کا اعلان: غیر قانونی طور سے مقیم افراد کے استقبال کیلئے دو نئی جگہوں کی شروعات: علاقہ: جلیب الشیوخ شروع کرنے کی تاریخ: کل بروز اتوار، 5 اپریل 2020 سے**

تمام نیشنلٹیز کے غیر قانونی طور پر مقیم افراد کیلئے جو اپنے وطن واپس جانا چاہتے ہیں یہ اطلاع ہے کہ جلیب الشیوخ کے علاقے میں ان کے استقبال کیلئے دو نئی جگہیں شروع کی جارہی ہیں، ( حوالہ: وزارت قانون نمبر 288 سال 2020)

**جگہ: خواتین کیلئے: مدرسہ رفیدہ الاسلامیہ الابتدائیہ - بنات- بلاک(4) اسٹریٹ(200) مردوں کیلئے: مدرسہ نعییم بن مسعود الابتدائیہ- بنیلاک(4) اسٹریٹ(250)**

وقت: صبح 8 سے دوپہر 2 بجے تک

نوٹ: یہ بات ذہن میں رہے کہ یہ وطن واپسی مفت ہے اور سفر کے سارے اخراجات بھی حکومت اٹھالے گی، کسی کو کسی طرح کا کوئی مالی جرمانہ بھی نہیں دینا ہے اور بعد میں دوبارہ کویت واپسی کے بھی پورے امکانات باقی ہیں اگر کوئی کویت واپس آنا چاہے۔

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# Interior Ministry opens two new sites in Jleeb to receive violators

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KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry opened yesterday two new locations in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh to receive residency violators wishing to avail an amnesty the Interior Ministry announced this month. Visa violators of all nationalities can register from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm on weekdays at the following locations:

- For women: Roufayda Al-Aslameya School - Block 4 - Street 200
- For men: Naeem bin Masod School - Block 4 - Street 250

The two locations have been prepared according to security and precautionary measures to protect people's safety, the Interior Ministry's Public Relations and Media Department said in a statement, noting that free meals and drinks will be distributed to the violators.

Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh had issued an amnesty decision allowing residency violators to leave the country between April 1 and April 30 without paying any fines or airfare with a chance to return to Kuwait later. The amnesty was issued in view of the circumstances the country is currently going through and as part of the precautionary measures taken to fight the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Individuals desiring to procure valid residencies in Kuwait and are willing to pay the fines without being subjected to investigations will be allowed to pay the fines and legalize their status if they meet the required conditions.

The ministry had earlier noted that special centers in Farwaniya were allocated to accommodate violators who finalize their papers pending departure, and these sites will be provided with all living comforts and free means of sustenance. Male violators are received at Al-Muthanna primary school for boys, Farwaniya, block 1, street 122, while female violators are received at Farwaniya primary school for girls in Farwaniya, block 1, street 76. Violators are received from 8 am till 2 pm according to the following dates and nationalities: Philippines (April 1-5, 2020), Egypt (April 6-10), India (April 11-15), Bangladesh (April 16-20), Sri Lanka (April 21-25), other nationalities (April 26-30, 2020).

## Charities spend \$9 million for afflicted people

KUWAIT: Local charities spent KD 2.7 million (\$9 million) as of Friday, the Ministry of Social Affairs said, noting that this came within the framework of the national campaign to collect money for the needy and personnel working in the shadow of the coronavirus crisis. The 'Fazaat Al-Kuwait' campaign, involving 41 ministry-accredited societies and charities, has raised KD 9.1 million (\$30 million) contributed by 198,227 donors, the ministry said in a report released on Saturday. The contributions included 150,217 meals for workers at state ministries, at quarantines and border exits. They also covered 14,400 beneficiaries at 32 schools that have been equipped and transformed into quarantines. Some of the funds will be disbursed for aiding individuals and families afflicted with the coronavirus crisis and workers who can no longer earn their bread due to the extraordinary circumstances caused by the pandemic. 'Fazaat' is an old Arabic term where people scramble to aid each other in crises, dangers and catastrophes. —KUNA

**ఇంటికి తిరిగివచ్చేందుకు ఉచిత విమాన టికెట్ (ఇవాసా) ప్రక్రియను ప్రారంభించింది**  
ఇంటికి తిరిగివచ్చేందుకు ఉచిత విమాన టికెట్ (ఇవాసా) ప్రక్రియను ప్రారంభించింది. ఇంటికి తిరిగివచ్చేందుకు ఉచిత విమాన టికెట్ (ఇవాసా) ప్రక్రియను ప్రారంభించింది. ఇంటికి తిరిగివచ్చేందుకు ఉచిత విమాన టికెట్ (ఇవాసా) ప్రక్రియను ప్రారంభించింది.

**ఇంటికి తిరిగివచ్చేందుకు ఉచిత విమాన టికెట్ (ఇవాసా) ప్రక్రియను ప్రారంభించింది**  
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**مهلت مرخصی متخلفان اقامت در طی دوره از ۱ تا ۳۰ آوریل ۲۰۲۰**

# با خیال راحت سفر کنید

**وزارت داخلیه دو دفتر جدید در جلیب الشیوخ برای استقبال از متخلفان قانون إقامة افتتاح کرد.**

فردا یکشنبه موافق ۵-۴-۲۰۲۰ این دو مرکز شروع به کار میکنند و آمادگی دریافت کلیه ملیت ها از متخلفان قانون اقامت که مایل به ترک کشور هستند میباشد. مطابق قطعنامه 288 سال 2020 وزارت داخلیه.

**پذیرش خانمها در مدرسه ابتدایی دخترانه رفیده الاسلامیه - قطعه 4 خیابان 200 میباشد.**

**و آقایان در دبستان پسرانه نعییم بن مسعود - قطعه 4 خیابان 250 انجام شود.**

ساعات مراجعه از (8) صبح تا (2) عصر بدون پرداخت جریمه مالی از آنها و یا هزینه پرواز (مجانی) و با امکان بازگشت مجدد به کشور کویت است.

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**ইকাবাধিগণ প্রবাসীদের জন্য ফ্রিতে ফ্লাইটের সুব্যবস্থা**  
সুযোগ (সোপারশ ক্যা)

সময় কাল: ১-৪ থেকে ০০-৪ ২০২০ পর্যন্ত

#নিরাপদে ফ্রিতে ফ্লাইট যান

কুয়েতে অবস্থিত অভিবাসীদের নিজ দেশে ফ্লাইট সুবিধার্থে জেলির আল সুরাযে আরো দুটি অফিস চালু

কুয়েতে বসবাসে মনোযোগের যোগ্য- অফিস উদ্ভাবনের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে বহিরাবাসী এই এপ্রিল ২০২০ ইস্যবে

প্রকাশ্য থাকে যে, বৈধক নং ২৮৮, ২০২০ মন্ত্রীপরিষদের সিদ্ধান্ত অনুযায়ী অবস্থিত প্রবাসীদের নিজ নিজ দেশে ফ্লাইটের জন্য যোগাযোগ করতে জেলীর আল সুরাযে দুটি অফিস চালু করা হয়েছে। মনোযোগের যোগ্যতার কারণে কুয়েতিয়া আল আসলামিয়া মহিলা প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়, ব্লক নং ৪ (রাস্তা নং ২০০) পুরুষের যোগাযোগ করার জন্য নাইম বিন মাসুদ প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়, (ব্লক) ব্লক নং ৪ (রাস্তা নং ২৫০)।

যোগাযোগের সময়: সকাল ৮টা হতে দুপুর ২টা পর্যন্ত

বিশেষ নোট: কোন প্রকার আর্থিক জরিমানা ফ্লাইট হতে পারবে না। ভ্রমণ তথা বিমানের টিকেট খরচ সম্পূর্ণ বি, পুনরায় কুয়েত আসার সুযোগ থাকবে।

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## Local

# Stimulus package offers KD 5 billion in additional lending: KBA chief

## Enabling local banks to help alleviate COVID-19 impacts

IN MY VIEW

### Coronavirus changes habits



By Chidi Emmanuel

local@kuwaittimes.com

The world is almost under lockdown for weeks now, thanks to the deadly coronavirus. Amid all of this, there are lots to learn and explore as the deadly virus wreaks havoc. People are beginning to see each other as one. COVID-19 is now making us stay at home and live a simple life. The world leaders (all of a sudden) are calling for unity - no more wars and violence.

Surprisingly, Taliban fighters in Afghanistan have seen the need to spare medical practitioners in a bid to fight COVID-19. Petrified by the epidemic, the Taliban leaders have pledged their readiness to work with medical practitioners instead of killing them as they normally did in the past. "The Islamic Emirate via its Health Commission assures all international health organizations and WHO of its readiness to cooperate and coordinate with them in combating the coronavirus," said Suhail Shaheen, the Taliban's spokesman, on Twitter.

As if that is not enough, people are beginning to see the need to avoid unnecessary handshake, hugs, and pecks on the cheek. We now try a direct gaze, or maybe a hand gesture instead of a handshake while greeting. Across the globe, people are changing their habits at home, work places and in places of worship to reduce the risk of contracting the deadly virus. Here is a look at some of the changes in behavior due to the coronavirus, which has killed more than 70,000 worldwide.

#### Spitting and coughing

Across Kuwait, one can notice a sudden change of behavior. Before the coronavirus pandemic (from the edges of the elevator to that of the public buses), one will always be greeted with a disgusting red-like salivary substances carefully deposited at one corner by paan and guthka eaters. These edges of the elevators and buildings are no longer soiled as they used to be before. Spitting is among the multitude of irritating anti-social behavior witnessed on a daily basis. Among other etiquettes, people have seen the need cover their mouths and noses with a tissue when they cough or sneeze.

#### Handshake and hugging

Authorities and medical experts have advised people not to shake hands or hug each other as a sign of greeting. COVID-19 has triggered various social media campaigns against kissing on the cheek, handshakes and hugging. Our normal way of greeting has been replaced with just a smile, bump fists and elbow bump - in a bid to curb the raging virus. UAE, as well as Qatar, have advised citizens to stop the traditional 'nose to nose' greeting. The UAE also urged people to wave instead of kissing - or a handshake.

#### Hand washing, lockdown

In recent times, regular and thorough washing of the hands with soap and alcohol-based hand rub have become critical in the fight against the novel coronavirus disease. As the pandemic continues to spread, we are all reminded on the importance of hand washing as a key preventive measure against the COVID-19. Hand washing with soap is one of the cheapest, most effective things you can do to protect yourself and others against coronavirus, as well as many other infectious diseases. In any way you look at it, the deadly virus has actually changed our lives - both in a good and a bad way. The lockdown and 'social distancing' measures are bringing families closer than before.



**KUWAIT:** Chairman of Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) Adel Al-Majed said the stimulus package announced by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently makes KD 5 billion (nearly \$16.5 billion) available for additional lending from local banks. The package includes easing the conditions previously set by the CBK for financing the economic activities and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), thus enabling the local banks to help alleviate the impacts of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), he said in an interview on Saturday. "It will enable the banks to exercise their vital role in the economic growth through financing the businesses and clients who are in need of liquidity to continue their activities and avert long-term problems due to the current challenging conditions," Majed pointed out.

He noted that the local banks constantly coordinate with the CBK the steps to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19, revive the national economy and maximize benefit from the stimulus package. "The protective policies, being implemented by the CBK since the global financial crisis of 2008, led to building a strong capital basis and substantial accumulative reserves. Now, it is time to make use of these reserves," he said, noting that the global crisis posed by coronavirus is worse than the financial meltdown.

On a similar note, head of the financial and economic committee of the National Assembly MP Safa Al-Hashem said the stimulus package would help allay the concerns and burdens of businesspeople particularly in the SMEs. The senior lawmaker commended as timely and dynamic the response of the decision-makers to the crisis. She noted that the stimulus package would ease the supervisory restrictions on the local banks, thus enabling the private sector to retain the national workforce and continue the economic activities. Announcing the package on Thurs-



The Central Bank of Kuwait.

day, CBK Governor Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel said it would help minimize the risks posed to the private sector by COVID-19. Hashel said the package would reduce requirements for banks to provide financing for SMEs from 75 percent to 25 percent. He added that it is also intended to boost the maximum lending limit and increase the maximum financing for residential real estate developments to the value of the

property or the cost of development. The package will support vital economic sectors and SMEs in their efforts to overcome the challenges of coronavirus pandemic, Hashel said, affirming that the Kuwaiti banking system enjoys a strong position. He added that the CBK would closely monitor banks to ensure meeting the targets of package and serving the interests of the national economy. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Ooredoo and Kuwait Red Crescent Society members in a group photo.

## Ooredoo Kuwait distributes gifts at quarantine centers

**KUWAIT:** Ooredoo Kuwait, the first to launch innovative digital services in Kuwait gifted all patients under health quarantine and the staff treating them at Aqua Marine Resort, Sea Shell Resort, and Khalifa Resort. This includes staff from the Ministry of Health, Council of Ministers, and Kuwait Red Crescent Society. This initiative stems from the company's Corporate Social Responsibility and a continuation of its efforts during the COVID-19 situation and its commitment to supporting the Government and its entities.

Commenting on this initiative, Chief Business Officer at Ooredoo Kuwait Abdulaziz Al-Babtain stressed Ooredoo Kuwait's commitment and full support of the government during these times. Babtain recognized the great efforts made by the medical staff and the Minister of Health: Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah and wished all the patients a quick recovery and to keep Kuwait safe from harm.

Senior Director of Corporate Communications Mijbil Al-Ayoub noted that this initiative is in alignment with the Company's Corporate Social Responsibility strategy to support the society at all times throughout the year,

and across all sectors. This has been Ooredoo Kuwait's strategy since day one, and the company is committed to provide society and the nation with all the support needed under any circumstances.

It is worth mentioning that Ooredoo Kuwait has reaffirmed its full support of the Government and its entities in light of the Coronavirus outbreak in the country and to ensure that customers are staying home as per Government directives. The company reaffirmed its support by collaborating with the Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) by providing customers with free 5GB internet and free calls for one month. Ooredoo Kuwait also gifted all mothers under health quarantine and the medical staff treating them at Sheikh Jaber Hospital on the occasion of Mother's Day. At the beginning of the outbreak, the company gifted its customers in Ministries and Governmental Organizations which include the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior, Civil Defense, Kuwait Police, Kuwait Airways and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation free internet valid throughout the month of March in appreciation for their great efforts during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

situation in the country.

Ooredoo Kuwait also launched its 'Be Safe. Be Home. Be Online' campaign, featuring an array of digital offers and services designed to support customers and to ensure they are well connected and informed during the Coronavirus outbreak in the country. The digital offers and services provided by Ooredoo Kuwait include subscription to any Ooredoo Surprise offer on My Ooredoo App, enjoying the best music, series, movies, and games, recharging online, joining ANA and free SIM delivery to customers' doorsteps, and amazing benefits from Shamel. Customers can also view Ooredoo's services as well as exclusive offers and their subscription data online through the MyOoredoo application and the Company website Ooredoo.com.kw in addition to contacting our call center through 121 around the clock for all enquiries and services. Ooredoo Kuwait reaffirms its keenness to adhere to all instructions issued by the official authorities in Kuwait related to the current situation, confirming its cooperation and its complete readiness to implement the procedures followed in this regard during the coming period.



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## 'There's going to be a lot of death', Trump warns

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# Death at home: The unseen toll of Italy coronavirus crisis



**LONDON:** People take their daily exercise in Greenwich Park in south London as life continues in the city during the novel coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. —AFP

# 5G conspiracy: Dangerous fake nonsense

# UK coronavirus death rate to stay high

Mobile phone masts have in recent days been vandalized and telecoms staff abused in Birmingham in central England and Merseyside in northern England, damaging connectivity at a time when people are relying on it more than ever. An arson attack at a tower in Birmingham owned by BT, Britain's biggest telecoms company, caused significant damage. It provided 2G, 3G and 4G services to thousands of people, but did not have 5G capability, the company said.

"Those are also the phone networks that are used by our emergency services and our health workers and I'm absolutely outraged, absolutely disgusted that people would be taking action against the very infrastructure that we need to respond to this health emer-

Vodafone, the world's second largest mobile operator, said the attacks were now a matter of national security. "It beggars belief that some people should want to harm the very networks that are providing essential connectivity to the emergency services, the NHS, and rest of the country during this difficult lockdown period," UK boss Nick Jeffery said. He described his engineers as heroes and urged people not to spread the "utterly baseless" stories online.

## UK death toll rises

High fatalities from the coronavirus will continue in the United Kingdom for at least another week or two, even if people comply with stringent isolation measures, health authorities said on Saturday as the country's death toll jumped to 4,313. The toll went up by 708 in 24 hours, the highest daily rise so far in Britain. A 5-year-old child with an underlying health problem was among the dead, along with at least 40 who had no known previous known conditions. "With great sad-

“Unfortunately that is likely to continue over the next week or two until we get on top and stop this virus,” Powis said. The government has put Britain into a widespread shutdown, closing pubs, restaurants and nearly all shops, while ordering people to stay home unless it is absolutely essential to venture out. Cabinet Office minister Michael Gove repeatedly declined to say when the lockdown could be lifted but said it would depend on whether people adhered to the stringent rules.

The lockdown began nearly two weeks ago, with a pledge to review the measures after three weeks. “If we relax our adherence to the rules we increase the risk for others,” he said, offering his condolences to the family of the 5-year-old. Britain initially took a restrained approach on tactics to curb the spread but Prime Minister Boris Johnson changed tack and imposed stringent social-distancing measures after modeling showed a quarter of a million people in the country could die.

Johnson has himself been in self-isolation after test-

ing positive for the novel coronavirus. His pregnant fiancée, Carrie Symonds, said on Twitter she had spent the past week in bed with symptoms but was now feeling better. "I've spent the past week in bed with the main symptoms of Coronavirus. I haven't needed to be tested and, after seven days of rest, I feel stronger and I'm on the mend," Symonds said.

### Length of lockdown

Countries around the world are grappling with tens of thousands of coronavirus deaths and more than a million cases. But the massive efforts to contain the spread have virtually stalled the economy and some have started to question if a global depression will cost more lives in the long run. British health officials have said the peak of the deaths could come on Easter Sunday, April 12, and Powis told a news conference that new cases had stabilized in recent days.

Hospital admissions also plateaued in London, the epicenter of the British outbreak, while increasing in the Midlands and the north west of England. As of 0800 GMT on Saturday, some 41,903 people had tested positive out of a total of 183,190 people tested. Neil Ferguson, a government adviser and professor of mathematical biology at Imperial College London, said the lockdown was unlikely to be lifted until the end of May. “We want to move to a situation where at least by the end of May we’re able to substitute some less intensive measures, more based on technology and testing, for the complete lockdown we have now,” he told BBC Radio. — Agencies

# French virus toll hits new high

**PARIS:** The total number of deaths from the coronavirus in France reached a new high on Saturday as the government included more previously unreported deaths in nursing homes. The health ministry reported 441 new deaths from COVID-19 in the country's hospitals on Saturday - less than the high of 588 reported on Friday - for a total hospital death tally of 5,532. For the third day in a row, the ministry also reported the cumulative tally of deaths in nursing homes since the start of the epidemic in early March, which were previously unreported.

This added another 2,028 deaths to the national tally for a total death toll of 7,560, an increase of 1,053 on the cumulative figure reported on Friday. Previously unreported, nursing home deaths now make up nearly a third of total coronavirus deaths. “This pandemic is totally unprecedented. It is imperative that people respect confinement, now is not the time to ease up,” health ministry director Jerom Salomon said at a daily briefing. Salomon said that confirmed coronavirus infections in hospitals rose by another 4,267 cases to 68,605 - up 7% but slower than Friday’s 9%.

But he also said that the number of “confirmed or possible” cases in nursing homes rose by 20% to 21,348. Salomon did not give a breakdown between confirmed and possible cases. Adding hospital and nursing home cases, France has a total of 89,953 confirmed or suspected cases. Epidemiolo-



**ORLY:** Medical staff load a patient infected with novel coronavirus, Covid-19, into a military A400M plane for transportation from Orly airport, south of the capital, to a hospital outside of the Paris region. — AFP

gists say the case count is hard to compare to other countries as some have more extensive testing policies than France. Salomon said 28,143 people were in hospital with COVID-19 infection. That number showed a net 711 more admissions compared with the previous day after 2,111 people were discharged.

