



Hayef demands list of MPs intervening for visa traders

Assembly to hold Ramadan session to debate population structure

As society opens, Saudi women surge into job market

RIYADH: Like thousands of Saudi women, Rouaa Al-Mousa entered the workforce as reforms sweep the ultra-conservative kingdom and is certain that neither grumbling male bosses nor the coronavirus will change that. Armed with a college degree but bound by conservative Saudi attitudes to women working, the 25-year-old was expecting to wait years before finding a suitable job.

Continued on Page 16

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Mohammad Hayef yesterday asked Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh over reports that a number of MPs have mediated to secure the release of people suspected of visa trading. The lawmaker asked the minister if any MPs have tried to mediate for visa traders or obstructed the interior ministry's plans to refer such cases to the public prosecution. If the reports are true, Hayef demanded names of these lawmakers and names of suspected visa traders they attempted to help.

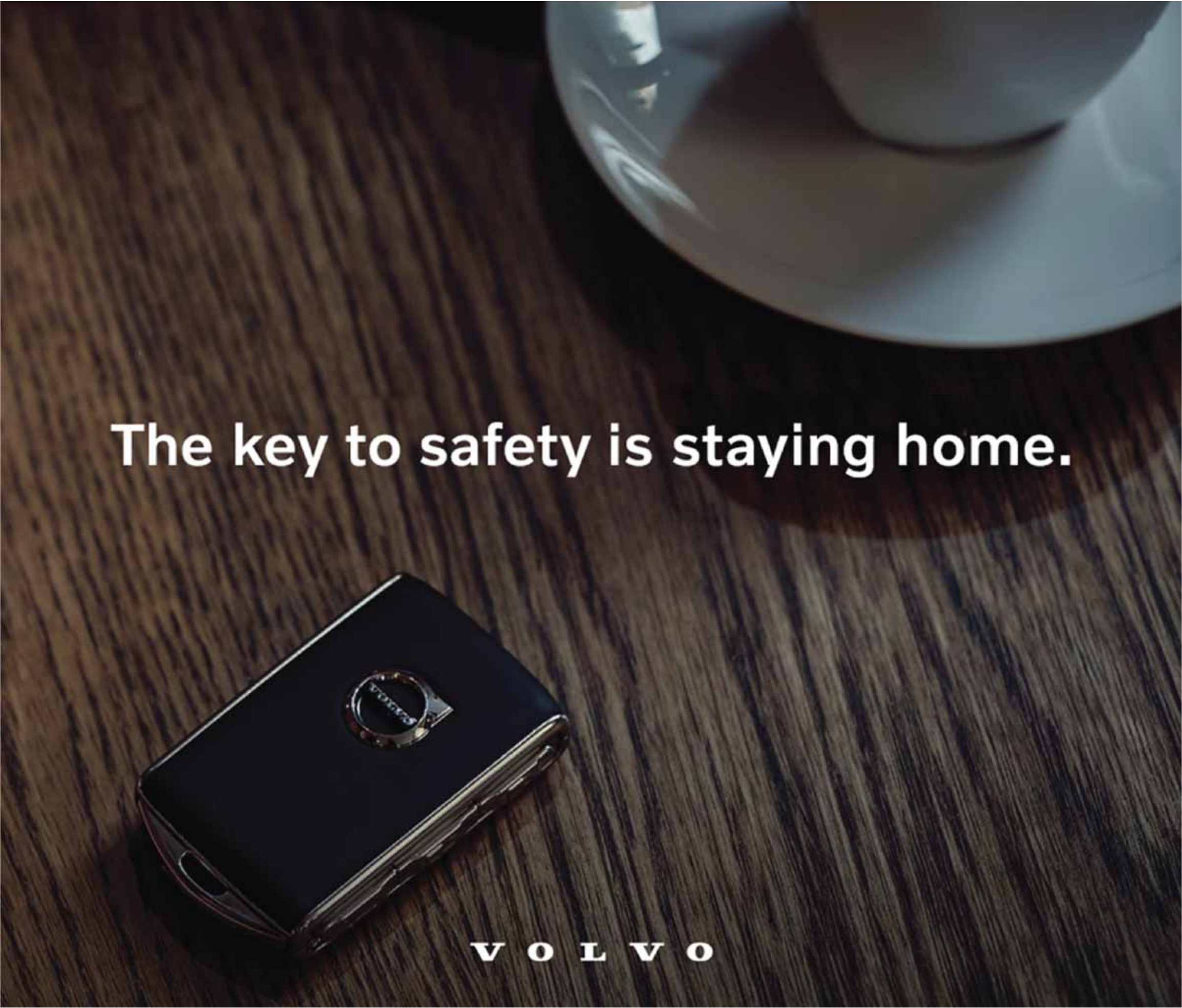
National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem on Sunday spoke about reports that some MPs may have mediated for visa traders and demanded that the interior minister send an official letter to him stating the names of such MPs. He promised he will announce their names during an Assembly session.

But Hayef said the speaker should have instead sent a parliamentary question to the minister inquiring about the reports that some MPs have mediated for suspected visa traders who are either being interrogated at the interior ministry or have already been referred to the public prosecution. Hayef said the issue has now reached the media and all MPs are under suspicion, and to clear this, Saleh should reply to the question. Meanwhile, the speaker and lawmakers plan to meet the foreign minister and

Continued on Page 16



MAKKAH: Worshipers perform Isha prayer while keeping distance between them next to the Kaaba in Makkah's Grand Mosque on Monday. — AFP



Pandemic Diaries

Coronavirus
changing Kuwait

By Jamie Etheridge

etheridge@kuwaittimes.com

Kuwaitis can now conduct a variety of transactions for social security online via a new website launched by the Public Institution for Social Security this week. Everyone can book appointments to visit the co-ops during the curfew to shop for groceries. The Public Authority for Civil Information has also launched an app to carry your civil ID on your smartphone. And the interior ministry has launched website options for renewing iqamas.

These are just a few of the digital innovations that the government has launched since the coronavirus pandemic hit Kuwait. These steps may seem small, but they add up to an important step forward for Kuwait. Digital integration, especially for government services and paperwork, has been slow and at times dysfunctional. A new website or app might work or might not; a new system may be put in place only for the process to revert back to the old system within a few days or weeks.

The crisis, however, has created an urgency beyond imagination for the government to adopt functional, sustainable digital solutions for everything from crowd management at co-ops to education to legal documents and processes. And Kuwait has stepped up and shown itself not only willing but capable to quickly integrate and launch such solutions. The co-op appointment system took only a few weeks to work out from idea to beta testing to launch, with more co-ops added every day.

Greater digitalization of government bureaucracy will have lasting effects for Kuwait as a whole. Ideally it could make completing government paperwork much easier, thus opening the door for small and medium enterprises to grow the private sector. It can also help reduce waste, government expenditure and ultimately the bloated civil service. To do this, however, will also require alternative job opportunities within the private sector that offer similar income, benefits and security.

This may also be changing. In the ports, Kuwaitis are being trained to use heavy equipment and in co-ops and other areas, work traditionally performed by expats is being taken up by Kuwaiti volunteers. Breaking the barrier of what work is acceptable and accessible to Kuwaitis is an important part of reducing the country's reliance on foreigners, something Kuwait has been trying to do for years.

Kuwait is also taking the opportunity created by the pandemic to send home the tens of thousands of unskilled laborers and others not needed by the economy and the many brought here illegally. So while the pandemic has created myriad problems, it may also serve as a turning point for Kuwait's future.

Kuwait allows reopening of car
repair shops at co-ops, gas stations

Cabinet briefed on latest developments related to COVID-19 spread



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the Cabinet's meeting. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Waleed Al-Jassem said Monday car repair shops affiliated to cooperative societies and in gas stations would reopen in all areas nationwide. Jassem, in a tweet, said the decision also includes repair shops in Kabd, Abdaly and Wafra. He said reopening decision was in compliance with a government's approval of reopening of some car businesses, which were closed due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The Cabinet tasked, during an extraordinary session on Monday, Kuwait Municipality to allow resumption of activities related to repair of cars and trade in auto spare parts.

COVID-19 briefing

Following the session which was held at Seif Palace under chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh said it kicked off with His Highness the Prime Minister extending congratulations to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince and the gracious people of Kuwait on advent of the holy month of Ramadan.

Minister of Health and head of the team tasked with following up on spread of the novel coronavirus, Sheikh Dr Basel Humoud Al-Sabah, briefed the ministers about latest developments related to spread of the virus globally, based on data and statistics of the World Health Organization. He also informed his peers about tallies of the infections and deaths in Kuwait, where it has been observed that tracing and mingling cases have increased. The ministers followed up on developments with respect of treatment, prevention and logistics related to the virus, examining recommendations by the ministerial panel tasked with following up on the contagion.

The Cabinet advised the ministries of health, information, municipality, Public Authority for Industry, Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources, Environment Public Authority, Public Authority for Food and Nutrition to have personnel present 24 hours at border exits to speed up entry of imported commodities.

Sufficient quarantines

Moreover, the Cabinet tasked Ministry of Finance to secure a sufficient number of quarantines, with some 3,000 rooms, to accommodate citizens coming back from abroad as part of the evacuation operation, in addition to specializing some hotels for medical purposes. In response to His Highness the Amir desire not to neglect economic fallout and negative effects resulting from the fight against the coronavirus and for sake tapering burdens on the citizens, the ministers discussed a request by the ministry of finance to examine delay of monthly installments for clients of the

fund of defaulting citizens and the family fund due to extraordinary circumstances resulting from the coronavirus spread. In this regard, the cabinet decided to postpone collection of monthly dues for clients of the two funds for six months as of April, also tasking the minister of finance to coordinate with the legislations department to draw up a relevant bill. The Cabinet welcomed the declaration by the coalition for supporting the legitimacy in Yemen, renewing a call for full ceasefire for a month as of April 23, in line with a call in this respect by the United Nations. —KUNA

Sufficient
quarantines
for citizens

KFSD sends instructions to avoid gas leaks

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) released general instructions to avoid cooking gas leaks at homes, especially during Ramadan while Kuwait remains under lockdown due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) spread. The instructions include maintaining and checking hoses and the rubber ring on top of the gas cylinder by passing a soapy sponge to make sure it is free of cracks, and replace if damaged.

Furthermore, users are urged to make sure that all valves are closed, and make sure the cylinder's valve is clean and free of dust. "Do not leave the regulator open all day, and the hose should be of approved quality," it said. "The gas cylinder should be away from the burner. The gas cylinder must be in vertical position while in use and should not be rolled on the floor." In case of gas leak, people are instructed to open the windows, close the regulator, and avoid using a fire source or switching on electric buttons. "Vacate the premises at once, and call 112," KFSD explained.

IN MY VIEW

Nature can
breathe better

By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

Amazing how nature adapts to what is good quickly and obviously. When Mr Corona arrived, it made everyone raise their heads and pay attention to what is around them. Not long after curfews were imposed, the atmosphere began clearing up, and yesterday the air quality indicator was in the green. Really amazing! Fewer engines on streets during night hours gave nature an opportunity to breathe better. I believe this is proof that man has much to do with ills, and it is also proof that nature, if left alone, can go the right course and be of help to man, plant and even stone.

Going around the country, I can see many types of wildlife — both flora and fauna. I see many types of birds flying around even closer to city limits, which was a rare occurrence in the near past. So, why don't we cooperate and act as one to keep our surroundings clean, like open yards, parks, beaches and other public places?

The municipality places garbage dumpsters around neighborhoods, yet many of us throw bags any which way and hardly pay attention to the containers. There should be strict laws to guarantee peoples' commitment to comply with environmental laws and keep places clean, and punish those who harm plants, especially those that help clean the air of harmful elements, particularly carbon dioxide, and give us clean air.

One important thing is that a clean environment prevents the spread of disease caused by environmental pollution. It is a must, as it is important on land, to maintain clean seawaters to also protect its environment, and maintain healthy seawaters because this will also affect our own wellbeing. It is our duty to care for ourselves, and care for each other, so we can lead a clean healthy life. Let us start now!

Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 3,288 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of Monday, in addition to 22 deaths. With the exception of 64 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 hundreds have been discharged from quarantine after exhibiting no symptoms during their 14-day quarantine period, the Ministry of Health confirmed. Meanwhile, 1,176 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 2,254 people receiving treatment and 2,095 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 to test people for possible infection.

Curfew

Kuwait enforced a country-wide curfew from 5:00 pm to 6:00 am, which was later extended to start from 4:00 pm until 8:00 am during Ramadan, while allowing restaurants and food stores to make home deliveries from 5:00 pm until 1:00 am. The government also locked down Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh in a bid to contain the spread of the virus and enable health workers to test inhabitants. 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 supermarkets, restaurants and shops 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. The Ministry of Commerce launched a website (www.moci.shop) to enable people to book appointments to shop at co-operative societies in their areas. The Public Authority for Industry also announced that companies can apply to evacuate their workers from Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Mahboula. To do so, they must fill a 'workers evacuation form' available on www.pai.gov.kw, and send the form via email to: Jasiri@moh.gov.kw.

Precautions

Kuwait halted all commercial flights until further notice, and has sent special flights to repatriate Kuwaitis

back home from countries affected with the virus' spread. 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. Meanwhile, the Cabinet announced on April 9 the operation of all airline flights for expats who are wishing to return back to their countries. Authorities also announced a public holiday in the country from March 12 to May 28, with work resuming on May 31, while entities providing vital services will remain open. 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. 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.

Amnesty

The Interior Ministry issued an amnesty 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.

Special centers in Farwaniya were allocated to accommodate violators who finalize their papers pending departure. 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), Bangladesh (April 11-15), India (April 16-20), Sri Lanka (April 21-25), other

nationalities (April 26-30, 2020).

The Interior Ministry later opened two new locations in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh to receive residency violators from all nationalities: Female violators are received at Roufayda Al-Aslameya School - Block 4 - Street 200, while male violators are received at Naeem bin Masod School - Block 4 - Street 250.

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 during 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

Meanwhile, all licensed pharmacies in Kuwait delivering medicine are allowed to continue their services 24 hours a day.

The Ministry of Health is also asking doctors and nurses affiliated with the private medical sector to volunteer in order to contribute to the fight against the virus. Volunteering is available through the link: <http://volunteering.q8-ehealth.com>. The ministry had closed all private clinics and medical centers effective March 22, 2020 until further notice.

Mental health assistance

The Kuwait Psychological Association (KPA) is providing consultation through the phone for people suffering from the psychological impacts of coronavirus. Different doctors are working on the hotline in different timings as follows:

- Dr Rashed Al-Sahl: on Monday and Wednesday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9797-6168.
- Dr Fahad Al-Tasha: daily from 8:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 9904-8258.
- Dr Othman Al-Asfour: daily 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm. Call 9938-5350.
- Dr Mohammed Al-Khalidi (head of this team): daily 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Call 9903-6470.
- Dr Ahmad Al-Khalidi: daily 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9910-7965.
- Dr Muneera Al-Qattan: Monday and Wednesday 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9953-3108.
- Dr Zainab Al-Saffar: Sunday and Thursday 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9954-9908.
- Dr Sameera Al-Kandari: Tuesday 9:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 6770-9434.
- Dr Kawthar Al-Yaqout: Monday and Wednesday 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 5521-0088.

For information and other concerns, call 9401-4283.

Local

Food distributions in Mahboula, Jleeb too disorganized, too little

Residents 'fight' in long queues with no social distancing



KUWAIT: Police try to control a large crowd of people in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh at a food distribution point in the locked down area.— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The distribution of food and relief goods for people under complete lockdown in both Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Mahboula is disorganized, with crowds of people trying to get their share in a chaotic manner. "Our problem here is that some people can only get food if they fight for it; if they don't, they will not get anything. The only way to get your share is to push and shove other people. There is no queue, with

Unpaid workers rely on govt distributions

people fighting each other. We want to avoid the spread of coronavirus and social distancing must be followed, but look at how they are implementing the distribution of food," said Eyas, an Indian resident of Mahboula.

"It is as if we are animals here to be given chunks of food. We all want to eat, but I think the people in charge of distrib-



uting the food must be creative to avoid the spread of the virus, and so that people can get their share fairly and not just a few who fought for it," said Eyas. "Our situation here in Mahboula is really grim. Many of us here live in 'camps'. We are not getting salaries, so we have no money - not even a few fils to buy some food from the baqala. Yet the people in charge of giving us food are not managing it correctly for the people of Mahboula. We have run out of cash and are now relying on government distribution of food so we can eat,

but we have to fight for it," he lamented.

Some residents in the area are not relying on the limited food aid by the Kuwaiti government, especially Filipinos, whose embassy is providing food packets to its nationals in locked down areas. "Filipinos here are getting support from the Philippine Overseas Labor Office, courtesy of our embassy. It started even before the lockdown - we got some supplies from private individuals, but since the lockdown was implemented, the Philippine Embassy is continuously providing food. I have also



volunteered to distribute food. They give us cash to buy the supplies, which we distribute here," said Rems, a resident of Mahboula.

But the support of the embassy is not enough, so private individuals are also distributing food at the perimeter fence. "While they cannot enter the area, they can coordinate with people in need and ask them to come to the perimeter fence to hand them the supplies over the fence. This is how their supplies are getting into the locked down areas," said Rems.

May Siapno, also a volunteer to distribute embassy aid to Filipinos in Jleeb, once tried her luck to get some food from the government-run distribution center. "Hands up! I won't try again; the queue is too long with no social distancing, and you must pray that you will get your share. Unfortunately, I went home without food. I saw a lot of Filipinos in the queue, and I felt sorry for them. This is why we asked the embassy for food support. They give us cash to buy food and distribute it to our fellow Filipinos here," said Siapno.