A total of 6,838 serious coronavirus cases were in intensive care units, he said. In the past 24 hours, 502 new cases were admitted to intensive care - an increase of 3% - compared with 641 the previous day and 729 on Thursday. "This slowdown of the increase is good news but we want a decrease. We still have more patients

coming into ICUs every day which means more pressure," he said. Italy on Saturday reported that the number of patients in intensive care fell for the first time.

Pressure was easing on the need to find new space in intensive care, Salomon said. This trend was due to more people leaving, and was an important indicator of how hospitals were coping and using available resources. "The number of people who have recovered is also increasing rapidly, because we have 15,438 people who have come out of hospital cured, and thousands of others who stayed confined at home and have also recovered," Salomon said. — Reuters

# Virus reveals, exacerbates US inequality

**WASHINGTON:** Just three weeks ago, Miguel Rodriguez was enjoying a pleasant life, working as a waiter in a Maryland restaurant in a job he held for 20 years. The American economy was going strong and he had a comfortable living situation. Everything changed overnight when La Ferme, a French restaurant in the upscale Chevy Chase suburb of Washington, was forced to close amid statewide shutdowns to try to contain the coronavirus outbreak.

His wife, a waitress at another restaurant, also lost her job. The pandemic instantly threw millions of US workers off the payroll and into poverty, in a crisis that is revealing and further exacerbating inequalities in the world's largest economy. Low-income and middle-class households will be the first and hardest hit, and they have little in the way of savings.

"This is an extraordinary blow to millions of Americans who had barely recovered from the 2008 financial crisis," said Edward Alden, an expert at the Council on Foreign Relations. Real wages took eight years to recover after the crisis, and had only accelerated for lower-paid workers in the past two years, he said. Wages in 2019 rose at the fastest rate in 20 years partly thanks to some states increasing the minimum

wage. "This crisis, with the huge increase it is bringing in unemployment, will erase those gains," Alden said.

A decade of employment gains came to an abrupt halt in March, as the economy jettisoned 701,000 jobs and the unemployment rate posted the biggest increase in 45 years, rising to 4.4 percent. President Donald Trump, who is running for re-election in November, regularly touts the record low unemployment among Hispanics and blacks. But the jobless rate for both groups surged last month. Even during years of economic growth, inequalities have continued to widen between wealthiest Americans - who accumulated substantial gains on Wall Street - and the bottom 90 percent.

The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed the global economy into recession and the downturn “will exacerbate inequality,” said Gregory Daco, chief economist at Oxford Economics. Nearly 10 million workers filed for unemployment insurance in the final two weeks of March, and those “sudden job losses are concentrated in the low-income service sectors” in a country with few social safety nets and an extremely low savings rate of around eight percent.

Rodríguez, 55, is saddened to have to rely on unemployment benefits for the first time since arriving in the United States in 1983 from El Salvador. And he worries payments, which do not take into account tips, which make up the majority of his earnings, will not be enough to provide for his three children. "I have some savings now but I can survive for a couple of months," Rodríguez said. —AFP



## International

# What impact is coronavirus having on Mideast conflicts?

## ‘The worst is yet to come’ UN chief warns

**BEIRUT:** The novel coronavirus has put global trade on hold, placed half of the world population in confinement and has the potential to topple governments and reshape diplomatic relations. The United Nations has appealed for ceasefires in all the major conflicts rocking the planet, with its chief Antonio Guterres on Friday warning “the worst is yet to come”. But it remains unclear what the pandemic’s impact will be on the multiple wars roiling the Middle East. Here is an overview of the impact so far on the conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Libya and Iraq:

### Syria

The COVID-19 outbreak turned into a pandemic just as a ceasefire reached by the two main foreign power brokers in Syria’s nine-year-old war—Russia and Turkey—was taking effect. The three million people living in the ceasefire zone, in the country’s northwestern region of Idlib, had little hope the deal would hold. Yet fears the coronavirus could spread like wildfire across the devastated country appear to have given the truce an extended lease of life. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the month of March saw the lowest civilian death toll since the conflict started in 2011, with 103 deaths.

The ability of the multiple administrations in Syria—the Damascus government, the autonomous Kurdish administration in the northeast and the jihadist-led alliance that runs Idlib—to manage the coronavirus threat is key to their credibility. “This epidemic is a way for Damascus to show that the Syrian state is efficient and all territories should be returned under its governance,” analyst Fabrice Balanche said. However the pandemic and the global mobilization it requires could precipitate the departure of US-led troops from Syria and neighboring Iraq. This in turn could create a vacuum in which the Islamic State jihadist group, still reeling

from the demise of its “caliphate” a year ago, could seek to step up its attacks.

### Yemen

The Yemeni government and the Houthi rebels initially responded positively to the UN appeal for a ceasefire, as did neighboring Saudi Arabia, which leads a military coalition in support of the government. That rare glimmer of hope in the five-year-old conflict was short-lived however and last week Saudi air defenses intercepted ballistic missiles over Riyadh and a border city fired by the Iran-backed rebels. The Saudi-led coalition retaliated by striking Houthi targets in the rebel-held capital Sanaa on Monday. Talks have repeatedly faltered but the UN envoy Martin Griffiths is holding daily consultations in a bid to clinch a nationwide ceasefire.

More flare-ups in Yemen could compound a humanitarian crisis often described as the worst in the world and invite a coronavirus outbreak of catastrophic proportions. In a country where the health infrastructure has collapsed, where water is a rare commodity and where 24 million people require humanitarian

assistance, the population fears being wiped out if a ceasefire doesn’t allow for adequate aid. “People will end up dying on the streets, bodies will be rotting in the open,” said Mohammed Omar, a taxi driver in the Red Sea port city of Hodeida.

### Libya

Much like Yemen, the main protagonists in the Libyan conflict initially welcomed the UN ceasefire call but swiftly resumed hostilities. Fierce fighting has rocked the south of the capital Tripoli in recent days, suggesting the risk of a major coronavirus outbreak is not enough to make guns fall silent. Turkey has recently played a key role in the conflict, throwing its weight behind the UN-recognized Government of National

of the Executive,” Burr, a Republican from North Carolina, said in a statement on Saturday. “However, in order to be effective, the IG must be allowed to conduct his or her work independent of internal or external pressure.”

US Senator Charles Grassley, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, demanded a better explanation for Atkinson’s firing. “Congress has been crystal clear that written reasons must be given when IGs are removed for a lack of confidence,” he said. “More details are needed from the administration.” Trump is trying to scare the watchdog community, Adam Schiff, a California Democrat and chairman of the House Intelligence Committee told MSNBC Saturday morning.

“He’s decapitating the leadership of the intelligence community in the middle of a national crisis,” he said. “It’s unconscionable, and of course it sends a message throughout the federal government and particular to other inspectors general.” Republican House Representative Jim Jordan, a staunch Trump supporter, mocked Schiff’s concern about Atkinson’s firing. “He was Schiff’s key impeachment enabler,” Jordan wrote on Twitter.

Atkinson’s firing comes as US inspectors general, who are charged with independent oversight of federal agencies, were recently tasked with broad surveillance of the government’s response to the coronavirus, including the historic \$2.3 trillion fiscal package to mitigate its economic impact. Democrats have expressed concerns about how the fiscal package will be doled out through the US Treasury, headed by Steven Mnuchin.

Michael Horowitz, chair of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE), an independent agency in the executive branch and the inspector general at the Department of Justice, defended Atkinson and vowed on Saturday to continue to conduct “aggressive” independent over-

in production have been allowed to re-open while following anti-coronavirus precautions. Officials have repeatedly complained that many Iranians ignored appeals to stay at home and cancel travel plans for the New Year holidays that began on March 20.

Iranians traditionally travel to home provinces and popular vacation spots and organize family gatherings during the New Year holidays. Officials initially urged people to cancel such plans due to the coronavirus outbreak, and then imposed inter-city travel bans on March 25. Earlier the judiciary said most of some 70 inmates who escaped from a prison in western Iran last month are now back in jail. About 100,000 prisoners have been granted temporary release due to the coronavirus epidemic. Iranian media have reported unrest in several prisons.

### Criticism of US sanctions

In a rare comment in Britain’s Guardian newspaper, Tehran Mayor Pirouz Hanachi said US sanctions were crippling Iran’s fight against the coronavirus. “As a result (of sanctions), the ability of my colleagues and I to provide the health, logistical and other essential infrastructure necessary to combat the disease has been drastically reduced. We experience this loss every day, and it can be counted in people that would not have died,” Hanachi said.

Separately, the foreign ministry accused US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo of “medical-terrorism” through the sanctions, which have hit vital sectors such as oil and banking. “Undisputed fact: US ‘diplomats’ have long been in the business of coups, arming terrorists,” ministry spokesman



**SANAA:** A Yemeni barber cuts a customer’s beard while wearing a face mask and gloves amid the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, in the Yemeni capital Sanaa. —AFP

Accord. Fabrice Balanche predicted that accelerated Western disengagement from Middle East conflicts could limit Turkish support to the GNA.

That could eventually favor forces loyal to eastern-based strongman Khalifa Haftar, who launched an assault on Tripoli one year ago and has the backing of Russia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. Western countries have been hit hardest by the pandemic, which could prompt them to divert both military resources and peace-brokering capacity from foreign conflicts. A report by the International Crisis Group said European officials had reported that efforts to secure a ceasefire in Libya were no longer receiving high-level attention due to the pandemic.

### Iraq

Iraq is no longer gripped by fully-fledged conflict but it remains vulnerable to an IS resurgence in some regions and its two main foreign backers are at each other’s throats. Iran and the United States are two of the countries most affected by the coronavirus but there has been no sign of any let-up in their battle for influence that has largely played out on Iraqi soil. With most non-US troops in the coalition now gone and some bases evacuated, American personnel are now regrouped in a handful of locations in Iraq. Washington has deployed Patriot air defense missiles, prompting fears of a fresh escalation with Tehran, whose proxies it blames for a spate of rocket attacks on bases housing US troops. —AFP

## ‘He’s a total disgrace’: Trump defends firing US intel watchdog

**WASHINGTON:** President Donald Trump on Saturday defended his decision to fire the top watchdog of the US Intelligence Community, saying Michael Atkinson did “a terrible job” in handling the whistleblower complaint that triggered an impeachment probe of Trump last year. “He took a fake report, and he brought it to Congress,” Trump said during a briefing on the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Late on Friday, the White House told Atkinson, the Intelligence Community’s inspector general, that he would be terminated from his position in 30 days. He was a key figure in the run-up to impeachment, having found credible a complaint from a still-unnamed whistleblower within the administration that Trump abused his office in attempting to solicit Ukraine’s interference in the 2020 US election for his political benefit.

The president complained that after receiving the complaint, Atkinson did not come and speak to him about it at the White House. “He’s a total disgrace,” Trump said. Trump inveighed against the whistleblower as well, calling him “fake” and politically biased. “Frankly, somebody ought to sue his ass off,” he said. Atkinson’s firing prompted concerns among some Congressional Republicans and criticism from Democrats.

US Senator Richard Burr, who chairs the Senate Intelligence Committee, praised Atkinson, while noting Trump has the authority to fire him. “Like any political appointee, the inspector general serves at the behest



**WASHINGTON:** In this file photo, Michael Atkinson, Inspector General of the Intelligence Community, leaves a meeting in the US Capitol. US president Donald has fired Inspector General of the Intelligence Community Michael Atkinson. —AFP

sight of government programs. “This includes CIGIE’s Pandemic Response Accountability Committee and its efforts on behalf of American taxpayers, families, businesses, patients, and health care providers to ensure that over \$2 trillion dollars in emergency federal spending is being used consistently with the law’s mandate,” Horowitz said in a statement.

In bringing the whistleblower complaint to Congress, Atkinson expressed concerns that Trump potentially exposed himself to “serious national security and counter-intelligence risks” when he pressed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during a July 25 phone call to investigate Democratic presidential hopeful Joe Biden and his son, according to a Justice Department legal opinion. After contentious, partisan hearings, the Democratic-led House of Representatives voted to impeach Trump but the Republican-led Senate acquitted him of the charges in early February. —Reuters



**TEHRAN:** Iranian Firefighters disinfect streets in the capital Tehran in a bid to halt the wild spread of coronavirus. —AFP

Abbas Mousavi said on Twitter on Saturday. “But @SecPompeo ... and his masters have taken the ‘job’ to a whole new level: #Medical\_terrorism.”

Pompeo and other US officials have stressed that humanitarian supplies are exempt from sanctions Washington reimposed on Tehran after President Donald Trump abandoned Iran’s 2015 multilateral deal to limit its nuclear program. However, broader US sanctions deter many US and global firms from humanitarian trade with Iran. Meanwhile state media quoted President Hassan Rouhani as saying that state support for businesses hit by the coronavirus outbreak would be restricted to enterprises that give assurances not to lay off workers. —Reuters

## Single passenger flights: The daily woes of airlines

**WASHINGTON:** When Reuters photographer Carlos Barria boarded American Airlines flight 4511 from Washington Reagan National Airport to New Orleans on Friday for an assignment, he was the only passenger on the 76-seat jet. “There were some awkward moments,” Barria said.

Like when the gate agent announced a formal boarding process only to remember that Barria was the sole passenger who would board, or when the pilot approached his seat to personally explain a delay in take-off due to a mechanical issue, rather than speak over the PA system. The two flight attendants invited Barria to sit in a first-class seat and went through the safety demonstration for Barria alone. “I felt I had to pay attention,” he said.

Nearly vacant flights have become the norm for US airlines, despite a drastic reduction in the number of planes they put in the air each day as passenger traffic has diminished in the midst of the new coronavirus gripping countries across the globe. American Airlines Group Inc flew 119 flights out of Washington Reagan National on Friday; eight of those departures had only one passenger (including Barria’s) and many had just a handful, an American official said. On the same day last year, American operated 254 flights out of the same airport.

“Pretty soon we’ll even run out of people to cancel on US airlines,” American’s senior vice president of network strategy Vasu Raja said. The US Transportation Security Administration (TSA) screened 129,763 travelers on Friday versus 2.48 million on the same day a year ago, according to daily data it is providing on its website. US airlines, who say they are burning through cash every day, have applied for government aid meant to help them meet payroll and ensure they have trained staff available once the health crisis subsides and demand recovers.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Saturday reported 277,205 cases of the new coronavirus, an increase of 37,926 cases from its previous count, and said the number of deaths had risen by 1,150 to 6,593. Flight attendants continue to do their jobs, despite some telling Reuters that they fear contracting the virus and infecting at-risk family at home. One of the flight attendants on Barria’s flight said she would be flying from New Orleans on to her hometown Miami, where she was due to take her father for a cancer treatment after her four-day trip rotation that included sleeping in hotels every night.

“Our elected officials want us to continue to provide safe air travel through this crisis...we need to continue flying as requested and serving those that need to travel,” American Chief Executive Officer Doug Parker said in a video message last week. In an effort to protect passengers and crew, airlines have scaled back beverage and snack services, increased cabin cleaning procedures and allow flight attendants to wear gloves, though they are not given masks. By the end of Barria’s flight, he felt a camaraderie with the crew. “I was thanking them for what they do and they were thanking me for what I do,” he said. —Reuters

## Iran warns of virus surge; many ignore ‘stay home’ rules

**DUBAI:** A senior Iranian health official said the greater Tehran area may face a coronavirus resurgence after many residents flouted advisories to stay home, crowding streets and causing traffic jams across the city as the country’s New Year holidays ended on Saturday. Iran – the Middle East country worst-hit by the epidemic – said earlier on Saturday that 158 more coronavirus patients had died in the past 24 hours, bringing the total death toll to 3,452. The total number of cases reached 55,743.

“We are still concerned about the virus, for example with the level of traffic in Tehran today and queues of cars stuck on freeways, because these people can take the virus to their homes or workplaces,” Deputy Health Minister Iraj Harirchi said on state TV. “Even a medium level of virus here can spread to nearby cities with the high level of job-related traffic between nearby cities and Tehran,” said Harirchi, who has himself been ill with COVID-19.

“Dr Harirchi cautioned about a probable return of coronavirus in case of negligence and said social distancing measures were absolutely necessary,” said the TV. The television showed stores that had re-opened despite a closure order on non-essential services and businesses. Only enterprises involved



## International

# ‘There’s going to be a lot of death’, US president warns

## Coronavirus-related illnesses killed 630 in New York

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump told Americans to brace for a big spike in coronavirus fatalities in the coming days, as the country faces what he called the toughest two weeks of the pandemic. “There’s going to be a lot of death,” Trump said at a briefing with reporters. He pushed back on criticism that the federal government has not done enough to get ventilators that many critically ill coronavirus patients need to survive to the states, saying some governors are asking for more machines than they will need.

“Fears of shortages have led to inflated requests,” Trump said of submissions his administration has received to dole out equipment from the strategic national stockpile. The United States has the world’s highest number of known cases of COVID-19, the flu-like respiratory disease caused by the coronavirus. More than 306,000 people have tested positive in the United States and over 8,300 have died, according to a Reuters tally.

White House medical experts have forecast that between 100,000 to 240,000 Americans could be killed in the pandemic, even if sweeping orders to stay home are followed. “We are coming up to a time that is going to be very horrendous,” Trump said at the White House. “We probably have never seen anything like these kind of numbers. Maybe during the war, during a World War One or Two or something.”



Over 306,000 tested positive in the US

of New York City, where the number of cases “is like a fire spreading,” Cuomo told a news conference.

Health experts calculate that New York, home both to bustling Manhattan and hilly farm country stretching to the Canadian border, might be around a week away from the worst point in the health crisis which has killed about 60,000 people worldwide. “We’re not yet at the apex, we’re getting closer ... Our reading of the projections is we’re somewhere in the seven-day range,” Cuomo said. “It’s only been 30 days since our first case,” he said. “It feels like an entire lifetime.”

New York City alone accounted for more than a quarter of the US coronavirus deaths tallied by Johns Hopkins University. Hospitals and morgues in the city are struggling to treat the desperately ill and bury the dead. Because of the risk of infection, many people with critically ill relatives in New York City are unable to see their loved ones in their final hours. A resident at New York-Presbyterian hospital said he and his colleagues have made several death notification phone calls every shift this week. “There’s something sort of unquantifiably painful about telling a family their loved one died without letting them see them,” he said.

The emergency stockpile of medical equipment maintained by the US government has nearly run out of protective garb for doctors and nurses. Cuomo announced that the Chinese government facilitated a donation of 1,000 ventilators that will arrive at JFK airport on Saturday. “This is a big deal and it’s going to make a significant difference for us,” Cuomo said. The dispatch of the ventilators was a result of a conversation on March 27 between President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping, a source familiar with the discussions said.



NEW YORK: Bodies are moved to a refrigerator truck serving as a temporary morgue outside of Wyckoff Hospital in the Borough of Brooklyn in New York. — AFP

### Staying home, finally

Almost all Americans are under orders from state and local officials to stay home except for essential outings such as grocery shopping or seeing a doctor. Areas of the country such as Florida and Texas that had been slow to lock down have started practicing social distancing and sheltering at home. “We see what’s going on in New York now, we see that people are dying,” Rick Scott, a US senator from Florida, told Fox News Channel.