Engineers produce face shields, masks for frontliners

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Kuwait Society of Engineers (KSE) has set an emergency crisis management plan to support the government with any possible efforts. KSE has gathered volunteer engineers in five groups from different engineering fields to provide technical support to public and private institutions, in addition to individuals.

KSE is providing many activities, the most important of which is establishing a temporary factory to produce face shields and other medical equipment for those working on the frontlines, including doctors, police forces, soldiers, volunteers and others. Around 200 engineer volunteers are working in shifts on this project for almost a month.

"At KSE we have three types of face shields - 3D-printed, laser-cut and hand-made (one-time use) shields. The 3D and the laser-cut shields are reusable and durable, which saves the environment with less waste and reduces the need for more production. The single-use shields were only given to the ministry of health. KSE has produced over 13,000 masks till today," Chairman of KSE Faisal Deweh Al-Atel told Kuwait Times yesterday.

They started with producing 400 shields daily. "Before the holy month of Ramadan, our team was working seven hours a day, while now they only work three hours, so production has dropped to half. We asked the ministry of interior

for permission to work during the curfew and we are still waiting for it," Atel said.

"We were informed that our shields don't reach all doctors, especially those in certain locations, so we decided to distribute the shields personally to them. Our volunteers distribute them to doctors in Farwaniya, Jaber, Amiri, Mubarak, KOC and Adan hospitals. We also distribute them to doctors and other professionals working at the airport and at quarantine sites including firefighting forces, National Guard, police and special forces, Red Crescent, Public Authority for Food and Nutrition, Municipality, medical associations, and co-ops," stressed Atel.

KSE is producing more medical equipment according to the needs of medical staff. "We produced the 'ear guard', which is a plastic piece that relieves pressure on ears and nose while providing more protection. We also produced 10 cubicles that provide complete isolation for doctors from patients. But this is only used by a few doctors. Now there is a shortage of gowns in Kuwait, so we will start producing them after receiving the machine from abroad," he pointed out.

KSE has 12 locations for production in cooperation with some institutions. "All the materials are provided by KSE, but we cooperate with the Kuwait Institution for Scientific Research, Gulf Consultant and others by using their equipment. Hopefully soon, we will also cooperate with the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training," concluded Atel.

Minister refers two co-ops' boards to prosecution

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Maryam Al-Aqeel announced Monday referring boards of Al-Jabriyah and Fahad Al-Ahmad cooperative societies and two board members of Al-Naeem society to the public prosecution due to grave financial irregularities. The minister said in a statement to the press the legal action

against the boards and the members was taken in line with a memo filed by the co-operative sector of the ministry of social affairs with respect of discovering violations in works of these societies, noting that the two board members of Al-Naeem society had been dismissed due to same reasons. The memo calls for speedy legal action against the boards and the boards'

members to protect funds of shareholders and maintain good image of the cooperative sector in the country. Minister Aqeel has warned that she will not hesitate to refer any breaching society to the judicial authorities. She issued two decisions on Sunday dissolving boards of Al-Jabriyah and Fahad Al-Ahmad coops and appointing interim managers for each. — KUNA



KUWAIT: A man was killed in a road accident near Ardhiya intersection with the Avenues mall Monday night. Ardhiya Fire Station men dealt with the accident. —By Hanan Al-Saadoun

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in the Arabian Gulf



KuwaitTimes



94488888

Local

Police interrogates girl over violation of curfew

Home quarantine violators referred for questioning

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Interior said on Monday the criminal security sector of Hawally investigations department subpoenaed a girl after she claimed in a video clip that she violated the partial curfew. During interrogation, the girl admitted to the charge and was therefore referred to the competent authority as a prelude to a legal measure, according to a statement from the ministry's public relations and security media department. The statement reminded the public of the importance of abidance by the curfew, noting that the Ministry would never tolerate any breach of the relevant decisions of the cabinet.

In the meantime, the Ministry of Health said Monday it referred people who violated home quarantine to the Ministry of Interior to be questioned. Those violating home quarantine are referred to the investigation department of the Interior Ministry to be questioned and then face charges, MoH's Assistant Undersecretary for Legal Affairs Mohammad Al-Subaiee said. He said this referral was based on Law No 8 of 1969 regarding

prevention of communicable diseases. Subaiee said they were monitoring the citizens who were repatriated and how they were abiding by the home quarantine restrictions. The ministry, he asserted, would refer any person violating the quarantine for the



Mahboula crowd under control

sake of wellbeing of the society. The Ministry of Interior also announced that police arrested 13 curfew violators on Monday, including 11 Kuwaitis and two expats. Seven people were arrested in Hawally



governorate, four in the Capital, one in Farwaniya, and one in Jahra, the ministry said.

Crowd under control

In other news, the Ministry of Interior said Monday that law enforcers managed to take control over a group of African nationals who gathered in Mahboula. The expats were waiting for buses to take them to a school where they would stay pending their repatriation as part of an amnesty, said a statement from the ministry's public relations and

security media department in response to video circulated earlier on social media. The buses were not at the site when the expats arrived and some crowds were about to spill out of control so the public security officers stepped in to control the situation. The expatriates were sent back to their home pending the arrival of the buses, according to the statement. The Ministry urged all media outlets to avoid circulating disinformation or untrue reports regarding the security situation in the country.