“People are beginning to understand that the best way that we can slow the spread and actually avoid death is by this stay-at-home standard, going out only

for essential services,” Texas governor Greg Abbott told the channel. He was among the last governors to issue a statewide order telling residents to avoid leaving their home. There were still some hold-outs elsewhere, though. Louisiana pastor Tony Spell said he plans to hold three services at his 1,000-member Life Tabernacle megachurch in a suburb of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on Palm Sunday this weekend, defying state orders against assembling in large groups. “We’re defying the rules because the commandment of God is to spread the Gospel,” he said. Louisiana has become a US hot spot for the virus, on Saturday reporting a jump in deaths to 409. — Reuters

### News in brief

#### Virus corpses left on streets

QUITO: Ecuador’s vice president Otto Sonnenholzner has apologized after scores of bodies were left on the streets of Guayaquil as the coronavirus ravages the horror-struck port city. Residents had published videos on social media showing abandoned bodies in the streets in the Latin American city worst hit by the pandemic. Authorities collected at least 150 corpses from streets and homes earlier this week, but did not confirm how many of the dead were victims of the outbreak. “We have seen images that should never have happened and as your public servant, I apologize,” said Sonnenholzer, who is heading the country’s virus response, in a statement broadcast by local media on Saturday. — AFP

#### Man kills 5 for ‘talking loudly’

MOSCOW: A man in central Russia shot and killed five people for talking noisily at night under his windows, investigators said yesterday. The shootings took place in the Ryazan region during stay-at-home orders aimed at slowing the spread of the coronavirus. A 32-year-old man from the small town of Yelatma opened fire on a group of four young men and a woman who “were talking loudly in the street under his windows” at around 10 pm on Saturday, investigators said. Yelatma is located near the city of Ryazan, which is situated some 200 kilometers southeast of the capital Moscow. — AFP

#### Coptic suspends services

CAIRO: Egypt’s Coptic Orthodox church has decided to suspend prayers preceding Easter celebrations later this month as part of efforts to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus. The church, which last month ordered the closure of churches and suspension of services nationwide, said the decision was taken on Thursday during a meeting chaired by Pope Tawadros II. “Prayers, including Holy Week services, which are considered the most important rituals in the Coptic Orthodox church, will be suspended” until the pandemic is contained, a statement posted on Facebook said. Holy Week prayers precede Easter Sunday, which this year will be celebrated on April 19 by the Orthodox community, one week later than the Catholic Easter. — AFP

#### Eleven killed in Colombia

BOGOTA: Eleven people were killed and four injured in an accidental explosion at a Colombian coal mine in Cucunuba, near Bogota, on Saturday, according to the local fire department. The victims were miners who were working despite the health emergency caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Most Colombians are quarantined by government order, but mining is among the activities exempted. Captain Alvaro Farfan, head of the fire department of the department of Cundinamarca, told local media that the accident occurred in a legally operated coal mine, although he did not give details about the type of explosion. On Friday, six other miners were killed in a similar incident at a coal mine in the municipality of San Cayetano in northeastern Colombia. — AFP

## Death at home: The unseen toll of Italy coronavirus crisis

MILAN: It took Silvia Bertuletti 11 days of frantic phone calls to persuade a doctor to visit her 78-year-old father Alessandro, who was gripped by fever and struggling for breath. When an on-call physician did go to her house near Bergamo, at the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak in northern Italy, on the evening of March 18, it was too late. Alessandro Bertuletti was pronounced dead at 1:10 a.m. on March 19, 10 minutes before an ambulance called hours earlier arrived. The only medication he had been prescribed, over the phone, was a mild painkiller and a broad-spectrum antibiotic.

“My father was left to die alone, at home, without help,” Bertuletti, 48, said. “We were simply abandoned. No one deserves an end like that.” Interviews with families, doctors and nurses in Italy’s stricken Lombardy region indicate that Bertuletti’s experience is not uncommon, that scores are dying at home as symptoms go unchecked and that phone consultations are not always enough.

In Bergamo province alone, according to a recent study of death records, the real death toll from the outbreak could be more than double the official tally of 2,060, which only tracks hospital fatalities. As the global fight to save lives centers on boosting the supply of hospital ventilators, some doctors say a lack of primary healthcare is proving just as costly because medics cannot or will not make home visits, in line with a worldwide tactic of switching to remotely delivered medical advice.

“What led to this situation is that many family doctors didn’t visit their patients for weeks,” said Riccardo Munda, who is doing the work of two doctors in Selvino and Nembro, two towns near Bergamo, after a colleague caught the virus. “And I can’t blame them, because that’s how they saved their own skin.”

He said many deaths could be avoided if people at home received prompt medical help, but doctors were swamped, lacked enough masks and suits to protect themselves from infection and were discour-



BERGAMO, Italy Member of the medical staff take care of a patient infected with the novel coronavirus at the COVID-19 division of the ASST Papa Giovanni XXIII hospital on April 3, 2020. — AFP

aged from making visits unless absolutely necessary. “Doctors give people at home a treatment. But if this treatment doesn’t work, if there is no doctor who checks and changes or adjusts the medicines, then the patient dies.”

While hospital workers were given priority access to masks, some family doctors say they went without and so felt unable to visit patients safely. A spokeswoman for the state-run ATS health agency in Bergamo said authorities in the Lombardy region, rated among the world’s most efficient for health services, told family doctors to “deal with patients by phone as much as possible”, limiting home visits “to reduce contagion and waste of protective equipment”.

She said 142 doctors in the Bergamo area were either sick or in quarantine but they had all been replaced. Authorities are now moving to reinforce primary care in line with recommendations by the World Health Organization, which says that delivering primary healthcare safely should be a priority for governments right after intensive care capacity.

In Bergamo province six special units of doctors

started operating on March 19, each equipped to visit sick people at home. In nearby Milan, where deaths at home and in centres for the elderly more than doubled in the second half of March, similar units began operating only on March 31.

### Hidden death toll

Italy’s official death toll reached 15,362 on Saturday, almost a third of the global total, but there is growing evidence that this vastly understates the real total because so many people are dying at home. A study by local newspaper L’Eco di Bergamo and research consultant InTwig, using data provided by local municipalities, estimates that 5,400 people died in the Bergamo province during the month of March, or six times more than a year ago.

Of these, it reckons that as many as 4,500 people succumbed to the coronavirus - more than double the official tally. This took into account 600 people who died in nursing homes and evidence provided by doctors, it said. The ATS did not respond to a request for comment on the study’s findings. — Reuters

## Lockdown silencing domestic abuse victims: Groups

MILAN: Italy has seen a sharp fall in official reports of domestic violence as it approaches a month under coronavirus lockdown, raising concern among some support groups that forced confinement is leaving victims struggling to seek help. Citing official data, a parliamentary committee into violence against women said last week that reports to police of domestic abuse dropped to 652 in the first 22 days of March, when Italy went into lockdown, from 1,157 in the same period of 2019.

Telefono Rosa, Italy’s largest domestic violence helpline, said calls fell 55% to 496 in the first two weeks of March from 1,104 in the same period last year. Other help groups said they had seen similar declines. The parliamentary committee’s report said the

trend did not mean a decline in violence against women but was rather a signal that “victims of violence risk being even more exposed to control and aggression by a partner who mistreats them.”

“There are a lot of problems in this situation, maybe not the least of them is the difficulty of asking for help when everyone is obliged to stay at home,” said Alessandra Simone, director of the police criminal division in Milan. Successive Italian governments have passed reforms aimed at improving protections, but 13.6% of women have suffered violence from a partner or ex-partner, according to national statistics bureau Istat.

The country has seen more than 100,000 cases of COVID-19 and accounts for almost a third of worldwide deaths. It was the first European nation to go into lockdown. “We’re seeing a drastic fall in calls by women because they have less freedom in this situation of forced confinement,” said Chiara Sainaghi, who manages five anti-violence centers in and around Milan for the Fondazione Somaschi, a social assistance foundation.

She said calls to her group had fallen by as much as 70%. Some help groups and the authorities say they have tried to launch other forms of contact, in-

cluding messaging services like WhatsApp, whose use has surged during lockdowns in many countries. Users in Italy are placing 20% more calls and sending 20% more messages on WhatsApp compared to a year ago, the company said in mid-March.

Italian police have in recent days adapted an app originally designed to allow young people to report bullying and drug dealing near their schools to report domestic violence by sending messages or pictures without alerting their partner. In Spain, where police said they had also seen a fall in calls for help, authorities launched a WhatsApp service for women trapped at home which the Equality Ministry said had seen a 270% increase in consultations since the lockdown began.

Valeria Valente, the senator who chairs the Italian parliamentary committee, said cultural and social factors in Italy already made it hard for many to report domestic violence. But she said the shutdown appeared to be leading some women who might otherwise try to leave their partners to stick it out. “How is a woman who wants to report violence supposed to move? With the lockdown (she) can only contact the anti-violence centers when she goes to the pharmacy or buys food,” Valente said. — Reuters



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## Business

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OPEC+ is working on a deal to cut the production of oil equivalent by about 10 percent of world supply, or 10 million barrels per day, in what member states expect to be an unprecedented global effort including the United States.

# Blame-game stalls OPEC+ meeting

## Row over OPEC deal collapse rages; oil prices rise from lows

**DUBAI/MOSCOW:** OPEC and Russia have postponed a Monday meeting to discuss oil output cuts until April 9, OPEC sources said, as a dispute between Moscow and Saudi Arabia over who is to blame for plunging crude prices intensified.

The delay came amid pressure from US President Donald Trump for the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries led by Saudi Arabia and its allies, a group collectively known as OPEC+, to urgently stabilize global oil markets.

Oil prices hit an 18-year low on March 30 due to a slump in demand caused by lockdowns to contain the coronavirus outbreak and the failure of OPEC and other producers led by Russia to extend a deal on output curbs that expired on March 31. OPEC+ is working on a deal to cut the production of oil equivalent by about 10 percent of world supply, or 10 million barrels per day, in what member states expect to be an unprecedented global effort including the United States.

Washington, however, has yet to make a commitment to join the effort and Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday put the blame for the collapse in prices on Saudi Arabia - prompting a firm response from Riyadh on Saturday. "The Russian Minister of Energy was the first to declare to the media that all the participating countries are absolved of their commitments starting from the first of April, leading to the decision

that the countries have taken to raise their production," Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said in a statement reported by state news agency SPA.

Putin, speaking on Friday during a video conference with government officials and the heads of major Russian oil producers, said the first reason for the fall in prices was the impact of the coronavirus on demand. "The second reason behind the collapse of prices is the withdrawal of our partners from Saudi Arabia from the OPEC+ deal, their production increase and information, which came out at the same time, about the readiness of our partners to even provide a discount for oil," Putin said.

The Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud disputed Putin's claims, saying Russia had withdrawn and that statements about the kingdom's withdrawal from the OPEC+ deal was devoid of truth, state agency (SPA) reported on Saturday. OPEC sources, who asked not be identified, said the emergency virtual meeting planned for today would likely now be postponed until April 9 to allow

more time for negotiations.

OPEC sources later downplayed the Saudi-Russia row, saying the atmosphere was still positive, although there was no draft deal yet nor agreement on details such as a reference level from which to make the production cuts. "The first problem is that we have to cut from the current production level now, not to go back to the one before the crisis," one of the OPEC sources said. "The second issue is the Americans, they have to play a part."

### Oil rises from lows

Oil recovered from this week's lows of \$20 per barrel with Brent settling at \$34.11 on Friday, still far below the \$66 level at the end of 2019. Prices had their biggest one-day gain ever on Thursday when Trump said he expected Russia and Saudi Arabia to announce a major production cut. The United States is not part of OPEC+ and the idea of Washington curbing production has long been seen as impossible, not least because of US antitrust laws.

Still, the oil price crash has spurred regulators in

Texas, the heart of US oil production, to consider regulating output for the first time in nearly 50 years. But US Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette, in a call with oil industry leaders on Friday, did not mention the possibility of US production cuts, a source who listened to the call said. On Saturday, US President Donald Trump focused instead on tariffs as a response to the oil price crash. "If I have to do tariffs on oil coming from outside or if I have to do something to protect our ... tens of thousands of energy workers and our great companies that produce all these jobs, I'll do whatever I have to do," Trump told reporters in a briefing about the coronavirus outbreak.

"The President has now told us what Plan B is: tariffs," said Robert McNally, president of Rapidan Energy Group in Bethesda, Maryland. Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak told Russian state media he understood that the United States had legal restrictions on output cuts but it should still be flexible. Other oil producers that do not belong to OPEC+ have indicated a willingness to help. Canada's Alberta province, home to the world's third-largest oil reserves, is open to joining any potential global pact. Western Europe's largest oil and gas producer Norway said on Saturday it would consider cutting its oil production if a global deal to curb supply is agreed by the world's biggest producers. — Reuters

## UAE doubles stimulus to \$70 billion

**ABU DHABI:** "The aggregate value of all capital and liquidity measures adopted by the CBUAE since 14 March 2020 has reached 256 billion dirhams (\$70 billion)," the central bank said in a statement.

Last month, oil-rich UAE announced stimulus worth \$35 billion that included aid to the banking system, facilities for loans and injecting funds into the bourses. Most of the new measures focused on easing financial and liquidity requirements for banks to free up cash for lending.

In the new measures, the central bank reduced by half to 7.0 percent the reserves banks are required to keep for demand deposits, which can be withdrawn by clients anytime. This will allow for some \$16.6 billion in liquidity to be used in new bank lending, the central bank said.

The regulator's new measures also allow banks to defer payment of loans for companies and clients until the end of 2020. "The additional measures announced today will effectively relieve the pressure on financial



**DUBAI:** People walk or ride bicycles over a bridge, during the novel coronavirus pandemic crisis, in the Emirati city of Dubai on Friday. The Central Bank of the UAE said yesterday it has doubled to \$70 billion a stimulus package to support the Gulf state's economy amid the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

institutions ... offering the required relief and continued access to funding for businesses and households," newly-appointed governor Abdulhamid Saeed said.

The UAE, where 1,505 coronavirus cases and 10 deaths have been reported, has introduced strict measures including halting travel and closing shopping malls and entertainment venues.

On Saturday night, Dubai, one of the seven emirates making up the UAE, announced a two-week lockdown in which it will carry out tests in densely populated areas. The bourse of Dubai has led the slide of the Gulf stock markets, shedding 36 percent in the first quarter, most of it in March. Its UAE sister bourse in Abu Dhabi dropped by 26.4 percent. —AFP

## Trump threatens to impose tariffs on oil imports

**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump said on Saturday he would impose tariffs on crude imports if he has to "protect" US energy workers from the oil price crash that has been exacerbated by a war between Russia and Saudi Arabia over market share. "If I have to do tariffs on oil coming from outside or if I have to do something to protect our ... tens of thousands of energy workers and our great companies that produce all these jobs, I'll do whatever I have to do," Trump told reporters in a briefing about the coronavirus outbreak.

Oil prices have dropped by about two-thirds this year as the pandemic crushes demand and as major producers Russia and Saudi Arabia boost output in a war over market share.

The United States in recent years has become the world's biggest oil producer, at times putting its exports

in competition with Russia and members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OPEC. As oil prices drop, many heavily leveraged US energy companies face bankruptcies and workers are at risk of layoffs. After meeting with industry executives on Friday, Trump said he was not considering tariffs at the moment, but it was a tool that could be used "if we're not treated fairly."

Two major industry groups, the American Petroleum Institute and American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers, told Trump in a letter on Wednesday that tariffs on oil imports would jeopardize the domestic refining business as some plants depend on crude from abroad. The United States imported more 1 million barrels per day of oil from Russia and Saudi Arabia combined in 2019, according to the US Energy Information Administration. Trump reiterated on Saturday that Saudi Arabia had told him it had agreed with Russia to jointly reduce output by an unprecedented 10 million barrels per day or more. The countries have not confirmed the plan, other than saying they would discuss ways to stabilize global oil markets. — Reuters



## Business

# Coronavirus leaves bitter taste for Canada maple sugar shacks

## Quebec province's measures to halt virus hurt maple producers

**MONTREAL:** Under a dazzling sky, with spring in the air, syrup is flowing in a maple grove near the village of Saint-Alexis. With a mallet in hand, feet braced in deep snow, Simon Lanoue pounds plastic tubing into one tree after another to drain their sap, weaving a vast spider web in the forest.

As the sweet liquid drips slowly from the trees, Lanoue laments his losses due to Quebec province's measures to slow the spread of the new coronavirus. "For me, this represents a shortfall of between \$80,000 and \$100,000," he said.

Quebec has ordered all residents to stay home except for essential tasks, closed eat-in restaurants and even limited travel in the province. The 140-seat dining hall in Lanoue's Osias sugar shack, located in an old barn about 60 kilometers (40 miles) north of Montreal, is deserted.

On weekends around this time of year, diners normally rotate in and out every two hours. Lanoue had to close his dining room in mid-March, barely two weeks after the start of "maple sugar time." An annual tradition that runs until the end of April, Quebecers and visitors flock to rustic sugar shacks to feast on spiced sausages, sticky baked beans, fluffy omelets and Christ's ears (deep-fried pork fat) — all layered with golden maple syrup.

It's topped off with a dessert of maple "taffy," made of thick hot syrup spread over snow and rolled around a popsicle stick. Usually, "catering represents from 75 to 80 percent" of revenues, but this year Lanoue will have to be content with the

sale of his syrup, "which does not represent much." "But there are cabins in worse shape than mine," he points out.

### 'Catastrophic situation'

A similar scenario is playing out in the neighboring village of Saint-Esprit, at the Constantin Gregoire sugar shack. "It is generally full everywhere," owner Denise Gregoire says in one of the three grand dining rooms, where moose antlers hang over a large fireplace. "On March 15, we closed our doors, and we will not be able to reopen this year, it will go to next year," says Gregoire, who had to lay off about 20 employees. Nevertheless,

Jacqueline, a client, wants to come "buy maple syrup, like every year. Usually we come to eat at the cabin. But this year, because of the virus, it's not possible."

There are more than 200 of these so-called "commercial" cabins in the province of Quebec, explains Helene Normandin, spokeswoman for the federation of

Quebec Maple Syrup Producers.

"It's a catastrophic situation," she says. "This year 2020 is completely lost for (owners)."

But COVID-19 or not, the production of syrup continues, the industry having been designated "essential" by the provincial government. Canada produces 92 percent of the world's maple syrup, largely thanks to Quebec (72 percent), with the rest coming from American border states.

Quebec has more than 11,000 producers grouped into 7,400 companies, most of them arti-



**SAINT-ESPRIT:** A worker is filling a barrel with freshly made maple syrup at the Constantin Gregoire Sugar shack in Saint-Esprit, Quebec. "For me, this represents a shortfall of between 80,000 and 100,000 dollars," laments Simon Lanoue, a maple syrup producer in Canada's Quebec province hit hard by measures to slow the spread of the new coronavirus. —AFP

sanal, which contribute annually up to Can\$600 million (\$422 million) to the local economy, supporting the equivalent of 10,500 full-time jobs. Quebec had a record season last year, harvesting more than 72,000 tons of syrup, with 80 percent of it exported to 60 countries. The United States, Germany and Britain are the largest foreign buyers. The current season promises to be "normal," according to

Normandin, projecting a slightly more modest harvest. "I think we are going to have a good year, and the syrup again is excellent," Lanoue says. And no shortage is anticipated, as the federation maintains a strategic reserve of "blond gold" to ensure price stability: more than 45,000 tons of syrup stored in barrels in a padlocked warehouse as large as five football fields. —AFP

## Giant small business scheme poses threat to US banks

**NEW YORK:** After laying off almost all of his workforce across seven stores, Legacy Toys owner Brad Ruoho sees a path to rehiring them only if the new \$350 billion US small business lending program performs as promised. Passage of the giant US relief package that includes the program "enabled us to feel more confident about bringing on extra help," said Ruoho, whose Minnesota-based chain has already re-hired 10 of 75 employees to support a growing e-commerce push. Ramping up the massive program will be a herculean task for the Small Business Administration (SBA) and for the nation's banks during a period of skyrocketing unemployment.

Signs were mixed by Friday afternoon, with the biggest US banks at various stages of rolling out their programs and the status of many lenders changing by the minute.

Questions cropped up on everything from bank money-laundering rules to how fast loans could be issued from lenders not previously part of the SBA programs. On top of that were nitty-gritty details about forms and documentation. The SBA on Twitter pointed to huge interest in the program—with more than \$2 billion in loans around 1900 GMT—but it wasn't clear how quickly those funds would flow to companies that face immediate cashflow problems.

Jim Friedlander, president of New York-based Arrangements Abroad, which organizes vacation packages, fears the funds may not arrive in time for him to avoid laying off some of his 32 employees. "The government, to its credit, is trying to do something fast and big, and you do want to be careful to avoid fraud," Friedlander said. "But it is helpful to have clear information so you don't have the expectation that the money is going to come right away."