Separately, the Ministry of Interior said Monday that agents of its criminal security sector arrested a delivery boy after he behaved mysteriously in front of a home. A circulated video showed the person, an Arab, while messing around on the rubbish after delivering the order. During interrogation, the man admitted that he messed around the trash and tampered with the contents of the order, according to a statement from the ministry's public relations and security media dept. The man was referred to the competent authority pending a legal measure against him, the statement added. — KUNA



Kuwait Embassy to Sudan distributes 1,800 food baskets

KHARTOUM: Kuwait's Embassy in Khartoum distributed 1,800 food baskets for hundreds of families, orphans and needy to mark Muslims' holy month of Ramadan, Ambassador Bassam Al-Qabandi said Monday. The food baskets, financed by Kuwait Public

Waqf Endowment, were distributed through several days in Khartoum and neighboring areas as well as in houses of orphans, senior citizens and displaced, Qabandi said. Kuwait is living up to its international status as Humanitarian Center, led by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah who was named by the UN as Humanitarian Leader, he said. Each basket weighs 50 kilograms and consists of rice, sugar, tea, flour, lentil, dates, oil and other basic needs consumed by families in Ramadan. The distribution of baskets, said Qabandi, coincided with the curfew in Khartoum which was imposed to curb spread of coronavirus. — KUNA



Expats continue to avail amnesty

KUWAIT: People from different nationalities headed on Monday to centers set up by the Ministry of Interior to receive expatriates without valid residencies. Kuwait announced an amnesty 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. Applicants from all nationalities are received on April 26 - 30. The amnesty started with receiving Filipino applicants on April 1 - 5, followed by Egyptians on April 6 - 10, Bangladeshis on April 11 - 15, Indians on April 16 - 20, and Sri Lankans on April 21 - 25.

Violators are received from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm at the following locations: 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. Residency violators from all nationalities are also received in two difference locations in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh as follows: Female violators are received at Roufayda Al-Aslamaya School - Block 4 - Street 200, while male violators are received at Naeem bin Masod School - Block 4 - Street 250.



KUWAIT: People from different nationalities queue up Monday outside a school in Farwaniya which was turned into a center to receive applications of violators wishing to avail the amnesty. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Stores sealed for violating precautions

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Commerce and Industry said yesterday its teams have sealed two stores for failing to abide by the preventive measures relating to the combat against the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)

and the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Teams from the ministry have inspected 165 consumer cooperatives, shopping malls and vegetables stores to verify their commitment to the pricing rules, the ministry said in a statement, noting that nine stores were booked for irregularities.

The teams have checked the orderliness of delivery of food rations to eligible recipients at 61 rationing centers. The emergency center of the ministry received 191 complaints via its hotline 135 and 20 complaints via the supervision centers, the statement said, adding that 132 ration cards have been renewed. — KUNA

• Read Kuwait Times now on your phone for **FREE**

• Send Subscribe to **+965 944 88888**

• Enjoy the first daily paper in Kuwait on your phone

P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait
 Tel: 24833199 - 24833358 - 24835616/7 | Fax: 24835620 - 24835621
 E: info@kuwaittimes.net

Local

Kuwait Heritage



KUWAIT: A scene from the Shuwaikh Port, which was called 'Al-Furdha' in the past. This pictures, dating back to the 1950s, shows commercial activity at the port which was the hub to import and export all kinds of goods on a daily basis, including foods such as sugar, tea, coffee, as well as timber and other material. (Source: A total of commemorative printed images to the Ministry of Information in the 1960s and 1970s. — Prepared by: Mahmoud Aakaria Abu Alella, researcher in heritage, Ministry of Information)

Ramadan: When God Spoke

By Teresa Leshner

We often offer silent or audible prayers, asking for help from our Creator, for succor from our problems, for blessings on our loved ones, and for forgiveness on our mistakes. We also - likely less often - thank Him for our sustenance and surroundings, our families and abilities. We communicate with God, and we may perceive the conversation as one-sided since we receive no spoken or written response. But what if the Almighty Creator of the heavens and earth did answer you - did send you a spoken or written response? What would He say? Would it be one word? A 20-minute speech? A letter? Or an entire book?

In the month of Ramadan, 1453 years ago, God sent us a message. It is the Quran, the Speech of God, revealed through the angel Gabriel to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who dictated it so it could be transcribed for all of humanity. It is a direct message for you and me, and all humankind. In fact, many verses of the Quran are addressed to "O People!" or "O Mankind!" These are general verses for every living soul. While some verses are addressed particularly to believers, in fact, the whole Quran is a message for each of us. The Quran is the only divinely revealed scripture that has remained intact in its original language throughout the centuries, being widely available until today. It has also been translated in virtually every language across the globe.

So what did God say in this book to us from Him? Following are a few key verses:

"O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, that you may become righteous. [He] who made for you the earth a bed [spread out] and the sky a ceiling

and sent down from the sky rain, and brought forth thereby fruits as provision for you. So do not attribute to Allah equals while you know [that there is nothing similar to Him]." (2:21-22)

"O People! Remember the favor of Allah upon you. Is there any creator other than Allah who provides for you from the Heaven and the Earth? There is no deity except Him, so how are they turned away? If they deny you (O Muhammad) so were messengers denied before you. To God all affairs are returned (for decision)." (35:3-4)

"O People! God's promise is true, so do not let the worldly life turn you away and do not let the devil deceive you. Indeed, Satan is an enemy to you; so take him as an enemy. He only invites his party to be among the companions of the Blaze." (35:5-6).

"This (Message) is a declaration to (all) people as well as a guidance and instruction for God-fearing people" (3:138).

Say, [O Muhammad], "If ye do love Allah, Follow me: Allah will love you and forgive your sins: For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (3:31)

"There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often." (33:21)

It is really miraculous that our Creator has answered our prayers with an entire book dedicated to us, and sent us a messenger to guide our way in applying its teachings. After such a grand gesture, it is only polite to take the time to read it! If we truly want God to hear our prayers and answer our call, we must also heed His words and answer His call. If you would like a translation of the Quran, contact any branch of IPC or the TIES Center.

— Courtesy of the TIES Center, whose mission is to empower Kuwait's expats through social and educational services that promote a positive and productive role in society, and to facilitate opportunities for intra- and interfaith interactions that promote social solidarity. For more information, please call 25231015/6 or e-mail: info@tiescenter.net.

COVID-19 cases found among co-ops' staff

KUWAIT: Sabahiya Co-op Society announced that an employee has tested positive for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), while another is suspected to have contracted the virus. The co-op was closed yesterday as a preventative measurement. Meanwhile, Jabriya Co-op Society announced a

suspected case of coronavirus among its staff at Block 5 branch. The branch was closed for two days as a precaution. In the meantime, Ishbiliya Co-op Society announced that its secretary Bassam Al-Mutairi tested positive after all staff members were tested following the discovery of positive cases last week. Separately, Daiya Co-op Society announced that one of the shoppers passed away in front of the supermarket's building, and the cause of death is being investigated. The co-op branch in block 2 was closed yesterday and will remain closed until the cause of death is identified, the co-op said.