### 'Up and running'

A linchpin of the newly enacted US relief bill is a \$349 billion Paycheck Protection Program, which provides forgivable loans to small businesses that retain their workers or rehire laid-off employees by June 30. The funds can be used to finance eight weeks of payroll or rent and are designed to allow small businesses such as restaurants, stores and hair salons to maintain their employees while remaining shuttered for public health.

Small businesses, which represent a segment of the economy with less access to private capital than larger companies, have received bipartisan support under the program, which is just one element of the \$2 trillion relief bill signed into law last week by Trump. Experts on small business finance have lauded the program's intentions, but expressed skepticism that Washington would be able to execute as quickly as needed.

They question whether the SBA, which will guarantee the loans, and the private US banking industry have enough bandwidth given the scale of need. At a press briefing Thursday night, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the government had doubled the interest rates on the loans to one percent following complaints from small banks and insisted the program would be "up and running tomorrow." —AFP

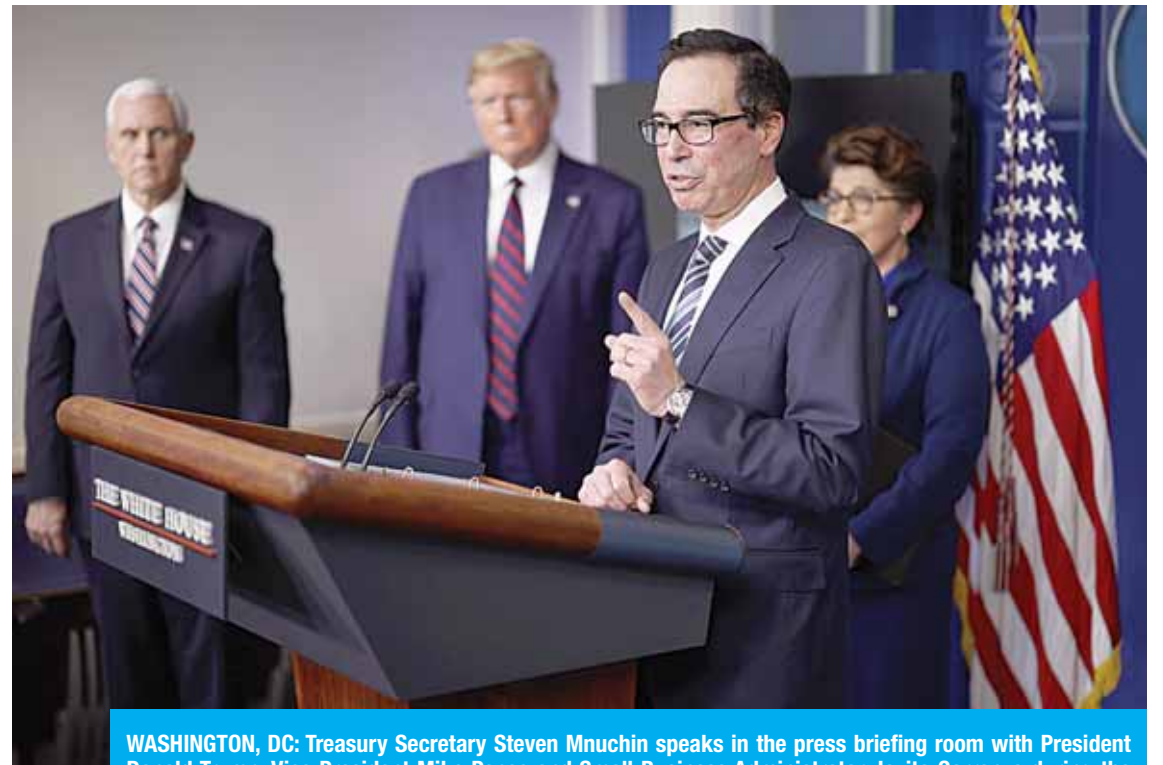
## Small businesses in US seek \$5.4bn in relief loans

**WASHINGTON:** Small and medium-size US businesses have applied for more than \$5.4 billion in government-backed loans as a key pillar of the country's coronavirus relief plan took effect, the Trump administration said. Jovita Carranza, who heads the federal Small Business Administration, said late Friday on Twitter that 17,503 companies—those with 500 or fewer employees—had filed applications through local banks for loans totaling more than \$5.4 billion. Friday was the first day the companies were able to apply for the money, intended in large part to help them pay employees' salaries. The loans, which could eventually total \$350 billion, constitute a central part of the \$2.2 trillion coronavirus relief plan adopted by Congress and then signed into law by President Donald Trump on March 27.

"I will immediately ask Congress for more money to support small businesses... if the allocated money runs out," Trump tweeted Saturday. But things were "so far, way ahead of schedule," he said, adding that Bank of America and community banks "are rocking!"

On Friday, most applications were submitted to local banks. Some of the biggest US banks said they had encountered difficulties with administrative procedures, although Bank of America reported that it had processed tens of thousands of applications by the end of the day.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin told the Fox Business Network that "our expectation is starting next week" all big banks would be ready. Companies that receive the money and do not fire their workers—or that otherwise re-hire those they



**WASHINGTON, DC:** Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin speaks in the press briefing room with President Donald Trump, Vice President Mike Pence and Small Business Administrator Jovita Carranza during the Coronavirus Task Force briefing on Friday in Washington, DC. —AFP

have laid off—will have their debt forgiven.

The funds are intended to help hundreds of thousands of restaurants, hair salons and other small- and medium-size businesses pay wages and rent for eight weeks, allowing them to keep staff on the payroll during virus-enforced closures. "If we run out of money we're going to go back to Congress and get more money," Mnuchin said. "This is a great, great program with bipartisan support."

But Mnuchin said he was working with key bank

executives to iron out any kinks and expected the largest banks to be taking part in the coming week. Mnuchin also said money transfers to households would start within two weeks, down from the previously estimated three weeks. A family of four can receive up to \$3,000 under the larger relief package. The first economic effects of the crisis struck across the United States in March, when 701,000 jobs were lost. The unemployment rate rose to 4.4 percent. —AFP

## US watchdogs overseeing \$2.3tn bailout

**WASHINGTON:** Who's watching over the US government's largest bailout in history — the \$2.3 trillion in fiscal stimulus to fight the economic impact of the coronavirus? Four different watchdogs made up of federal government officials and members of Congress have been created.

None of these groups will have any direct control over where any of the funds are directed — those decisions are being made by the US Treasury, headed by Steven Mnuchin, with the help of the Small Business Administration, other federal agencies, and outside advisers.

Instead, the watchdogs' role is to examine the decision-making process, and provide the public information about where the taxpayer dollars and other resources go.

Similar oversight mechanisms were "pretty effective and did a pretty good job of keeping fraud and waste down" during the stimulus spending after the 2008 recession, said Jennifer Ahearn, policy director at Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, an ethics advocacy group.

But the scope of what watchdogs are looking at is much wider in this case, she noted. Making the task more difficult, many of the watchdogs are only in "acting" roles because they have not been confirmed, and they may have less

support from the Trump administration.

### The pandemic response accountability committee

The CARES Act signed into law on March 27 includes \$80 million for the creation of this broad committee "to promote transparency and support oversight of funds provided in this Act to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus, domestically or internationally."

It is made up of 'Inspectors General' from other government agencies including the Department of Defense, Health and Human Services, and Treasury, making it a sort of uber-watchdog group, with broad oversight. It is tasked with reviewing "the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness" of the administration, and "fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement in Coronavirus response programs and operations." It can conduct independent investigations and has subpoena power.

Glenn Fine, the acting Inspector General (IG) from the Department of Defense, was named chair of the committee on March 30. On April 1, he named IGs to the committee, from agencies including the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Peace Corps. The committee is expected to set up a public website by the end of April; until then information can be found on the US federal IG website

### The special inspector general for pandemic recovery

This new IG, part of the Treasury Department, was given a \$25 million budget in the CARES Act to "conduct, supervise, and coordinate audits and investiga-



**KANSAS CITY:** Planes belonging to Delta Air Lines sit idle at Kansas City International Airport on Friday in Kansas City, Missouri. Four different watchdogs made up of officials and members of Congress are watching over the US government's largest bailout in history — the \$2.3 trillion in fiscal stimulus to fight the economic impact of the coronavirus. —AFP

tions of the making, purchase, management, and sale of loans, loan guarantees, and other investments" made by Mnuchin.

The White House said late on April 3 that Trump intends to nominate Brian Miller, a special assistant to the president and senior associate counsel in the Office of White House Counsel, to the role. President Donald Trump will not permit this special IG to report directly to Congress, the White House said on March 27.

### The congressional oversight commission

The committee includes five senior members of Congress, who will be authorized to investigate the Treasury and the Federal Reserve's attempts to keep the US economy strong. They will study the

"impact of loans, loan guarantees, and investments made under this subtitle on the financial well-being of the people of the United States and the United States economy, financial markets, and financial institutions."

### The house select committee on the coronavirus

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said on Thursday she would create a Congressional watchdog to ensure funds "are spent wisely and effectively" related to the three COVID-19 bills already passed by Congress, and any future legislation. The bipartisan House committee will be headed by House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn, a South Carolina Democrat. —Reuters



## Business

# NBK introduces e-Dividend services to its shareholders

## Pioneering service offered in cooperation with KCC

KUWAIT: As part of National Bank of Kuwait's (NBK) continued efforts to better serve NBK shareholders and provide them with the most convenient and easiest options to receive their cash dividend distributions, NBK announced that it offers e-Dividends service to its shareholder, enabling NBK Online Banking customers to receive their dividends payments directly into their bank accounts.

NBK is the first Kuwaiti bank to offer e-Dividend

Al-Khorafi highlighted that NBK values the health and safety of its clients and shareholders as one of its main priorities, especially through these unprecedented times we are going through due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The new service provides an easy and convenient option to have the cash dividends deposited into NBK customers' bank accounts through following few simple and easy steps to register for the service without the need to step foot in the bank branch.

"The e-Dividends service is a step forward in our digital transformation journey, as we strive to expand on our convenient online banking services and products through various electronic channels to reach different stakeholders including our customers and shareholders. This service is conveniently offered through NBK Online and NBK Mobile service, as we continue to lead the way in delivering first-in-class digital experience in the local and regional markets," Al-Khorafi added.

In 2016, KCC launched electronic transfers as an optional service. NBK was the first bank in Kuwait to provide the service to its clients and shareholders as soon as it was introduced. KCC, in cooperation with banks, continued to develop the service to successfully cover all banks and a large segment of dividend-paying companies. This year, the services became mandatory to all companies registered with KCC so that payments would be paid electronically going forward.



Mohammed Al-Khorafi



Khalidoun Al-Tabtabaie

Meanwhile, Khalidoun Al-Tabtabaie, CEO, Kuwait Clearing Company (KCC) said: "We highly value NBK's role in supporting our digital transformation efforts and we appreciate the strategic cooperation that ties us with such a leading financial institution."

"Digital transformation is a main pillar of KCC's corporate strategy as we move forward with the implementation all of our strategic plans aimed at providing the best quality in investor services. We will continue to cooperate with our partners in the Kuwaiti capital market to optimize all the services we offer," Al-Tabtabaie added. "We encourage all investors to sign up for the service at their earliest convenience through following the simple steps offered through the digital channels provided by their banks. The process requires a one-time registration to sign



up for the service that allows shareholders to have their cash dividends deposited directly by the companies through KCC," Al-Tabtabaie concluded. NBK held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) on March 7, 2020 and approved the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute 35 percent cash dividends to shareholders (equivalent to 35 fils per share) for FY2019.

Individual shareholders may register for the e-Dividend service through the online service through NBK online Service available on the bank's website <https://online.nbk.com.kw/WOLWebUI/PMlogin.aspx>

Corporate shareholders may register for the e-Dividend service through NBK Corporate Online Banking service (Watani Online Corporate) available on the bank's website <https://wolcorp.nbk.com/wolcotp/>, alternatively, an email may be sent to [WOLCUnit@nbk.com](mailto:WOLCUnit@nbk.com) to assist corporate clients to sign up for the service.



### Dividends to be paid directly into bank accounts

service to its shareholders in cooperation with Kuwait Clearing Company (KCC). Individual shareholders may register through NBK Online Banking service to have their cash dividends directly deposited into their bank accounts, while corporate shareholders may register through NBK Corporate Online Banking (Watani Online Corporate "WOLC") to utilize this convenient service offered by NBK, the first bank to participate in this service offered by KCC.

Eligible shareholders entitled to receive the cash dividend distributions who were holding the bank's shares as of March 23rd and were registered in KCC's records have started to receive the proceeds since Monday, March 30. Mohammed Al-Khorafi, General Manager- Operations Group at NBK said: "In keeping up with our continued efforts to better serve NBK shareholders and customers, we have introduced the e-Dividends service that allows shareholders to quickly and easily receive the proceeds directly into their bank accounts once they sign up for the service.

- **Al-Khorafi:** We strive to offer the best services to NBK shareholders providing them with the easiest and most convenient options to have their cash dividends directly deposited in their bank accounts
- The new service reflects our efforts to ensure our shareholders' health and safety amid the ongoing public health emergency
- **Al-Tabtabaie:** We value NBK's role in supporting our digitization efforts, a main pillar of KCC's strategy

## Spanish farmers, fishermen feel COVID-19 fallout

MADRID: The start of spring is usually a profitable time for Sergio Gomez, a strawberry farmer in southern Spain, but the coronavirus pandemic has completely disrupted his harvest this year.

"We have been losing money for five days now!" he said. Spain, like much of the rest of Europe, has been in a lockdown since mid-March to curb the spread of the virus and this has altered consumers' habits, with people making fewer trips to the supermarket and no longer eating out.

The closure of Spain's borders has added to the burden, leaving farmers struggling to bring in crucial temporary workers to pick produce and care for animals. One of the hardest-hit crops has been strawberries from Huelva in the southern region of Andalusia, which supplies Europe with 90 percent of the fruit at this time of the year. Demand for strawberries has been halved this year, according to farmers' unions.

And with the border with Morocco closed, only one-third of the temporary workers who usually come to pick strawberries were able to make the trip.

"The whole sector is very frightened," said Gomez, who exports 70 percent of his crop to France, Poland and the Czech Republic. Demand is "on a roller coaster", he added. "One day I have an order and I have to work an hour extra, the next I am twid-



Everything sells, but at lower prices. — AFP

dling my thumbs."

Manuel Piedra, secretary general of the UPA farmers' union in Huelva, said people were shopping as little as once every 10 days, causing sales of perishable goods to plunge. "Consumers have completely changed their habits," he said.

### Missing sheep shearers

Uncertainty also reigns in the "Sea of Plastic", some 20,000 hectares of greenhouses in the province of Almeria where much of Europe's fruits and vegetables are grown. "We don't know how the market will react, it's a lottery," said Juan Antonio Criado, a local farmer who next week will start harvesting watermelons for export to Germany. Adoracion Blanque, head of the provincial branch of farm union ASAJA, said foreign demand for vegetables has "re-

mained practically the same" but farmers were struggling with a shortage of workers due to lockdown restrictions.

The government has pledged 236 million euros (\$258 million) to help growers hire 200,000 workers. "All food products are arriving (in stores) in absolutely normal quantities and qualities," Agriculture Minister Luis Planas said this week. Livestock farmers will also suffer from travel restrictions.

Gaspar Gonzalez of the Fovex Sat cooperative in the sparsely-populated southwestern region of Extremadura was counting on bringing over workers from Uruguay to shear 100,000 sheep between April and June. They will arrive this year in May at the earliest. Finding local replacements will be hard because "here, unfortunately, this profession has disappeared," said Gonzalez. — AFP

## URC announces financial results for year 2019

KUWAIT: United Real Estate Company K.S.C.P (URC), announced its financial and operating results for the year ended 31 December 2019, recording an increase in revenues by 10 percent to reach KD 113.8 million as compared to KD 103.5 million in 2018. The Company's net losses decreased by 19.7 percent from KD 9 million in 2018 to KD 7.2 million in 2019.

The improvement in the financial results of the Company in 2019 were due to significant improvement in operating profits from contracting and services sector, an increase in rental revenues from commercial properties and stable revenues from hospitality business. Also, the Company was successful in its cost reduction program with reductions in its overall general and administrative expenses as well as its financing costs. Total assets of United Real Estate Company increased by 1 percent to reach KD 623 million at the end of 2019 as compared to KD 617 million at the end of 2018.



Mazen Issam Hawwa

Commenting on the results, URC Vice Chairman and Group Chief Executive Officer Mazen Issam Hawwa said, "Despite of ongoing challenges, the underlying assets of the Company and its operating entities performed relatively well, thereby resulting in the improvement of the operating performance of the Company. 2019 also witnessed the launch of the construction of Heshah Towers, a high-end residential development situated in Heshah Al-Mubarak District. The Company remains focused on enhancing

the performance of its operating entities and committed to its development projects in Kuwait and abroad. The Company's developments form a key part in URC's strategy to diversify its portfolio and income stream."

Hawwa concluded, "In light of the globally unfolding event of COVID-19 pandemic, URC and its Subsidiaries expresses its sincere appreciation and gratitude to all the brave men and women on the frontline, including medical personnel, law enforcement, defense forces, Government and Private sectors, and the Non-Government Organization volunteers; in combating the coronavirus outbreak in effort to keeping Kuwait and its people safe. May God protect our Country and the rest of the World from any harm."

## Swiss firms put 1.3m workers on shorter hours

WINTERTHUR/USTER: A quarter of Switzerland's workers have been put on shorter hours as companies seek to limit the financial damage of the coronavirus epidemic, the government said on Saturday, with both deaths and confirmed infections still rising. The national death toll from the outbreak has reached 540, up from 484 on Friday, while the number of people testing positive for infections also increased to 20,278 from 19,303, the health ministry said.

While the country is testing more and more people, the health ministry said the main reason for seeing more confirmed cases is that infections continue to rise. Switzerland has approved a total economic aid package exceeding 60 billion Swiss francs (\$61.37 billion) to help soften the epidemic's impact. Some 1.3 million workers, from a population of 8.6 million people, are on short-time work hours, a program normally meant to help firms temper fluctuating demand but which has been deployed now with unprecedented speed.



WINTERTHUR/USTER: A quarter of Switzerland's workers have been put on shorter hours as companies seek to limit the financial damage of the coronavirus epidemic. — Reuters

"The economy will not exit this crisis unscathed," said Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch, economy ministry state secretary. "Even so, with all the economic measures it has deployed, the government is creating confidence and opportunity in the future for everyone in Switzerland."

An emergency scheme to provide no- and low-interest loans to help businesses survive liquidity crises because sales have collapsed was doubled to 40 billion francs on Friday after the program was flooded by 76,000 requests so far. Daniel Koch, the federal health ministry's coronavirus czar, again cautioned Swiss residents to stay home and not to expect a swift easing of re-

strictions like shop and restaurant closures.

"We can't lift any measures before the number of infections really starts going down," he said. Six percent of deaths were people under 65, but the median age of those who have died in Switzerland so far is 83, Koch said, with 97 percent suffering from previous illnesses, underscoring those most at risk from COVID-19. The most common condition was high blood pressure with 69 percent, followed by cardiovascular disease at 55 percent and diabetes at 29 percent. "We absolutely want to protect our risk groups," Koch said. "Those are the people who are taxing our hospital resources and the ones who must fear for their lives." — Reuters

## Coronavirus 'amplifying' poverty in UK

LONDON: The coronavirus pandemic is increasing poverty in Britain, where levels are already high after a decade of austerity triggered by the global financial crisis, according to experts.

Official data shows that more than 14 million people in the UK are classed as living in poverty, or nearly one-quarter of the population. Some 4.2 million children are poor, or around 30 percent of the total, government figures show. The situation is worsening with Britons losing jobs en masse as the UK experiences lockdown.

"The risk of poverty is particularly high for workers in sectors like hospitality and retail where people are more likely to be on low wages and in insecure work," said Dave Innes, head of economics at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, an organization for social change.

Over the past fortnight, almost one million adults in the UK have applied for Universal Credit, the government's main form of state aid. That is nearly 10 times the level in an average two-week period.

### 'Education poverty'

"If families who were earning decent wages before the pandemic move on to the Universal Credit, they will very suddenly find themselves living in poverty," said Louisa McGeehan, a director at Child Poverty Action Group UK. As for families who were already classed as living in poverty prior to the outbreak-and whose children are stuck at home owing to schools being shut-the demands of online education add to the problem, she said.

McGeehan noted that "a lot of schools are putting lessons on the Internet for children to do at home.

"If those children are in households who don't have Internet or don't have a computer, they are not able to do that learning," McGeehan told AFP: "We have a nation where a child poverty crisis has been amplified by the impact of coronavirus."

But unlike the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis when the government slashed public spending, COVID-19 has sparked huge state stimulus, including a boost to Universal Credit.

An adult receiving the benefit who is aged over 25 will receive £1,000 (\$1,239, 1,137 euros) extra per year. However an increase in the monthly amount to £400 remains far below the level of £600 considered sufficient for a single-person household to avoid "poverty" in the UK. — AFP



## Health &amp; Science

## Chileans vulnerable to virus amid water crisis

**LAGO PENUELAS, Chile:** With historically low river flows and reservoirs running dry due to drought, people in central Chile have found themselves particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus pandemic.

Years of resource exploitation and lax legislation have allowed most reservoirs in that part of the country to run dry. "There are now 400,000 families, nearly 1.5 million people approximately, whose supply of 50 liters of water a day depends on tankers," Rodrigo Mundaca, spokesman for the Movement for the Defense of Water, the Earth and the Protection of the Environment, told AFP.

One of the main pieces of advice to protect people against coronavirus is to wash your hands regularly.

"Living without water is awful," said Dilma Castillo, who lives with her children on one of the hills around El Melon, a town of 22,000 close to the seaside resort of Valparaiso whose river has dried up.

"The worst thing is that there's no awareness, even among the people here. I'm very distressed because it's humiliating to live in these conditions." In the greater Santiago area and in Valparaiso, rainfall last year was almost 80 percent below the previous record low. In the northern region of Coquimbo it was down 90 percent. Water tankers serve many homes, whose inhabitants come out to fill drums.

The virus pandemic is highlighting "once more that where there is a model of the private appropriation of water ... this condition does not guarantee people's human right to water and further weakens communities," said Mundaca.

Chilean law states that water is a resource for public use, but it turned

over almost the entirety of the right to exploit the resource to the private sector. In the Penueles lake, an hour from Santiago, much of its bed appears cracked by the sun. "I've been coming here to fish for 20 years. At first we used to catch a lot ... now we don't catch anything," Tomas Ruiz told AFP from the banks of what was left of the lake.

**Residents angered**

Matias Asun, the director of Greenpeace-Chile, said this week that the government of President Sebastian Pinera must "guarantee that there are no second-class citizens without the basics to protect themselves from COVID-19." "Having soap is useless if there's not enough water to wash with it," he said. Chile has reported more than 3,700 coronavirus cases and 22 deaths.

Private exploitation of water wasn't a problem in times of abundance, as was the case until recently. But the drought has brought a furious reaction from communities that have run out of water in a country that saw an outbreak of social unrest in October that only subsided when social distancing measures were imposed.

Around 100 residents of El Melon occupied a well-managed by the Anglo-American mining company, one of many multinationals exploiting Chile's vast copper reserves. The occupiers are demanding that the well be used to provide water to people living in the region rather than for mining activity, said Fabian Villarroel, 26, one of the activists. Anglo-American sent a statement to AFP saying it was committed to the well-being of people living near its sites and was collaborating in the search for "solutions that allow for inhabitants in the



**MELON, Chile:** A man observes from a pier the dried Collague Reservoir, in Melon, Chile. Flows of rivers and reservoirs have reached historic minimums in Chile. — AFP

area to rely on a permanent supply of potable water."

**The water commodity**

"The 1981 water code separates the ownership of water from the dominion of the land," said Mundaca. In Chile, "water

is bought, sold or leased." The general director of Waters, Oscar Cristi, says the water rights have been delivered to private companies, but the state controls those rights and can limit the amount of water kept in reservoirs. However, the state has never exercised that right and if

it did, it would have to compensate the private firms affected. "The problem has to do with how those rights are distributed and what conditions are imposed," said Andrei Jouravlev, a member of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. — AFP

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## Camila Mendes adopts a dog to be her 'quarantine companion'

The 'Riverdale' actress has urged her followers to foster pets from their local shelters because the coronavirus pandemic has led to a steep decline in animal adoption. Camila shared a photo of herself and her dog hiking in the woods and wrote on Instagram: "My cuddly lil quarantine companion. Don't know what I'd do without her. 'Pls consider fostering a furry friend with all this time you're spending at home! I adopted truffle from @thelabellefoundation in LA but you can just reach out to your local animal shelters and see how you can help.'" 'Queer Eye' Antoni Porowski has fostered a pit-beagle mix named Neon from Austin Pets Alive! in Texas and urged others to follow his lead. He said in a video shared by the shelter: "It's very important for us to support local shelters because they're getting a lot less foot traffic during this crazy pandemic. 'If you are ready to adopt, I would encourage you to do that... and if you can't com-

mit to adopting, I would encourage fostering as well. 'You can commit for a week or two or longer or shorter, and just give them the nice quality of life that they deserve, because they're pups and they love unconditionally.'" Last week, Camila Morrone fostered a cute husky pup and branded the move her "single best decision" while self-quarantining. She wrote: Fostering a puppy during this quarantine time has been the single best decision. For all my friends showing interest in doing this, DO IT. You won't regret it. These sweet creatures need you so badly.'" Two days later, the actress - who is dating Leonardo DiCaprio - revealed she had also fostered her dog's sister. She wrote: "And then it happened. I'm officially obsessed with fostering. I couldn't stand the thought of Jack not being with his sister, so I asked if I could take in Jill (on the right) as well. These two beauties are looking for a permanent [home] hopefully together?"

## Clarkson's potty problem during self-quarantining

Kelly Clarkson had to use her "toddler's potty" to relieve herself after being hit by plumbing issues while self-quarantining. The 'Breakaway' hitmaker is currently holed up in a cabin in Montana with her husband Brandon Blackstock and their children River, five, and Remington, three, amid the coronavirus pandemic and she had to resort to desperate measures when her toilet was out of action. She tweeted: "So our plumbing froze up at our little cabin in Montana and, no joke, I just used my toddler's potty. And just like that I have no pride or shame! Each day brings something I thought I'd never do hahahaha." Despite the stressful situation, Kelly is staying positive and trying to embrace the simple pleasures of life. She shared a Twitter post of Steve Martin playing the banjo and wrote: "As if I didn't love this man enough. Woke up 2 this, snuggling with my 3 yr old little man, coffee n hand, singing along while he's playing. I'm gonna forget that we're all isolated & remember how lucky I am today 4 so many things. Thank u 4 this. Simple yet effective [smile and heart emojis] (sic)" mAnd the 'Voice' coach is also using her free time to start



exercising again. She tweeted: "Well it took a pandemic but I finally started working out again Rolling on the floor [laughing face emojis] #silverlining (sic)" Kelly had been due to kick off her 2020 Las Vegas residency at the Zappos Theater in Planet Hollywood on April 1, but earlier this month, she put the shows on hold until July. In a statement, Kelly explained: "As you may know, production on 'The Kelly Clarkson Show' was temporarily shut down late last night and out of concern and care for everyone's safety, we have chosen to postpone the April 1st opening of my Las Vegas residency. Invincible, until July. "Details regarding ticket replacement are forthcoming and I can't wait to see you this summer. For now, please keep your loved ones close, safe and healthy."

## R. Kelly is asking to be released from prison over coronavirus concerns

The 'Ignition' hitmaker is currently being held without bail in a federal prison in Chicago, Illinois, after being arrested on several sex crime charges, but his legal team have filed paperwork to have him released, because of the risk he might catch coronavirus - which is also known as COVID-19 - if he stays in the facility. In papers filed in US District Court in Chicago, his lawyers claim the 52-year-old singer is within the category of people described as high-risk by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, and



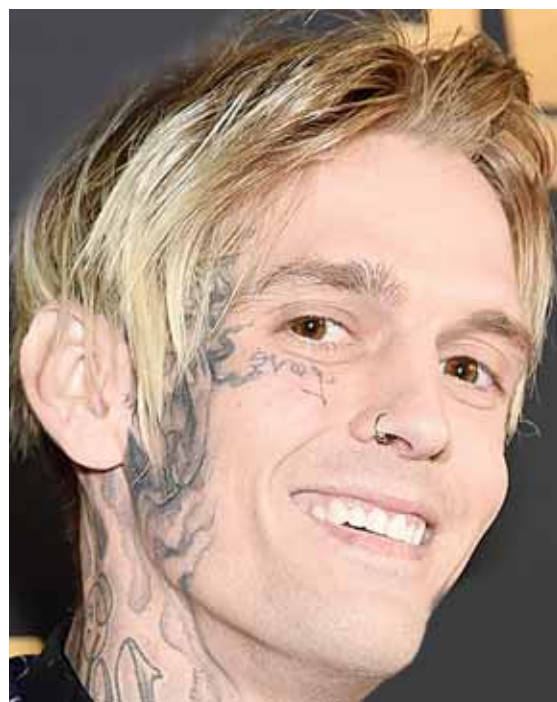
therefore should be allowed to self-isolate away from other prisoners. The filing also claims that sanitizer and soap are scarce in the Metropolitan Correctional Center, where the majority of inmates are kept in small, two-person cells that make social distancing difficult. Kelly's lawyers state: "The visitor's bathroom on the entry-level floor of the MCC frequently has no soap or paper towels available, which makes it difficult for individuals entering the facility to adequately clean their hands before visiting. "The courts have long recognized that there is no greater necessity than keeping a defendant alive, no matter the charge." A judge is yet to rule on the singer's motion, but according to the Chicago Tribune, prosecutors in New York have asked that he remain jailed. Earlier this month, it was reported Kelly was having difficulty meeting with his legal team, as the Metropolitan Correctional Center had suspended visits for 30 days in an attempt to keep coronavirus at bay. The 'I Believe I Can Fly' hitmaker is facing multiple charges in various states, including Chicago and New York, for crimes including sex trafficking, racketeering and child pornography. Kelly has maintained his innocence and denied all charges against him.

## Hayley Williams using self-isolation to learn important life skills

The 31-year-old singer has been on the road since she left home at 16 to tour as a member of Paramore, and as a result, never learned life skills such as how to plan meals, stock her fridge, and live on her own terms. But now she's stuck in her house as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, she's using that time to work on the domestic skills she never learned as a teenager. When asked about her home routine, she said: "Every day is a little bit different. So today, not bad. I also had a therapy session on the phone and baked. 'I mean, one day I'll kind of be a little bit existential and down and then the next day I'm kind of like, 'Oh, this time is asking me to slow down and be, give the world a break.' And I've been both directions. 'I left home at 16 to tour, and a lot of the life skills that some of my friends had, going to college and fending for themselves at an earlier age than me, I'm learning now," the star said. "I'm learning to meal plan and how to stock the fridge cor-



rectly. And it's just so funny that that's a skill that I've never acquired. But I'm working at it now and I'm encouraged." The 'Simmer' hitmaker also said learning how to live without being "handed" a schedule has been a challenge, as she was always told exactly how her days



## Carter's girlfriend arrested for alleged domestic abuse

Aaron Carter's girlfriend Melanie Martinez has been arrested for alleged domestic abuse. The 32-year-old singer and his girlfriend Melanie got into an argument last Sunday before things allegedly got physical, and police were called to the scene to arrest Melanie for alleged domestic abuse. According to TMZ, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department was called to Aaron's Lancaster home around 11pm on Sunday for a domestic violence call, and once they arrived on the scene, they took Melanie into police custody. Law enforcement sources allege there were visible marks on Aaron's body, which led sheriff's deputies to determine Melanie was the aggressor. The 'I Want Candy' hitmaker claims Melanie scratched him during the altercation, and cops have confirmed Aaron did have scratch marks on his body when they arrived at the house. TMZ reports Melanie is still in custody and being held on a \$50,000 bail. Following the report of the arrest, Aaron took to social media to speak in more detail about the altercation, in which he also accused Melanie of breaking her dog's leg. He tweeted: "so sad @petaa #ExGf #DomesticAssault My Heart Is Broken! another girl putting her hands on me when I try to break up with them for cheating on meits m\*\*\*ed right now :( and so is my heart "I'm not in jail for felony assault with animal control looking for my dog because she broke its leg and didn't take it to the hospital #FelonyAssault (sic)" But ultimately Aaron hopes Melanie can "get the help she deserves". In a series of other tweets, he wrote: "#ScornedWomen I hope she gets the help she deserves. I tried to give her a new life. "wishing her nothing but the best, but I won't stand for #DomesticAssault #Felony charges NOT ME I HAVE no CRIMINAL record thanks "so sad, :( I hope she gets the help she needs, no one deserves domestic abuse female OR MALE #DomesticAbuse #Cheater she literally chocked me out.... i'm devastated (sic)"



## Andy Cohen says coronavirus made him exhausted

The 51-year-old presenter revealed earlier this month he had tested positive for coronavirus - which is also known as COVID-19 - and after spending 10 days in quarantine, he has now started to feel much better. Andy says his symptoms included a fever, tightness in his chest, a cough, aches and pains in the body, exhaustion, and some chills, as well as a total loss of smell and appetite, and explained the virus made him feel drained. Speaking on his SiriusXM show 'Andy Cohen Live' he said: "It took 10 or 11 days to work through my system. You know, it takes a bit to get your energy back. There's a thing where you feel mentally like, 'Oh, I'm okay.' And then you realize, you go down-

stairs and make a piece of toast and you come upstairs and you're like, 'Now I need to relax.' " The 'Watch What Happens Live' star took plenty of Vitamin C and "liquids" to help him fight off the virus, and is now back on his feet and ready to spend time with his 13-month-old son Benjamin, whom he has been separated from since coming down with the illness. He added: "Today is a huge day for me. I have been quarantined from Ben for the last 12 days or so and I'm going to get to see him right after the show. "Two doctors said it would be safe to see him yesterday and I freaked out on Saturday night, worried. So I was like, 'You know what, let me just add a day to that.' " Before his diagnosis, Andy had

previously told his fans he would be filming new episodes of 'Watch What Happens Live' from his home, but had to shelve them because of his illness. In an Instagram post on March 20, he wrote: "After a few days of self-quarantine, and not feeling great, I have tested positive for Coronavirus. As much as I felt like I could push through whatever I was feeling to do #WWHL from home, we're putting a pin in that for now so I can focus on getting better. I want to thank all the medical professionals who are working tirelessly for all of us, and urge everybody to stay home and take care of themselves. (sic)". —BangShowbiz



## Lifestyle | Features

# Easter Island inhabitants turn to tradition to tackle virus troubles

Inhabitants of Easter Island are leaning on a traditional form of ancestral discipline to overcome a coronavirus-imposed lockdown that threatens the Pacific island's vital tourism sector, and consequently their livelihoods. Situated 3,500 kilometers (2,200 miles) off the coast of Chile, the island of 7,750 people is renowned for its giant humanoid monoliths called moais that were sculpted from basalt more than 1,000 years ago. So far, there have been just two confirmed coronavirus cases on Easter Island, with two or three more under observation. But the local population can ill afford the outbreak to spread with just one hospital and three ventilators on the island.

Faced with this crisis, the locals have turned to the Tapu, an ancient tradition based on taking care of oneself that has been passed down through generations of the native Rapa Nui people. "To accompany this self-care concept, we're applying the Rapa Nui tradition, an ancestral rule based on sustainability and respect," said the island's mayor Pedro Edmunds. "It's called Tapu. You can hear about this concept in all the Polynesian islands." Tapu is a complex concept related to secrecy, rules and prohibitions from which the English word "taboo" derives. "If you say the word Tapu to a Polynesian, they will immediately tell you why we have to do Tapu. That's precisely because they know and understand what it signifies," said Edmunds.

It means that the island's lockdown has been diligently respected, leading to the virus being prevented from spreading far and wide. "We've applied the Tapu concept for all Rapa Nui and the acceptance has been incredible," said Edmunds. "The virus is contained in two families in the same area, so we know where they are, who they are, and they've been respecting the (isolation) protocols since the beginning," Edmunds told AFP.

## Tourism impact

But now, there are greater worries about the pandemic's impact on tourism. On average, 100,000 people visit the volcanic Polynesian island each year, mostly attracted by the mysterious moais. The local

government was quick to react to the spreading pandemic in Latin America, closing the island's borders on March 11 — a week before Chile's government in Santiago did likewise — with the apparition of its first positive case.

Throughout Chile, there have now been more than 3,000 cases with 16 deaths. A week ago, Easter Island was put under total lockdown with a nighttime curfew from 2:00 pm to 5:00 am. On Tuesday, these were extended for a further two weeks.

## Plan B planting

With streets, beaches and parks deserted, the indigenous inhabitants have turned to the knowledge passed down through generations to deal with the crisis. Some indigenous Rapa Nui inhabitants have already adapted to their new circumstances and started to cultivate their land, like their ancestors did, said Sabrina Tuki, who has worked in tourism for 20 years. "Our family and many families are already applying a Plan B and we've already started planting," said Tuki, whose regular work has completely ground to a halt.

Everyone is worried about the coming months. Edmunds says the island's inhabitants can last for a month with the borders closed. But at the end of April, 3,000 people "will be seen begging in the streets for food from some local or national authority, because they won't be able to eat," said Edmunds. It won't be the Rapa Nui, though, according to Edmunds, because the community has begun to rally together behind its concept of Tapu. But the island's other inhabitants, who make up around half the population and mostly work in the service industry, will be in trouble.

## Taken by surprise

The mayor doesn't expect the recovery to come until August, when tourists would return to the islands. When it does restart, he's expecting a reduced capacity compared to the two flights a week the island was welcoming until three weeks ago.

Only one airline, Latam, operated the five-hour



View of Moais — stone statues of the Rapa Nui culture — in Easter Island, 3700 km off the Chilean coast in the Pacific Ocean.—AFP photos



A ship navigates near the shore of Easter Island.



View of a Moai — a stone statue of the Rapa Nui culture — on a deserted street in Easter Island.



View of boats moored at a pier in Easter Island.

flights from the continent, but like many airlines its business has been hard hit by the virus. "We're all affected: the whole chain, from the biggest agency to the craftsman," said Samuel Atan, a hiking guide who says the crisis caught everyone unawares. The pan-

demie has highlighted the fragility of such a remote location. Without state subsidies, many could not survive, Edmunds says. The challenge for the future will be to improve infrastructure and "re-enchanted people to come back," said Tuki.—AFP

## Disney delays Marvel blockbusters but hopes for summer 'Mulan' launch

Disney delayed the releases of more than a dozen major films Friday, but has not given up on a summer blockbuster with "Mulan" now penciled in for a July launch despite the coronavirus pandemic. The revised schedule confirmed eagerly awaited Marvel movies "Black Widow" and "The Eternals," as well as the latest "Thor" and "Doctor Strange" sequels, have all been pushed back as the virus shutters theaters around the world. "Black Widow" starring Scarlett Johansson, the first of the new "phase" of the record-breaking superhero franchise, will now debut in November, causing most subsequent installments to move later in a domino effect.

One untitled Marvel film previously set for summer 2022 was removed from the schedule entirely. But in a note of optimism that North American movie theaters could reopen sooner rather than later, "Mulan" — a mega-budget live action remake of the tale of a legendary Chinese warrior — is now tentatively set to launch July 24. That chimes with positive notes from National Association of Theatre Owners officials, who told a webinar Friday that theaters could reopen late May or June with social distancing measures in place to seat audience members far enough apart.

However, Disney's "Artemis Fowl" became the latest major studio film to skip theaters entirely and move directly to streaming — a trend that has triggered alarm among movie exhibitors. The children's book adaptation will debut on Disney+ instead, at an undisclosed date. The next Indiana Jones film, currently untitled, was pushed back an entire year to July 2022, while a confirmed "Captain Marvel" film bucked the trend by moving to an earlier slot that same month. —AFP



In this file photo an employee cleans the grounds behind the closed gates of Disneyland Park on the first day of the closure of Disneyland and Disney California Adventure theme parks as fear of the spread of coronavirus continue, in Anaheim, California.—AFP

# Quibi launching Hollywood 'on the go' streaming amid lockdown

Quibi, the multi-billion-dollar streaming platform launching Monday, is betting it can transform entertainment with short, Hollywood-quality clips to watch "on the go" — even as much of the world is trapped at home. Industry legends and stars from Steven Spielberg and Guillermo del Toro to Jennifer Lopez and Reese Witherspoon have lined up to make movies and shows for the youth-focused, smartphone-only service.