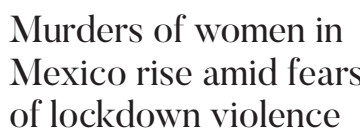
Ready for the Beach ??

Kuwait Times

Subscribe or renew your subscription
& get K.D 50

1 Coupon FREE

P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait | Tel: 24833199 - 24833358 - 24835616/7
Fax: 24835620 - 24835621 | E: info@kuwaittimes.net



Page 8



COVID-19 claims 5,800 lives; infects more than 91,000 in Iran

TEHRAN: An Iranian taxi driver rests while waiting for passengers at Aryashahr station, a transport hub in west Tehran, as cabs services have been among the hardest hit since the country's coronavirus outbreak. — AFP

Alireza, 49, spoke of a similar drop in income. He said he was getting by for the time being thanks to a loan from the company. In order to help drivers - 13 of whom have died from COVID-19, according to official figures - the municipality had extended their work permits free of charge, Qanadan said. For the most vulnerable of them, he added, city hall has also distributed sanitary articles and even food. — AFP

“We await results of the ongoing Phase 3 trial to learn more about COVID-19, and better understand whether some patients may benefit from Kevzara treatment,” said George Yancopoulos, Regeneron’s president and co-founder. The company is separately developing an antibody cocktail that will directly target the virus and that it hopes to advance into human trials by June. These antibodies are being acquired by infecting mice that have had their immune systems genetically modified to become human-like. Regeneron has previously used this system to develop a treatment that proved effective against Ebola. — AFP

International

Inside Connecticut's 'ground war' against virus at nursing homes

Coronavirus death toll mounts

BRIDGEPORT: On Main Street in Bridgeport, Connecticut, across the road from a hospital grappling with the coronavirus crisis, a nondescript brick building is playing a key role in the state's plan to free up acute-care beds and protect its ailing nursing homes. Over the past week, the Northbridge Health Care Center has taken in 46 patients who have recuperated enough from COVID-19 - the disease caused by the virus - to be discharged from a local hospital but are still contagious. Understandably, their long-term care facilities were anxious about readmitting them.

The use of two floors at Northbridge to care exclusively for patients with COVID-19 is part of Connecticut's "ground war" against a problem vexing officials across the United States: where to send recovering patients who might still infect others if returned to their original place of care, said Barbara Cass, a state health department official who oversees nursing homes.

The state is building a network of such facilities to act as a kind of step-down unit upon discharge from a hospital that could eventually accommodate more than 1,000 people. While they will take in an array of patients, a primary focus is protecting nursing homes, which account for as much as half of the coronavirus-related deaths in the state. "Thirty days into this, there is still lots of fear and lots of unknowns," Cass said in an interview. "The overall goal is to address the surge in hospitals, so that someone who arrives at hospital that is acutely ill can have a bed." How states approach this challenge could determine how well they quell the growing crisis at long-term care facilities, which are breed-

ing grounds for the highly contagious virus given the vulnerable older age of the residents, close living quarters and shared staff. While New York has mandated facilities take back coronavirus patients discharged from a hospital as long as they can provide adequate care, Connecticut is among a handful of states seeking to sidestep that risk.

It has tapped Northbridge and six other nursing facilities as COVID-19 recovery centers, with seven more being considered. To date, 119 patients have been transferred to the three sites currently open, a spokesman for the health department said. Andrea Iacomacci, senior manager of care coordination at Bridgeport Hospital, said while a few nursing homes have started taking back patients, she has sent about 10 to Northbridge and would send more there in the coming weeks. The transfers have helped the hospital reduce its number of COVID-19 patients to 191 from a peak of 225 a week ago, she said.

Similarly, St Vincent's Medical Center has sent eight COVID-19 patients across Main Street to Northbridge, among the dozens who have been cycled out of Hartford HealthCare's seven hospitals who would otherwise have had remain until they tested negative for the virus. "We have people who were essentially sitting in the hospital waiting for negative testing to be transitioned to a nursing facility," said David Santoro, vice president of business operations at Hartford HealthCare Integrated Care Partners. "This is a way to get the patients moving to a lower level of care."

'It's in our buildings'

According to a survey of data by ABC News



CONNECTICUT: A 'prone team', wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), turns a COVID-19 patient onto his stomach in a Stamford Hospital intensive care unit (ICU) in Stamford, Connecticut. — AFP

published on Friday, there have been at least 10,631 coronavirus-related deaths among long-term care residents, about a fifth of fatalities nationwide. Data released by Connecticut on Friday underscored the depth of its crisis, with 768 coronavirus deaths attributed to nursing home residents as of April 22, account-

ing for a staggering 50% of COVID-19 fatalities. Interviews with more than a dozen people involved with Connecticut's plan revealed the challenges they faced in settling on a strategy, especially following new guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) last month. — Reuters

Record 50 million people displaced internally

GENEVA: Conflict and disaster forced more than 33 million people to flee within their own countries last year, putting them at greater risk amid the global COVID-19 pandemic, monitors said yesterday. The new figure brings the total number of people living in internal displacement to a record 50.8 million, according to a report by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

The number of internally displaced people (IDPs) is far higher than the some 26 million who have fled across borders as refugees. "IDPs are often highly vulnerable people living in crowded camps, emergency shelters and informal settlements with little or no access to healthcare," IDMC director Alexandra Bilak said in a statement. "The global coronavirus pandemic will make them more vulnerable still," she said, warning it would "compromise their already precarious living conditions by further limiting their access to essential services and humanitarian aid."