Tapping into the boom in mobile video viewing, all content will be delivered in clips of no more than 10 minutes — or "quick bites." Every show must be made in both horizontal and vertical formats, automatically flipping between the two as viewers rotate their phones. But Quibi's plans were set long before the coronavirus pandemic prompted stay-at-home orders for billions of people around the globe — meaning nobody is quite sure how to measure success in the months ahead, its CEO told AFP. "Honestly, we don't know, because we are launching in unprecedented times," said Meg Whitman, who previously led eBay. "I don't think any of us have ever seen anything quite like this."

While presumably fewer people will now watch during commutes or coffee breaks, self-isolation could prompt its own need for quick distractions, Quibi executives say. "People still have in-between moments — it's just different," said Whitman. One such moment, she suggested, could come when an exhausted parent takes a pause from homeschooling children. "I live on Zoom calls all day," she said, referring to the popular remote confer-

encing software. "But occasionally I'll have 10 or 15 minutes between Zoom calls (and) I'll watch a Quibi."

## 'A little crazy'

A formidable lineup — 50 shows at launch, with 175 originals in its first year — helped make Quibi's decision to stick with its long-established April 6 launch a lot easier, said Whitman. Big Hollywood names have committed to work with Quibi thanks to its founder, Jeffrey Katzenberg, a

After an initial batch at launch, one "chapter" will be released per day, with the aim to rekindle the "water-cooler moments" of traditional television. New scripted content is already scheduled through late fall. But amid the deep uncertainty facing Hollywood, what comes next is anyone's guess. "We certainly hope the production will be back online soon," said Whitman. "We just don't know... You have to tolerate ambiguity well."

would actually not be able to get into production for us," she said. "But they've all come on."

## '\$100,000 a minute'

Subscriptions will cost \$5 monthly with ads, or \$8 without. But with cash short for many as unemployment surges, Quibi last month extended its two-week trial period to a 90-day offer. Quibi must also compete for younger viewers' time with millions of free — often user-generated — videos hosted by YouTube, TikTok, Facebook and Instagram. The assumption is that, just as HBO transformed television with its premium subscription content, Quibi can get people to spend if the quality is high enough. "We pay up to \$100,000 a minute for our premium long-form movies and chapters," said Whitman.

"What we will produce for the money that we are spending is very different to the incredible creativity of people who are producing shows for \$500 a minute," she added. Quibi's eye-watering budgets are more comparable to longer-form streaming platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+ and Apple TV+, with HBO Max and Peacock set to join the fray shortly. But Whitman insists Quibi — aiming to create "the next big wave of storytelling" — does not view those as direct rivals. "There were movies, there was television, there was streaming," said Whitman. "And now maybe there is this new way to tell stories for mobile, in Hollywood-quality ways." —AFP



In this file photo Quibi CEO Meg Whitman speaks about the short-form video streaming service for mobile Quibi during a keynote address at the 2020 Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, Nevada.

towering figure in Tinseltown who ran Disney Studios for a decade and co-founded DreamWorks. "We had enough content in the bank," Whitman said. Launch movies such as psychological thriller "Survive" — starring "Game of Thrones" alumna Sophie Turner — and Liam Hemsworth's dystopian "Most Dangerous Game" are expected to draw early subscribers.

Quibi also aims to keep users coming back with daily news, sports and entertainment shows — a genre far harder to produce at a time when studios are closed across the US. "It's been a little crazy," admitted Whitman, who said many shows will broadcast from hosts' homes rather than specially constructed studios. "Two weeks ago, we thought maybe four or five of these 'Daily Essentials'



## World's largest jazz festival in Montreal cancelled due to pandemic

This year's Montreal Jazz Festival, the world's largest, and other popular summer jamborees in Canada's francophone metropolises were cancelled Friday due to the COVID-19 pandemic, organizers announced. It had been scheduled to start on June 25. "This decision, which was made with our private partners and the government, was not an easy one, but it had become necessary in order to protect the public, the artists and our employees," the Jazz Festival's general manager Jacques Primeau said in a statement.

The Francos de Montreal music festival, which is put on by the same group and was scheduled for June 12, was also cancelled, he said. The pair of summer festivals attract hundreds of thousands of visitors each year to Canada's second-largest city. Organizers of the hugely popular Just for Laughs Festival, usually held in late July, also announced Friday that they were postponing the comedic performances until the fall. And a cycling event, the Tour de l'île, scheduled for June 7, was cancelled. —AFP



# Many residents take coronavirus surveillance into their own hands



HEERLEN, Netherlands: A drone is used by police to control people and ask them to respect social distances at a shopping boulevard on Saturday. — AFP

## Iraqis rally to help needy families as...

Continued from Page 1

modest private-sector economy has come to a grinding halt overnight.

Iraq is OPEC's second-biggest oil producer, but is ranked among the 20 most corrupt countries in the world by Transparency International. The World Bank says one in five Iraqis lives under the poverty line. Sensing that relying on authorities would be unwise, young activists, community figures and local religious leaders have come together to try to support those with no income. Using donations to buy essentials, like lentils, beans, rice and sugar, they pack supplies in plastic bags, talk their way through checkpoints and distribute them across the city.

Mustafa Issa, a 31-year-old Iraqi Shiite who helps distribute food to more than 450 families, told AFP he felt bound by a religious duty to help. "It's not like when we were under embargo in the 1990s," he said, referring to crippling international sanctions imposed on Iraq under former dictator Saddam Hussein that made even basic foodstuffs unavailable. "Baghdad is full of food right now, but people can't buy it. One construction worker we support has a family of eight, and suddenly has no income. Another man had sold his cooking gas canister to buy food. A third sold his phone," he said.

In a society that deeply values abundance and generosity, particularly at the dinner table, some are too proud to admit they need help. "One woman walked halfway across the city to ask for help at another mosque so no one from her own neighborhood would recognize her," Issa said. One government official told AFP that almost half the population could be food-poor by May, adding that authorities were studying options for subsidies.

The country imports most of its staples, including

rice, meat and wheat. Officials say Iraq's \$60 billion in reserves would cover more than a year of food imports, but already prime minister-designate Adnan Zurf on Saturday expressed worry that the government might have to cut public-sector wages. Issa was not taking any chances. "We don't know when this crisis will end. It could go on until July. Some of us are storing goods for later," he said. "This is more dangerous than Daesh," he added, referring to the Islamic State group that swept through a third of Iraq in 2014. That conflict further ravaged Iraq's dilapidated medical infrastructure, and there are fears a spike in COVID-19 cases would overwhelm hospitals.

Iraq, which relies on oil revenues for more than 90 percent of its state budget, is also facing the lowest crude prices in more than a decade and a paralyzed political class unable to reach consensus over a new cabinet. Some Iraqis are taking public health into their own hands. Asaad Al-Saadi, 40, has turned his Baghdad home into a makeshift workshop, producing face masks to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19. "I saw the pandemic was spreading quickly and the simplest ways to fight it weren't available," Saadi said.

He bought two sewing machines and now produces around 1,000 masks per day. They are distributed in packs of 10 to needy families. Saadi is also considering making other kinds of protective gear for under-equipped health workers. Such grassroots efforts have swept through the provincial capitals of the south, down to the oil-rich port city of Basra. Some are led by Iraqi women, in a country that remains broadly conservative and where just 15 percent of working-age women are employed.

Free food, money discretely slipped to desperate Iraqis, landlords suspending rent payments - initiatives all independent of government or political directives. Mohammad Jabboury, a farm owner in Iraq's west organizing food distributions and urging landlords to lower rents, expressed a sense of obligation towards those less fortunate. "It's our duty to help those in need until God saves us from this pandemic," he said. — AFP

skills they acquire during the assessed period, after giving students a suitable grace period to do these tasks.

As far as tuition fee is concerned, the 2019-2020 school year regulations set by the ministry include a condition banning collecting any fees for students' use of online learning and deferring the payment of the delayed fees until the distribution of certificates at the end of the school year - be that following the online courses or after the conclusion of the period dedicated to resuming the current school year studies. The decision also included a regulatory measure that guarantees the privacy of information and data transmitted and exchanged between the student and the school, and the prohibition of publishing anything that might affect this privacy policy.

Saturday as part of measures to contain the outbreak, the interior ministry said in a statement. Saudi Arabia is worst hit in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) group of Arab oil monarchies. It had reported 2,179 cases of confirmed infections up until Saturday and 29 deaths.

In Dubai, mobility will be restricted and legal action taken against violators though supermarkets and pharmacies, as well as food and drug delivery services would continue normal operations, WAM said. People can only leave their homes for essential purposes and just one family member is permitted to go out at any one time. People working in vital sectors, or those exempted from restrictions, will not be affected.

Dubai's metro and tram service will be suspended for two weeks and free bus transportation and a 50% discount on taxi rides will be offered during the lockdown. The emirate, which had previously sealed off the Al Ras area where there is a large migrant population, will conduct extensive medical tests across densely populated areas.

The UAE, where infected cases have jumped by 840 since April, also extended its de facto overnight curfew indefinitely to disinfect public areas by spraying streets, parks and public transport facilities. Abu Dhabi's government on Saturday extended closure of malls, cinemas, entertainment facilities and gyms until further notice, WAM reported. The UAE recommends that people wear masks when leaving home, a health ministry spokeswoman told a news conference on TV.

In Saudi Arabia, said residents in seven Jeddah neighborhoods could only go out for grocery shopping and medical care between 6 am (0300 GMT) and 3 pm and movement in and out of the areas will be restricted. Similar measures have been announced in the past few days in other Saudi cities, including the Gulf port of Dammam, the main

ROME/KUALA LUMPUR: A week after Malaysia ordered a partial lockdown to slow the spread of the coronavirus, construction supervisor Hafi Nazhan saw residents in his affluent Kuala Lumpur neighborhood jogging outside. He took photos of people flouting the stay-at-home order and published them on Twitter, receiving hundreds of shares. Hafi's followers informed the police, who subsequently arrested 11 joggers in his neighborhood. They were charged with violating the movement restriction order and each fined 1,000 ringgit (\$230) in court.

"I was upset some people did not take this stay-at-home order seriously. These are well-educated people," Hafi, 26, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation, adding that police were spurred into taking action after his tweets went viral. As governments around the world urge citizens to stay indoors to contain the deadly virus, concerned communities are taking surveillance matters into their own hands, reporting alleged breaches of quarantine and questioning anyone they deem suspicious.

The respiratory disease - which emerged in China late last year - has infected roughly 1.2 million people and killed about 65,000, according to a global tally by Johns Hopkins University. In Singapore, a Facebook post by a man sharing a photo of himself enjoying a bowl of bak kut teh - pork rib soup - in a restaurant when he should be self-quarantining at home was so widely circulated that officials stepped in. Singapore's law minister ordered an investigation and the immigration authorities told local media the man was likely to be charged, although they did not respond to requests seeking comment.

In New Zealand, which is under a one-month shutdown, a police website set up to allow residents to report their neighbours who break isolation rules crashed hours after going live. The website has received about 14,000 reports in less than a week since its March 29 launch. New Zealand police said in an email. They reportedly include people playing frisbee and holding parties.

In Italy, which has been under lockdown for weeks, fraying tempers have led to people being insulted from

## All hands on deck to fight a once in...

Continued from Page 1

I know this is difficult as nations find themselves increasing domestic spending by record amounts. But that spending will be in vain if we don't control the virus. Coordinated swaps among central banks can also bring liquidity to emerging economies. Debt alleviation must also be a priority - including immediate waivers on interest payments for 2020.

Third, recover better. We simply cannot return to where we were before COVID-19 struck, with societies unnecessarily vulnerable to crisis. The pandemic has reminded us, in the starkest way possible, of the price we pay for weaknesses in health systems, social protections and public services. It has underscored and exacerbated inequalities, above all gender inequity,

## People are still getting married...

Continued from Page 1

"The government has set strict penalties for violators of the curfew, including a hefty fine of KD 10,000 and imprisonment for up to three years, but people still break the curfew, so how do we expect them to not break the gathering rule? Nobody will get married with the attendance of only five people. Even if they limit the celebration to their close family, only the parents and siblings will number over 20, not mentioning other relatives and friends," said Binessa.

After the national holidays in February, the documentation department started operating partially

entry point for supply to the kingdom's oil industry.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump warned Americans to brace for a "very horrendous" number of coronavirus deaths in the coming days, ahead of a rare speech by Queen Elizabeth II on Sunday aimed at rallying hard-hit Britain. Global deaths from the COVID-19 pandemic have soared past 60,000, with Europe continuing to bear the brunt of the virus which has left roughly half the planet confined at home.

There are now more than 1.2 million confirmed cases across the globe, and around 65,000 people have died since the virus first emerged in China late last year, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally. Trump said the United States was entering "a time that's going to be very horrendous" with "some really bad numbers". "This will probably be the toughest week," he said at the White House. "There will be a lot of death."

Over 45,000 global deaths have been in Europe, with Britain reporting a new daily high in fatalities, taking the overall toll to 4,300 out of nearly 42,000 cases. Queen Elizabeth II was to make a rare, "deeply personal" speech yesterday to urge people to rise to the challenge posed by the coronavirus, and personally thank frontline healthcare workers.

At the Vatican, Pope Francis was expected to livestream his Palm Sunday Mass. St Peter's Square is usually packed by Catholic faithful for the occasion, but this year, it will be empty because of coronavirus containment measures. There was, however, some encouraging news from Europe over the weekend. Worst-hit Italy cheered after seeing its number of intensive care virus cases drop for the first time - from 4,068 on Friday to 3,994 on Saturday.

Even some of the most cautious Italian health officials seized on the figures as evidence that the tide may be turning in the deadliest disaster the

balconies or photographed and put on social media. In Spain, locals have also begun posting videos of people going for a run, walking in the park, riding a bike - all prohibited activities - on social media.

Such tip-offs and videos have sparked a debate over digital ethics with some arguing that normal privacy rules do not apply in a health emergency because the information is in the public interest. "When we are all threatened with the risk of catching a lethal, incurable disease I see no reason why individuals should not report their legitimate concerns to the authorities," said David Watts, former privacy commissioner for Australia's Victoria state.

"There is not much point having privacy rights when you are dead," added Watts, who now teaches information law and policy at Melbourne-based La Trobe University. For David Lindsay, law professor at the University of Technology Sydney, privacy is "not an absolute right and must always be balanced against other rights and interests". "The balance struck obviously depends upon circumstances, and a global pandemic is an extreme event," he said.

Still, both Watts and Lindsay said the balance between privacy and surveillance should be reset when the pandemic is over. Others, like Joseph Cannataci, the United Nations special rapporteur on the right to privacy, fear surveillance measures ranging from facial recognition to phone tracking could outlast the current crisis. "Dictatorships and authoritarian societies often start in the face of a threat," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation this week.

Community surveillance could also end up being used "in a malicious way, particularly to replicate prejudice or bias", warned Raman Jit Singh Chima, Asia policy director at digital rights group Access Now. "Often the people who might be reported on will be the least privileged, or might be belong to, in the case of India, lower caste communities or people who have to work outside," he said. Human rights experts worry that the tens of thousands of migrant workers who returned to Myanmar after a shutdown in neighboring Thailand's left them jobless will come under intense scrutiny. — Reuters

laying bare the way in which the formal economy has been sustained on the back of invisible and unpaid care labor. It has highlighted ongoing human rights challenges, including stigma and violence against women.

Now is the time to redouble our efforts to build more inclusive and sustainable economies and societies that are more resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change and other global challenges. The recovery must lead to a different economy. Our roadmap remains the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.

The United Nations system is fully mobilized: Supporting country responses, placing our supply chains at the world's disposal, and advocating for a global ceasefire. Ending the pandemic everywhere is both a moral imperative and a matter of enlightened self-interest. At this unusual moment, we cannot resort to the usual tools. Extraordinary times demand extraordinary measures. We face a colossal test which demands decisive, coordinated and innovative action from all, for all.

NOTE: This article first appeared in The Guardian

from March 1. It also has an emergency WhatsApp number: 24991395. "This department provides services such as marriage permissions and issuing marriage certificates. After reports were published that marriages are still being registered, more people got encouraged to get married," he pointed out.

"What is good is that those who were in the process of getting divorced (by verbally saying divorce less than three times) can get back to each other before the legal period lapses. The negative side is that we can't control the marriage ceremony - an example was a lunch invitation for a marriage and the organizer recorded a video of the celebration with a large number of people gathered," Binessa said. "I have stopped registering marriages, especially since my immune system is not very strong, and also because I'm doing this service voluntarily - it's not a job. There are 130 malaaches in Kuwait, and a large number of them are still providing their services currently," he added.

country has faced since World War II. The daily rise in new infections across Italy has also slowed. It reported 681 new deaths on Saturday, down from a peak of almost 1,000 just over a week ago.

Spain, which is under a near-total lockdown, saw a second successive daily fall in coronavirus-related deaths with 809 fatalities. The total number of deaths in Spain now stands at 11,947, second only to Italy. Although the number of new cases also slowed, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez announced an extension of the country's lockdown until April 25.

New York state, the US epicenter, saw a record 630 deaths in a single day and Governor Andrew Cuomo warned the worst was yet to come. The state has recorded a total of 3,565 deaths. Cuomo also cautioned that already strained hospitals were not prepared. New York City appealed for licensed medical personnel to volunteer their services. Trump said 1,000 military personnel, mostly doctors and nurses, would be deployed to help in the city, which he described as "the hottest of all the hot spots". Several Western countries including the US, Germany and France have in recent days encouraged the use of masks in public despite earlier saying that only carers needed to cover their faces. The U-turn has angered and confused some citizens, and spurred a flurry of online tutorials for DIY masks. The advice came after some studies suggested the new coronavirus can be spread through speaking and breathing, not just coughing and sneezing.

US authorities said wearing a simple homemade mask or scarf could help stem rocketing infection rates. The World Health Organization is reviewing its guidance but has said it worries that masks could give "a false sense of security", leading people to be more casual about hand washing and social distancing.

## MoE: E-learning optional, classes...

Continued from Page 1

following the period to be dedicated to completing the current school year for students who do not wish to study online.

The ministry also decided to adopt assessment methods for e-learning based on student-teacher interaction and communication, attendance, participation, homework assignments and students' commitment to doing them in view of the basic

## Lockdown of expat areas eyed amid 77...

Continued from Page 1

increase as oil prices crash. MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari called on lawmakers to stand against the debt law and reject it, saying the government which failed to manage national wealth at times of prosperity will not be able to manage the huge loan in times of crisis. MP Thamer Al-Suwait said he and his colleagues will not allow the passage of the debt law, which aims to fulfill the desires of some influential sectors.

Meanwhile, 11 opposition lawmakers issued a statement in which they said they will not support the stimulus package announced by the government last week because it lacks clarity and transparency. They said that they have strongly supported the government during the ongoing crisis, but this does not mean that its decisions are immune to questioning. They vowed that once the ordeal is over, they will raise some issues.

Dubai imposed a two-week lockdown Saturday night and Saudi Arabia sealed off parts of the Red Sea city of Jeddah as Gulf states tightened measures in big cities to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Dubai had been under an overnight curfew along with the rest of United Arab Emirates since March 26. Its Supreme Committee of Crisis and Disaster Management said the lockdown would now run around the clock for two weeks, state news agency WAM said.

In neighboring Saudi Arabia, authorities announced a lockdown and a partial curfew in seven neighborhoods of Jeddah also starting on



Stars

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Yesterday's Solution								
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medium

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

A rather disconcerting rumor about your job could reach your ears, Aries. Perhaps you'll hear that the company is being sold or undergoing a shakeup in the hierarchy. You might get caught up in a frenzy of worry about whether or not you'll stay on. Before jumping to any conclusions, phone someone who knows what's going on and find out the truth. What you've heard is probably just gossip.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You tend to be very intuitive, Libra, but today you could find your psychic abilities short-circuit. If you give readings, don't schedule any for today. This isn't to say your abilities are blocked, but they aren't as dependable as they usually are. Likewise, your imagination isn't as reliable either. Don't worry. This is just typical writer's or artist's block. You'll be back to normal by tomorrow.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

A number of great ideas either for new creative projects or enhancing ongoing ones could pop into your head during the day, Taurus. If you don't write them down immediately, they could just as easily pop right out again, never to return! With all your responsibilities, you could have a rather frantic day as your mind constantly shifts from one focus to another. Stay with it. You can handle it.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Some rather upsetting news about a friend could come to you today, Scorpio, probably over the phone. This could be the truth, but more likely the facts have been distorted in the retelling. In fact, what you're hearing may actually be nothing more than gossip. Phone someone who might know what's really going on, preferably the friend you heard about, and check the facts before driving yourself crazy.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

A person with whom you work, probably a woman, could leave suddenly without notice or stated reason, Gemini. This could be confusing, and you might find yourself wondering if there are changes within the company that you know nothing about. Try to learn exactly why this person left. If you can't ask him or her directly, discreetly ask someone who might know.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Today you could receive a lucky career break of some kind that brings some extra money your way, Sagittarius. The downside is that you might have to put in many extra hours. Your good fortune could cause temporary problems in your personal life. Your significant other and family members could be disgruntled. Point out that it may be inconvenient now, but everyone will be better off in the long run.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Someone you've wanted to hear from for a long time, perhaps an old friend who lives far away, could ring you up today while you're out, Cancer. You'll be happy to get the message, but it could result in a frustrating game of phone tag throughout the day. Don't get so irritated you give up. Keep trying. You'll eventually touch base, and you'll be glad you did!



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

An unexpected visit from someone who lives far away is likely to throw your schedule off kilter, Capricorn. Even though you'll be glad to see your friend, the visit could require a lot of calls to break appointments and postpone meetings. Once that's done, however, you'll have a good visit. You and your friend should each have a lot to report. You'll talk for hours. Relax and have some fun!



Leo (July 23-August 22)

A rather upsetting dream could disturb your sleep tonight, Leo. When you wake up and focus on the real world, it could seem so bizarre as to not be worthy of serious consideration. Nonetheless, write it down. After some time has passed, go over the symbols and see what they suggest to you. The dream is trying to tell you something about a specific situation in your life, albeit in a weird way!



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

An unexpected financial setback could have you reeling at first, Aquarius. Perhaps an emergency, such as a toothache or car breakdown, requires a substantial expenditure that you hadn't planned for. You can probably find a way to deal with the crisis. You may have resources to draw upon that you aren't aware of now. Go over all your finances and you could be pleasantly surprised. Hang in there!



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

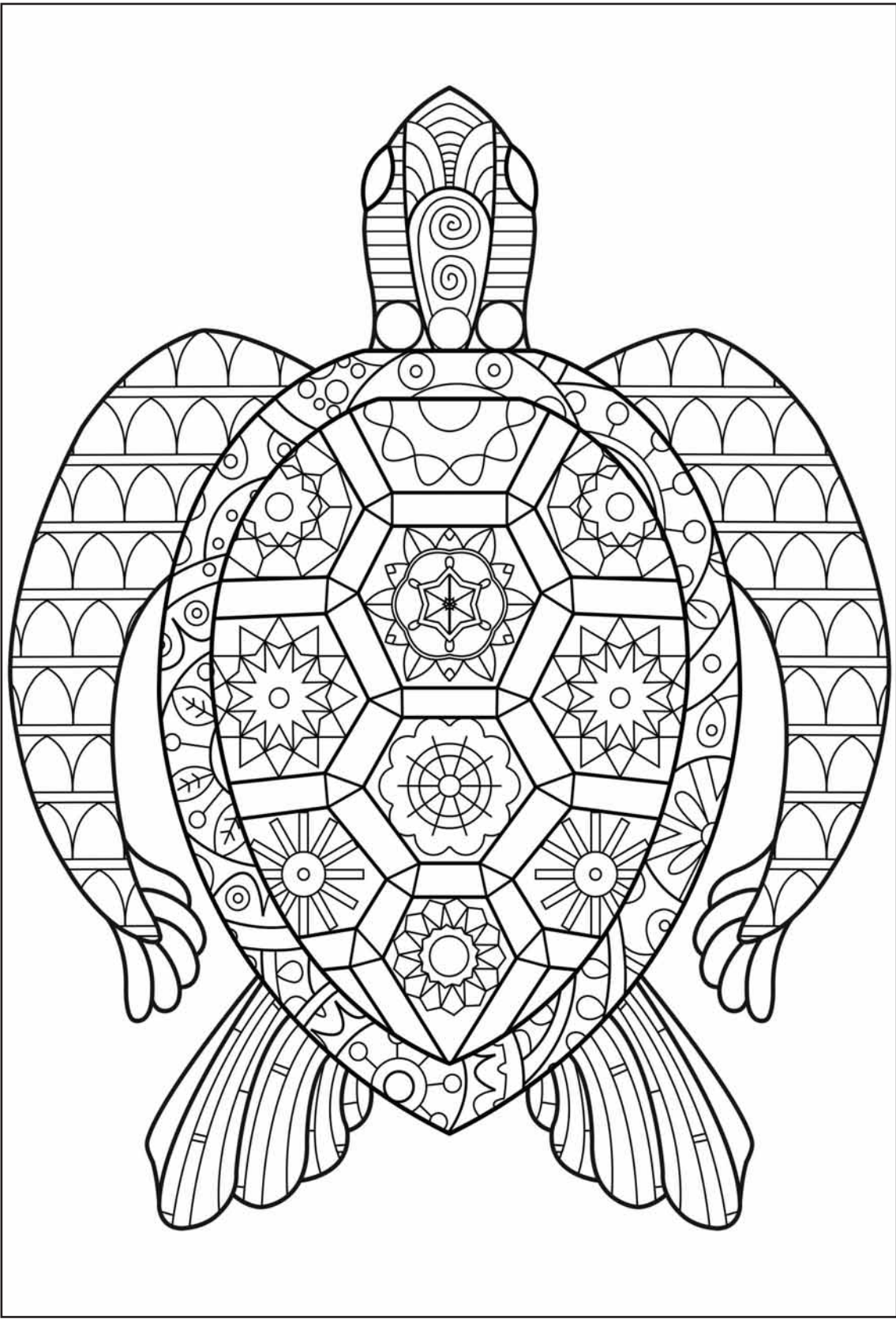
A colleague or possibly a romantic partner could be in a rather touchy mood today, Virgo. Therefore, you might find this person difficult to deal with. You could get a bit irritated and wonder if this person is worth the aggravation he or she is causing you. Don't do anything foolish. This mood will pass. Try to stay out of your friend's way, if possible. All should be back to normal by tomorrow.



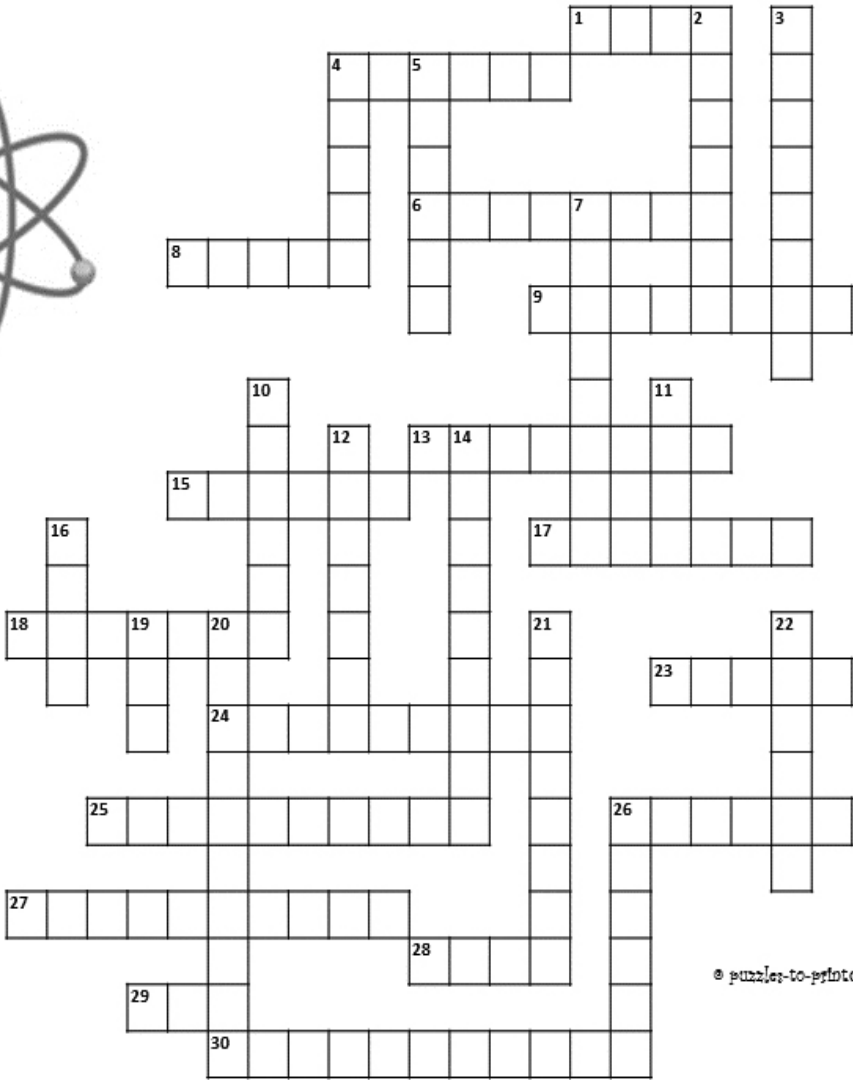
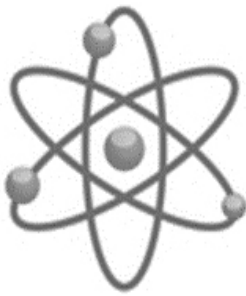
Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You could be feeling restless and frustrated due to a temporary separation from a partner, Pisces, perhaps a business partner but more likely a romantic one. Phone contact could be difficult as well, because you could both be busy and keep missing each other. Find something fascinating to do that will take your mind off the situation. Get together with friends and have some fun.

Color It



Crossword



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ACROSS

- Produces OH<sup>-</sup> ions in solution
- S
- Combination of two or more atoms
- Piece of glass used with a microscope
- Negatively charged particle
- Any liquid, solid or gas
- Positively charged particle
- Has no net electric charge
- Eye protection
- Negatively charged ion
- K
- Includes eyepiece, lens, and stage

DOWN

- Bunsen \_\_\_\_\_
- Measures the relative densities of two liquids
- Produces H<sup>+</sup> ions in solution
- An atom or molecule with a net electrical charge
- Might be calibrated in Fahrenheit or Centigrade
- C<sub>1</sub>
- Hand protection
- Ionic compound produced by reacting an acid with a base
- Representation of a substance using symbols
- OH<sup>-</sup>
- Consists of a nucleus orbited by electrons
- Matter with no defined volume or shape
- A test in the laboratory
- Two or more atoms joined together
- Cu
- Cylindrical glass container



## Sports

## Photo of the Day



PETRA: Miles Daisher performs a BASE jump at The Treasury in Petra, Jordan. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

## ‘It’s quite eerie’: Horses race on in Australia and Asia

**SYDNEY:** Punters in the UK had to make do with a virtual Grand National this weekend, but in Australia and Asia they are still able to enjoy a flutter on the real thing, albeit only online.

Sydney’s autumn racing festival burst out of the gates Saturday to little fanfare on an Australia Derby Day held without the customary throngs of well-dressed spectators. Royal Randwick racecourse was open only to “essential” Racing New South Wales and Australian Turf Club staff, as well as a handful of participants and media.

Owners were kept away as jockeys competed in the first day of the Aus\$20 million (US\$12 million) “The Championships”, though the day’s races were broadcast live with bets taken online.

Champion New Zealand trainer Murray Baker recorded a fifth win in the Derby with Quick Thinker and one he is likely never to forget — he had to watch it from his sofa back home in Cambridge on the other side of the Tasman Sea.

“When you’re in lockdown, any win is good,” Baker told the Sun-Herald newspaper.

“We’ve got no horses here, there are no cars driving past, so it’s quite eerie,” Baker said before revealing how he would celebrate. “I can have a beer,” he said. “I’ll have more than one.”

Racing in Australia has continued behind closed doors in all states except Tasmania, which last week enforced a shutdown. Five cards were scheduled on Sunday from New South Wales to Western Australia while in Asia, behind closed doors meetings were also taking place in Hong Kong and Japan.

Horse racing is one of the few global sports to be left standing in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, though the Singapore Turf Club finally caved in on Friday and suspended all racing until May 4 after soldiering on with a reduced programme in March. —AFP

# Exile fly-half Russell targets Scotland return with July tour

## Fiji rugby players arrested for breaching virus isolation

**PARIS:** Fly-half Finn Russell said he was targeting Scotland’s summer tour as a return to the Test scene after missing the Six Nations following a breakdown in his relationship with coach Gregor Townsend.

Russell, who has 49 Test appearances, was unavailable for his country earlier this year after leaving the national set-up before the start of the tournament. Townsend’s side are set to head to South Africa for two matches and New Zealand for a Test in July but the fixtures are in doubt due to the coronavirus pandemic.

“The stuff in the Six Nations is done now, I’m not looking at that and thinking we need to look back, it is just how can we move forward and how can we get better as a team?” Russell told broadcasters BT Sport.

“If the summer tour goes ahead or not, I think that’s the target. “That’s my plan anyway, to try and get back by then,” Russell added. The 27-year-old said the press had made an issue out of his disagreement with Townsend.

“There wasn’t a massive fallout, I think things were blown out of proportion a bit which happens in the media,” the Racing 92 outside-half said. “We are speaking, it is not like there was a massive disagreement or ‘I am never playing for you again,’” he added.

But Russell said their relationship had improved on a personal level since the COVID-19 outbreak

started. “I have been chatting to Gregor the last couple of weeks, not as player-coach but just as a chat in terms of ‘how you getting on? What you doing in isolation? What you been up to?’,” he said.

“It was up and down during the Six Nations but I think we are both going to move forward in terms of progressing, which is great.”

Meanwhile, two Fiji rugby players have been arrested for ignoring the Pacific nation’s coronavirus self-isolation rules, with local authorities saying their “irresponsible behaviour” would be reported to rugby’s world governing body.

The two men have not been publically identified but the Fiji Rugby Union confirmed they were professionals and media reported them variously to be sevens players and internationals.

Fiji are the Olympic sevens champions and were third in the current world series before it was put on hold because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama accused the players of putting “the whole of Fiji at risk”. He said one player, who arrived from Singapore, “had a high risk of exposure to the virus while overseas” and then escaped from isolation in a Fiji hospital.

“Unlucky for him he couldn’t step his way past our Fiji police force. He has been arrested and is in isolation at Nadi hospital,” Bainimarama said.



Finn Russell (right) with coach Gregor Townsend.

The Fiji Rugby Union would take “appropriate disciplinary actions against the professional rugby players, including reporting this highly irresponsible behaviour to their clubs and World Rugby,” chief executive John O’Connor said.

“The Fiji rugby family wants to put on record our

great disappointment at the irresponsible behaviour of these two players putting their families and other Fijians at risk. “Such irresponsible behaviour is totally unacceptable, and we support the actions of the police in arresting these two players and any further action taken against them.” —AFP

## On this day — April 6

**April 6, 1996**

**SOCCER** - Manchester United’s Eric Cantona celebrates after scoring the opening goal from the penalty spot in a 3-2 Premier League win over Manchester City at Maine Road, Manchester. Cantona later turned provider, setting up goals for Andy Cole and Ryan Giggs as United won to stay top of the Premier League. United wrapped up the title with a 3-0 win against Middlesbrough on the final day of the season and then beat Liverpool 1-0 in the FA Cup final to complete a domestic double, with Cantona scoring the only goal of the game.

**April 6, 2000**

**GOLF** - Six-times Masters champion Jack Nicklaus with fellow legends Arnold Palmer and Gary Player at the Augusta National Golf Club, Georgia. Nicklaus, who has won the most majors (18) of any golfer, made the cut in a field littered with past champions but Player and Palmer missed out. Nicklaus struggled throughout the course and eventually tied for 54th, 25 strokes behind winner Vijay Singh.

**April 6, 2000**

**SOCCER** - Leeds United manager

David O’Leary walks off after his side’s 2-0 defeat by Galatasaray in a UEFA Cup semi-final match overshadowed by the deaths of two Leeds fans in Istanbul. A fight broke out between the two sets of fans on the eve of the match and two Leeds supporters were stabbed to death. The game still went ahead the next day and goals from Hakan Sukur and Carlos Alberto de Oliveira gave the Turkish side a 2-0 victory.

**April 6, 2002**

**SUMO WRESTLING** - Emanuel Yarbrough, the world’s heaviest sumo wrestler weighing 350 kg (771.62 lb), looks down at a young boy after his exhibition match during the Czech Sumo Open in Prague. Yarbrough, who was an ambassador for the sport in the United States, also tried his hand at Mixed Martial Arts and professional wrestling but did not enjoy much success. The American had a history of ill health and died in 2015 at the age of 51.

**April 6, 2002**

**HORSE RACING** - Tape goes up signalling the start of the 155th Grand National at Aintree in Liverpool. Jockey

Jim Culloty, riding 20-1 shot Bindaree, beat Richard Johnson, who was riding What’s Up Boys, by a length and three quarters. Culloty, who won the Cheltenham Gold Cup a few weeks earlier, got to ride Bindaree after an injury to fellow jockey Jamie Goldstein. Bindaree looked to be in trouble after being overtaken by What’s Up Boys over the last fence but Culloty manoeuvred him back into the lead to pick up the win and collect 290,000 pounds (\$355,540) in prize money.

**April 6, 2003**

**FORMULA ONE** - Michael Schumacher’s Ferrari crashes into Antonio Pizzonia’s Jaguar during the 71-lap Brazilian Grand Prix, which was abandoned on lap 56 due to crashes that blocked the circuit in Sao Paulo. Pizzonia and Juan Pablo Montoya both aquaplaned and crashed on lap 25 and Schumacher followed suit two laps later, failing to finish a race for the first time since the 2001 German Grand Prix. Mark Webber later crashed into the barricades and Fernando Alonso, unaware of the yellow flags, struck one of the wheels of the Australian’s car and lost control. The injured Alonso was transported to hospital and the race called off, with the win initially awarded to Kimi Raikkonen but later given to Giancarlo

Fisichella on appeal.

**April 6, 2004**

**CRICKET** - Children enjoy a game of beach cricket during England’s tour of West Indies which is best remembered for Brian Lara’s 400 in the final game of the four-test series. Lara had accumulated only 100 runs in three tests, but made England toil on a flat surface in Antigua, scoring a quadruple century and breaking the record for the highest individual test score of 380, which belonged to Matthew Hayden. West Indies lost the series 3-0.

**April 6, 2007**

**SAILING** - Crew members of America’s Cup defender Alinghi prepare to round the windward mark on the fifth flight during the fourth day of the Valencia Louis Vuitton Act 13 fleet race in Valencia. Acts were a series of races held in the lead up to the Louis Vuitton Cup, which served as a qualification event for the prestigious America’s Cup. Act 13 consisted of seven fleet races, four of which were won by Alinghi, a Swiss team racing under the colours of Soci   Nautique de Geneve.

**April 6, 2008**

**BASEBALL** - Toronto Blue Jays sec-

ond baseman John McDonald and Vernon Wells collide in front of Alex Rios on a fly ball hit by Boston Red Sox batter Kevin Youkilis during the eighth inning of their MLB American League baseball game in Toronto. The Blue Jays completed a three-game sweep of the Red Sox with a 7-4 victory after Frank Thomas’ 11th grand slam and Vernon Wells’ two-run homer put them in a commanding position. The defeat left the Red Sox, the world series champions, in last place in the American League East for the first time in three years.