The report found that conflict forced 8.5 million IDPs to flee last year in countries like Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and South Sudan. Together with those already displaced, more than 45 million people live in internal displacement brought on by conflict, including nearly 6.5 million in Syria, which has been ravaged by nine years of civil war. Another 5.1 million people were living in internal displacement due to natural disasters at the end of 2019, out of nearly 25 million who fled their homes due to such disasters throughout the year

'Failing by epic proportions'

"Year after year, conflict and violence uproot millions of people from their homes," NRC chief Jan Egeland said in the statement. "Collectively, we are failing by epic proportions to protect the world's most vulnerable," he lamented, calling for concerted action and insisting that "in this age of coronavirus, continued political violence is utterly senseless."

Some 4.5 million were forced to flee their homes by cyclone Fani in India and Bangladesh, cyclones Idai and Kenneth in Mozambique and hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas. Heavy and prolonged rains and flooding in Africa forced another two million people into internal displacement last year, the report said. But Bilak noted to AFP that most displacements due to natural disasters were actually "government-led, preemptive evacuations to save lives and protect people" and that most people are able to return home relatively quickly, "as long as their home has not been completely destroyed".

Going forward, Bilak warned that the coronavirus pandemic could make it more difficult for countries to take the steps needed to evacuate before weather hazards hit, since thousands of people should not be crowded together in shelters. "How you balance those time-sensitive humanitarian relief efforts with your national effort to fight the spread of COVID is going to be a difficult balancing act," she said. — AFP

Biden wins big endorsements but gets little air time

WASHINGTON: Confined to his home to respect anti-virus measures and facing an accusation of sexual assault, Democratic presidential hopeful Joe Biden is finding it hard to get his message across in a country laser-focused on the health crisis. The former vice president has won a series of major endorsements-the latest came from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Monday-but has had to rely on late-night appearances and virtual town halls to make his voice heard.

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump is front and center every day as the nation combats the global pandemic and haltingly moves down the path to reopening the economy. Is it time for the Democrats to worry? Kyle Kondik, a political analyst at the University of Virginia, says no. "Biden wants to make this election more of a referendum on Trump," Kondik said.

"That Trump dominates the news while Biden doesn't is not a problem for this kind of strategy, because Trump's domination of the news is not at this point broadening Trump's own level of sup-



PHILADELPHIA: Democratic presidential hopeful and former Vice President Joe Biden speaks at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. — AFP

port." Indeed, in her endorsement, Pelosi hailed Biden as a man of "empathy, grace and courage" and "a leader with the humility to seek expertise in science and the confidence to act on it"-a pointed bid to draw a contrast with Trump. "As we face coronavirus, Joe Biden has been a voice of reason and resilience with a clear path to lead us out of this crisis," she said.

Democrats rally behind Biden

More than 2,500 lawmakers, officials and community leaders have rallied behind Biden, his campaign team said Monday. Of course, the biggest endorsement of them all came from Biden's former

Germans don masks to ward off COVID-19

BERLIN: Germany made wearing masks on public transport and in most shops mandatory on Monday, even offering them in vending machines, as the country became the latest to cover up in the fight against the coronavirus. "It's warm, slippery, you can't breathe well, but if it's to avoid infection, I'm fine with it," Emil, a commuter at a Berlin train station, told AFP. Starting this week, donning face masks in public is compulsory in all of Germany's 16 states but there are many regional differences. The rules are most relaxed Berlin, where masks are required only on public transport and not in shops. There are no fines for not complying.

Bavaria on the other hand has threatened penalties of 150 euros for anyone caught flouting the rules and shop owners who fail to make staff cover up can be fined 5,000 euros. The World Health Organization initially said masks should only be worn by medical workers and carers but the little squares of fabric are now widely seen as key to gradually reopening societies as the world learns to live with the pandemic. With its new rules, Germany follows in the footsteps of a string of European countries where mask-wearing is now compulsory, including Austria, Poland and the Czech Republic.

At one Berlin regional train station, compliance was widespread on the first day with even small children donning colorful masks. "I work in the health field and I think we should have had this in place much sooner in order to protect each other," said Claudia, a passenger in her 50s who opted for a mask with a floral pattern. Fellow commuter Andre, also in his 50s, was less enthusiastic. "With the mask on, I can't eat on the train," he said, pulling down his mask to talk to AFP. "I have to eat before or after. It's not very important, but personally it bothers me."

Germans are free to choose which type of mask to wear, from disposable ones to self-made cloth versions, and many states have said they will also accept scarves and bandanas. Berlin's Zoo station offered reusable masks for sale in a vending machine for anyone caught out at the last minute, charging 5.50 euros (\$6) apiece. In



BERLIN: People wear face protection masks at the Bahnhof Zoo subway station in Berlin, amid the new coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. — AFP

Frankfurt, the local transport company handed out 10,000 disposable masks to passengers on buses, trams, metros and trains. Tiny Saarland state, along the border with France, has vowed to hand out five free masks to each of its one million residents.

Gradual relaxation

The mask-wearing comes as Germany slowly begins relaxing its lockdown. Smaller shops, car dealerships and some schools have already been allowed to reopen and plans are being drawn up to ease other restrictions. Although Germany has recorded over 155,000 coronavirus cases, it has one of the lowest mortality rates in the world-just over 5,700 people have died. Keen not to undo the good work, Chancellor Angela Merkel has repeatedly urged Germany's states to proceed with caution, even as the lockdown batters Europe's top economy. Merkel said she "strongly recommended" wearing masks in public, and Germans are eagerly waiting for their first glimpse of the veteran leader doing her usual weekly shop in a mask. — AFP

Brazilian judge orders probe into accusations against the president

BRASILIA: A Brazilian Supreme Court judge on Monday ordered a probe into accusations by former justice and security minister Sergio Moro that President Jair Bolsonaro sought to "interfere" with police investigations. In his decision, obtained by AFP, Judge Celso de Mello gave the federal police 60 days to question Moro about his explosive allegations against the right-wing president. The findings, which will be handed over to the attorney general, could result in either a request for a political trial against Bolsonaro or an indictment against Moro for false testimony.

According to the judge, the alleged crimes seem to have "an intimate connection with the exercise of the presidential mandate," thus allowing for an investigation of the leader. Moro, a former anti-corruption judge, resigned on Friday after clashing with Bolsonaro over the sacking of the federal police chief, accusing the president of political interference. The judge's document lists seven accusations against Bolsonaro, including malfeasance and obstruction of justice.