**April 6, 2010**

**SOCCER** - Barcelona’s Lionel Messi celebrates after scoring one of his four goals against Arsenal during their Champions League quarter-final second-leg match at the Nou Camp, Barcelona. Four years after being left out of the Barcelona side that beat Arsenal in the 2006 final, Messi tormented the London club, scoring all four goals in a 4-1 win and overtaking Rivaldo as Barcelona’s all-time top scorer in the competition. Messi ended the season with 47 goals in all competitions, helping Barcelona retain their La Liga title, but his team were beaten by eventual champions Inter Milan in the Champions League semi-finals. — Reuters



## Sports

# Premier League pay row adds to pressure on game amid pandemic

## Kenny replaces McCarthy as Ireland coach

**MANCHESTER:** The players union representing Premier League footballers has questioned the league's call for a 30% player wage reduction amid the coronavirus crisis, saying it would reduce tax revenue for the National Health Service.

The stance taken by the union raises the prospect of a damaging public wrangle over the salaries of some of the best paid footballers in the world at a time when Britain is facing a major public health crisis. The union's apparent reluctance to endorse player wage reductions emerged after Premier League leaders and European champions Liverpool joined other clubs in announcing they had furloughed some of their non-playing staff.

This would make them eligible for public money through the government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. "Concerned about the turn football talks have taken tonight," Oliver Dowden, Britain's Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, wrote on twitter.

"People do not want to see infighting in our national sport at a time of crisis. Football must play its part to show that the sport understands the pressures its lower paid staff, communities and fans face."

Player representatives of the 20 Premier League clubs and officials from the Professional Footballers Association (PFA) union met with the Premier League on Saturday.

The clubs had agreed on Friday to consult their players regarding a combination of conditional wage

reductions and deferrals amounting to 30 percent of total annual pay.

The league outlined the possible financial damage that could be caused if the season does not resume, having been frozen due to the coronavirus outbreak since March 13.

The league warned that broadcasters could demand 762 million pounds (\$934 million) in refunds on games that they would not be able to show. Losses in sponsorship and matchday revenue would also impact the game.

The talks on Saturday were not described as a negotiation and no decision was expected to be taken, but the PFA issued a lengthy statement, not attributed to any official, which questioned the logic of the league's stance.

"The players are mindful that... the combined tax on their salaries is a significant contribution to funding essential public services - which are especially critical at this time," the statement said.

"Taking a 30% salary deduction will cost the Exchequer substantial sums. This would be detrimental to our NHS and other government-funded services."

The PFA added that the proposed 30% salary deduction over a 12-month period would equate to over 500 million pounds in wage reductions and a loss in tax contributions of over 200 million to the government. The 20 Premier League captains held a conference call on Thursday to discuss ways in which they could make a contribution or donation.

to propose such a measure, though others could follow. On Friday, the governing body of European football (UEFA), in a joint statement with the European Club Association and the European Leagues, warned that "abandoning domestic competitions is, at this stage, premature and not justified".

UEFA threatened to ban all teams from European competitions next season if they did not complete their league season. The URBSEA released a statement on Saturday saying that its president, Mehdi Bayat, had spoken to the president of the governing body of European football, Aleksander Ceferin.

The statement did not specify the nature of this "jointly" negotiated solution, saying only that the Belgian association would present the UEFA executive committee with its "recommendations for stopping its championship".

## Belgian federation in UEFA talks over end to its season

**BRUSSELS:** The Belgian Football Association (URBSEA) announced on Saturday that it is working with UEFA toward a "constructive" solution regarding the premature end to the Belgian championship.

On Thursday, the Belgian Pro League recommended that the season be declared finished due to the coronavirus pandemic with the present table accepted as final. It became the first European league

## Langer backs cricket behind closed doors

**LONDON:** Australia coach Justin Langer believes resuming cricket behind closed doors when it is safe to do so will have "great value" for the public, deprived of action by the coronavirus shutdown.

Like almost the entire sporting schedule around the world, cricket has been halted by the pandemic, with no return date set in stone. One of the options being mooted is to have the sport resume after restrictions have been lifted, but in empty stadiums.

"When you started off playing cricket, when you were under age, there's no crowds there," he told BBC Radio. "You played it because you loved playing the game, you loved playing with your mates and you loved playing the game."

"For the love of the game, and for still being able to entertain people through TV sets or radio, then there's value in (playing behind closed doors). "Yes it's different, but we'll never, ever, ever take for granted how lucky we are ever again."

World Cup-winning captain Eoin Morgan said this week that he was open to England fielding two teams on the same day at separate venues if the coronavirus led to a compressed home international season. —AFP

## Nicaraguan footballers playing on but players fear virus

**MANAGUA:** Football in Nicaragua is enjoying a surge in popularity as one of the few national leagues where games are still ongoing but players in action there are concerned about the spread of the new coronavirus and say fear has changed the way they play.

"We try to avoid touching other players," Carlos Mosquera, goalkeeper with Deportivo Las Sabanas, told Reuters. "Football has changed, because you don't go in for a 50-50 ball with the same intensity."

"The fear of what is happening in the world is always present. Mentally, you're not focused on the game, you are always thinking that opponents may have the disease."

The Primera Liga de Nicaragua is one of only four leagues believed to have survived the coronavirus lockdown, along with those in Belarus, Burundi and Tajikistan.

Games in the Central American nation are being played behind closed doors but are being broadcast locally on television or live on Facebook. The

refusal to shut down has drawn global attention to football in a nation that has long preferred baseball, a sport that is also resisting a lockdown in Nicaragua.

The secretary general of the Nicaraguan Football Federation, Jose Maria Bermudez, said fans from around the world are now tuning in to watch games and bet on them.

"We can tell from monitoring these things that more people are paying attention, particularly on betting sites," Bermudez said in a phone interview.

"It has no effect on us financially - people win or lose money, we don't get more money - but we can see that people are following us because we are one of the few countries where football is still going on."

Bermudez also said with live sport almost entirely absent from the world's TV screens, at least one foreign company had been in touch with the local rights holder, state-run Canal 6, asking to broadcast Nicaraguan games live.

That could result in a windfall for the unheralded league. Bermudez stressed that the 10-team league has not decided to complete their season, merely "to keep playing for as long as the situation permits." There are five regular season matches to play before the top four teams go into a semi-final and final round play-off expected to begin in late April. He pointed out that Nicaragua has recorded only a handful of cases of the new coronavirus and no deaths so far.



**DUNDALK:** In this file photo taken on September 29, 2016 Dundalk's Irish manager Stephen Kenny applauds the fans following the UEFA Europa League group D football match between Dundalk and Maccabi Tel Aviv at the Tallaght Stadium in Dundalk, north-east Ireland. — AFP

The PFA, which is mainly funded via Premier League broadcast revenue payments, said that the players wanted to provide financial help. "All Premier League players want to, and will, play their part in making significant financial contributions in these unprecedented

times," the statement said.

"All Premier League players fully appreciate their role and responsibilities in society during this current crisis. They care deeply for those who are suffering with loss, health and hardship at the moment." — Agencies

## Pressure grows for IPL behind closed doors

**NEW DELHI:** Players are putting pressure on cricket authorities to plan a shortened Twenty20 Indian Premier League later in the year to "kick-start" the sports economy after the coronavirus lockdown.

The world's richest cricket tournament has been postponed until April 15, which coincides with the end of India's 21 day nationwide shutdown to halt the spread of the pandemic.

But with the number of cases and deaths rising and India isolated from international travel, few believe any sport will be possible in the subcontinent for at least three months. "Let's say July-August is the earliest," said Kevin Pietersen, the former England batsman.

"I do truly believe the IPL should happen. I think every single player around the world is desperate to play the IPL," he said on Indian broadcaster Star Sports. Pietersen suggested the eight-team tournament be shortened from its normal eight-week duration and played behind closed doors.

"There could be a way in which to get some money into the franchises, into the economy by having a situation where you use maybe three venues which are completely closed to fans," said Pietersen.

"And the players can still go out and play the tournament in three weeks or in four weeks. "I think the fans need to understand they can't watch a live game at the moment and they might not be able to watch a live game for the foreseeable future."

The league is a huge revenue earner for the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and is estimated to generate more than \$11 billion for the Indian economy. Chinese mobile phone-maker Vivo paid \$330 million to be the league's top sponsor for 2018-2022.

Former India batsman Sanjay Manjrekar said the league, which involves stars such as England's Ben Stokes, David Warner and Pat Cummins of Australia, and India captain Virat Kohli, will inject life into the virus-ravaged economy.

"The moment we get clearances from all the authorities that matter, the IPL should happen, only because it will kickstart the economy," said the cricketer-turned-commentator.

"Because when you talk about the IPL it's not just about the Mumbai Indians, or a (Mahendra Singh) Dhoni or a Virat Kohli, there are a lot of people who are making their livelihood through the IPL."

Stokes and Cummins have already voiced their eagerness to participate in the IPL. Kolkata Knight Riders-contracted Cummins said "everyone's still really keen for it (IPL) to all go ahead". BCCI president Sourav Ganguly has conceded the IPL will be a "truncated" affair if it happens at all.

Meanwhile, Royal Challengers Bangalore need to rediscover the joy of cricket if they are to end their Indian Premier League (IPL) title drought, captain Virat Kohli has said.

Star-studded Bangalore have reached three finals of the Twenty20 league but are one of only three existing franchises — along with Delhi and Punjab — not to have won the title.

"You go after something so badly, and it keeps running away from you," Kohli told former England batsman and ex-RCB team mate Kevin Pietersen in an Instagram chat. —Agencies



**SYDNEY:** Justin Langer (right) and Aaron Finch during a training session in Sydney.

"The situation here is almost normal, there are only four cases of coronavirus and three were imported," Bermudez said. "We were given information by the health officials and we took a decision based on that. We are not the government, we run football."

"If things get worse or out of control we will have to suspend the tournament to protect lives." The number of confirmed cases had risen to five by Friday, Players said they were not consulted about the decision to keep playing, which was taken after a meeting between the league and club owners, many of whom get financial support from the government of Nicaragua's authoritarian president Daniel Ortega.

Ortega has insisted Nicaragua is taking the most sensible approach to dealing with the pandemic. Critics say he wants to show the world that life in Nicaragua continues as normal.

Washington imposed sanctions on Nicaragua following a crackdown on opposition protests in 2018. Some members of the European Union have accused Ortega of jailing and torturing political prisoners and banning human rights groups and media outlets, something the government denies.

Some players lined up for games this week wearing masks and gloves. Players at Deportivo Las Sabanas club told Reuters they needed to keep playing to support their families, and half-jokingly said the newfound interest in Nicaraguan football could help win them a transfer to a bigger club. — Reuters



**18** Exile fly-half Russell targets Scotland return with July tour



**19** Kenny replaces McCarthy as Ireland coach

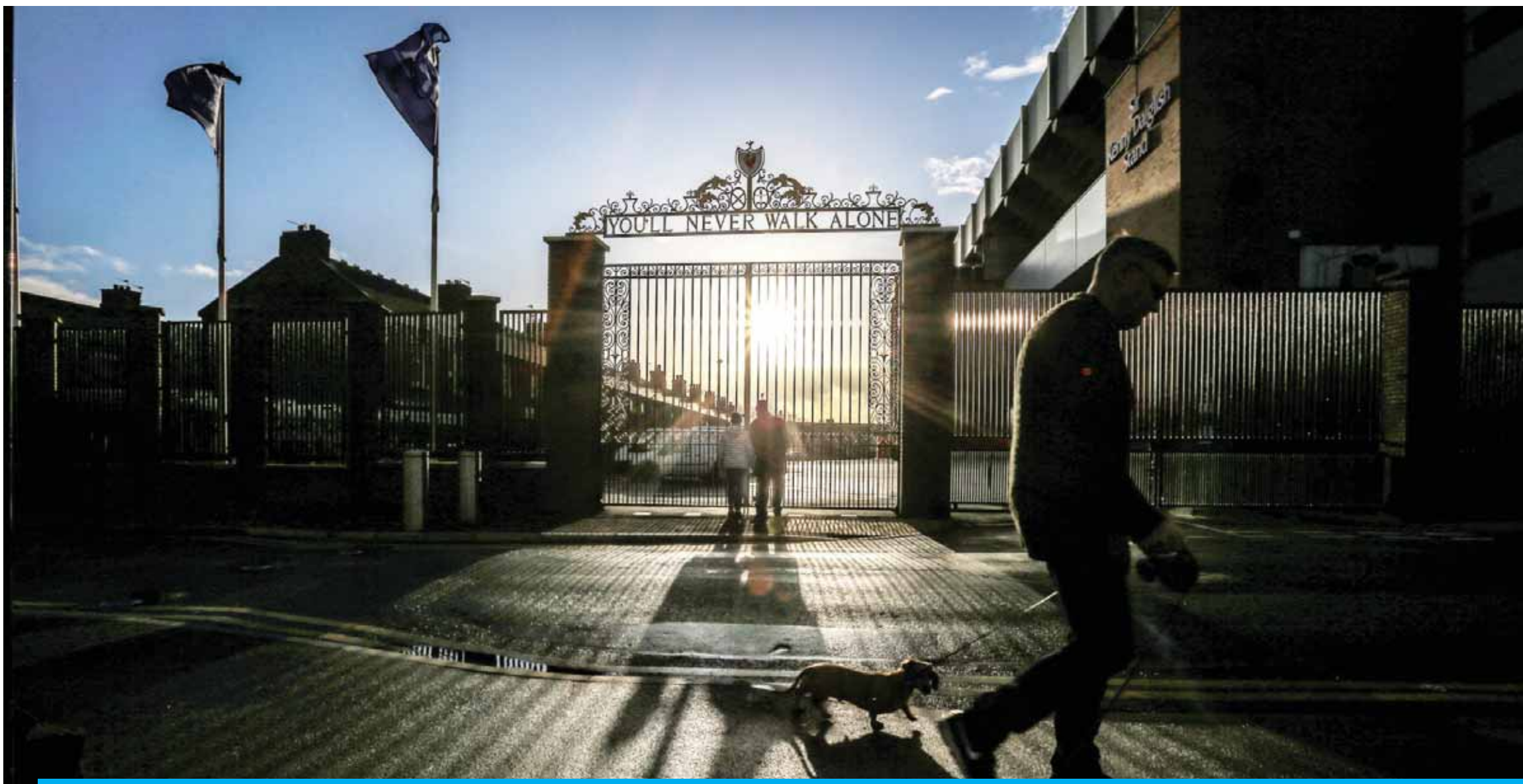


**19** Langer backs cricket behind closed doors



## Liverpool blasted over virus furlough

Premier League players in £200m wage cut warning



**LIVERPOOL:** File photo taken on November 26, 2019. A man walks his dog outside Anfield stadium in Liverpool, north west England on November 26, 2019. Premier League clubs will ask players to take a combination of pay cuts and deferrals amounting to 30 percent of their salary due to the financial crisis caused by coronavirus, the league said in a statement. — AFP

**LONDON:** Liverpool were accused of betraying their “morals and values” on Saturday for their move to furlough non-playing staff during the coronavirus pandemic as Premier League stars warned of a £200 million (\$245 million) shortfall in government coffers if 30 percent wage cuts were introduced.

Premier League leaders Liverpool said they would top up the public money made available from the government to ensure staff on temporary leave received their full salaries. It follows similar moves by Newcastle, Tottenham, Bournemouth and Norwich to take advantage of the scheme, under which employers can claim for 80 percent of furloughed employees' wages. But former Reds players Jamie Carragher and Stan Collymore strongly criticised the move by the European champions, who in February announced pre-tax profits of £42 million (\$51 million) for 2018/19.

“(Manager) Jurgen Klopp showed compassion for all at the start of this pandemic, senior players heavily involved in @premierleague players taking wage cuts. Then all that respect & goodwill is lost, poor this @LFC,” tweeted Carragher.

Collymore was even more forthright, tweeting: “I don't know of any Liverpool fan of any standing that won't be anything other than disgusted at the club for furloughing staff.”

Another former Anfield star, Germany's Dietmar Hamann tweeted: “Astonished by the news that @LFC takes advantage of the furlough scheme to claim 80% of non-playing staff wages back off the government.

“That's not what the scheme was designed for. Contrary to the morals and values of the club I got to know,” Liverpool said staff would be paid 100 percent of their salaries to ensure nobody was financially disadvantaged.

A statement from the club said: “Even prior to the decision on staff furloughing, there was a collective commitment at senior levels of the club — on and off the pitch — with everyone working towards a solution that secures jobs for employees of the club during this unprecedented crisis.”

Meanwhile, the Professional Footballers' Association warned of a £200 million shortfall in British government tax revenues if a 30% pay cut was introduced for players. “All Premier League players want to, and will, play their part in making significant financial contributions in these unprecedented times,” said a PFA statement after a meeting with the Premier League. “We welcomed the opportunity to discuss

this and we are happy to continue talks.” However, the PFA insisted it was too simplistic to criticise multi-millionaire players for not easily agreeing to salary cuts. “The proposed 30 percent salary deduction over a 12-month period equates to over £500m in wage reductions and a loss in tax contributions of over £200m to the government,” the PFA statement added.

“What effect does this loss of earnings to the government mean for the National Health Service?”

The Premier League has been seen as lagging behind other European leagues in its response to coronavirus and was accused by one British lawmaker of operating in a “moral vacuum”. In Spain, Barcelona and Atletico Madrid players have already agreed to pay cuts of 70% while the stars of Italian champions Juventus will be paid a reduced amount for the next four months.

England defender Danny Rose, on loan at Newcastle from Tottenham, told the BBC players were “keen to make something happen”. “I can only speak for myself but I would have no problems whatsoever contributing some of my wages

to people who are fighting this on the front line and to people who have been affected by what's happening at the minute,” he said.

On Friday, a hospital in London identified Rose as the individual behind a £19,000 donation. Liverpool skipper Jordan Henderson has led talks between Premier League club captains over what action they could take, a move that began before Britain's Health Secretary Matt Hancock on Thursday joined those singling out footballers. “It was just not needed for people who are not involved in football to tell footballers what they should do with their money,” added Rose. “I found that so bizarre.”

### 'SAFE AND APPROPRIATE'

Burnley issued a stark warning on Saturday about the potential financial fallout from the coronavirus outbreak, claiming they would face a shortfall of up to £50 million (\$61 million) if it were not possible to complete the season.

The English top-flight said on Friday the 2019/20 season would only return when it was “safe and appropriate to do so”.

The league agreed to provide a £125 million fund for the English Football League and National League and pledged £20 million in charitable support for the National Health Service and other groups. — AFP

## Swim star Peaty adjusts to life with no pool

**LONDON:** Cyclists and rowers can stay in top shape in their personal gyms even during the coronavirus shutdown but Olympic swimming champion Adam Peaty has to make do with no pool.

Britain's Peaty, an eight-time world champion, would have been preparing for the Olympic Games in Tokyo had COVID-19 not forced a postponement. It has forced the 25-year-old to change his workout schedule and diet.

“Swimming is one of those things where you can't really train unless you're in the water and unfortunately we're not going to be in the water for probably another three weeks, minimum,” Peaty told BBC Radio. “It's really hard for a non-swimmer to under-

stand the connection you have with the water. They say a day out (of) the water is two days to get back so it just depends on how long the lockdown lasts and when we can get back.

“(I'm doing) gym in the house then a lot of running, a lot of cycling, but mainly just staying on top of the core.” Peaty's routine at the moment is far removed from his usual 10,000 metres in the pool on top of gym work, which means a change in his eating habits, too. “The best thing we can do is stay on top of our diet, because when you're in isolation all you want to do is eat,” he said.

“I'm doing a lot of intermittent fasting until 2:00 pm... Just keeps the fat away and that's the biggest battle we have, “When I'm in full training... you're probably looking at (burning) 4,500 calories, now I'm probably trying to stay around 2,500.” Peaty already has his sights set on peaking for the Olympics next year. “I've been waiting four years for this moment and it hasn't come,” he said. “But there's way bigger things in the world at the moment. “Hopefully if we can beat this thing and come together.” I think the Olympics will be a great celebration.” — AFP



Adam Peaty