Should the investigation confirm the allegations, it will be up to the lower house of the National Congress to initiate impeachment proceedings against Bolsonaro and potentially remove him from office. In 2017, the prosecutor general's office asked to open two investigations against then-president Michel Temer, and in both cases the request was rejected by the Chamber of Deputies. The tensions come at the height of the global coronavirus crisis.

Bolsonaro has repeatedly downplayed the danger of COVID-19 and earlier this month fired his health minister, Luiz Henrique Mandetta, who supported isolation as a tool to contain the spread of the pandemic. A poll published Monday night shows divided opinions about Bolsonaro's future, with 45 percent of Brazilians saying Congress should open an impeachment process against him. In comparison, 48 percent think Bolsonaro should not be impeached, according to the Datafolha poll, which ran in the Folha de S. Paulo daily. Behind the scenes, changing the head of the federal police, an investigative body that reports to the justice ministry, is seen as an attempt by Bolsonaro to control investigations that surround his family and political allies. — AFP

International

US downplays Iranian military satellite as ‘tumbling webcam’

In twist to press arms ban, US asserts role in Iran deal

WASHINGTON: The head of the US Space Command said the Pentagon believes that Iran's first successful launch of a military satellite into space does not pose any intelligence threat. The Nour satellite placed into orbit on April 22 is classified by the US military as a small 3U Cubesat, three adjoined units each no more than a liter in volume and less than 1.3 kilograms each, said General Jay Raymond in a tweet late Sunday.

“Iran states it has imaging capabilities-actually, it's a tumbling webcam in space; unlikely providing intel,” he wrote. “#spaceishard,” Raymond added to the tweet. While Raymond downplayed any threat from the satellite, the United States has warned that Tehran's ability to place it into space represents a significant advance in its long-range missile capability, posing a greater threat to US forces and allies in the Middle East.

Last week US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo accused Iran of violating a 2015 UN Security Council resolution against Tehran advancing any nuclear-capable ballistic missile activities. On Saturday, Pompeo called for the United Nations to extend its conventional arms embargo on Iran beyond its scheduled end in October. “All peace-loving nations must reject Iran's development of ballistic-missile-capable technologies and join together to constrain Iran's dangerous missile programs,” he said.

Iran nuclear deal

Meanwhile, Trump's administration has persistently trashed a nuclear deal with Iran. But as it seeks to extend an arms embargo, it is making the case that it still has a seat at the table. The push has drawn skepticism from Western allies and has led critics to question if the ultimate aim is to kill the deal entirely, potentially in the final stretch of Trump's re-election campaign.

“You cannot cherry-pick a resolution saying you implement only parts of it but you won't do it for the rest,” a Western diplomat said on condition of

anonymity. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has called on United Nations members to renew the ban on all conventional arms exports to Iran which is due to expire in October.

He renewed his push last week after Iran said it had launched a military satellite into orbit for the first time-proving, according to Pompeo, that the clerical regime had been deceitful in saying its space program was for peaceful purposes. The launch should lead more countries to “understand what President Trump has understood since he first came into office, that the Iran deal was a crazy, bad deal,” Pompeo told the Christian Broadcasting Network. The arms embargo was part of a 2015 UN Security Council Resolution-whose primary pur-

Satellite ‘unlikely providing intel’



This file handout photo shows an Iranian military satellite-dubbed the Nour-which the Revolutionary Guards said was launched from the Qassed two-stage launcher in the Markazi desert, a vast expanse in Iran's central plateau, amid tensions with US. — AFP

pose was to bless the deal, negotiated by former president Barack Obama, under which Iran drastically scaled back its nuclear program. Former secretary of state John Kerry has said the five-year embargo was a compromise with Russia and China, which opposed any limits. Wielding veto power,

Russia and China are virtually certain to oppose a new embargo, with Moscow potentially in line for billions of dollars in arms contracts. But there is one way to skirt a veto-if a party to the deal asserts that Iran is in significant violation of it, which would trigger a return of international sanctions. — AFP

News in brief

Italians search for ‘relatives’

ROME: That is what millions of stir crazy Italians have apparently been asking ever since Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte allowed them to leave their homes to see their loved ones starting next Monday. Media reports said “relative” became the most searched for term on the Italian internet for a few hours after Conte's Sunday night television address. Conte said Italians would be allowed to leave their homes for the first time since March 9 “to visit relatives, but only if they respect distance and wear masks”. The only problem is that Italy has no legal definition of the term and people sounded genuinely confused. Most of the big papers devoted entire articles to the subject of whether your boyfriend or distant cousin provided a good enough legal excuse to leave your house. — AFP

Executions of child offenders

PARIS: France has condemned Iran over the executions this month of two young offenders who it said were minors at the time of their crimes, accusing Tehran of violating its international obligations. The French foreign ministry said that Shayan Saeedpour was executed on April 21 and Majid Esmaeilzadeh on April 18, noting they were both “minors at the time of the facts”. “The executions are contrary to the international obligations that Iran has signed up to itself, in particular the international convention on the rights of the child,” it said. Amnesty International had already condemned the execution of Saeedpour, 21, at the central prison in Saqqez, in Iran's Kurdistan province, “as vengeful and cruel.” — AFP

Libya's Haftar claims ‘mandate’

BENGHAZI: Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar said Monday he had “a popular mandate” to govern the country, declaring a key 2015 political deal over and vowing to press his assault to seize Tripoli. In a speech on his Libya al-Hadath TV channel, he said his self-styled Libyan “army” was “proud to be mandated with the historic task” of leading Libya. “We announce our acceptance of the people's will and mandate and the end of the Skhirat Agreement,” he said, referring to a 2015 United Nations-mediated deal that produced the unity government. He did not make clear whether an elected parliament in the country's east, a signatory to the deal, backed his move-or what its future role would be. Haftar has so far drawn his legitimacy from the administration based in the country's east, and last April his forces launched an assault to seize the capital Tripoli, in the west, from the Government of National Accord. — AFP

COVID: Deaf Indonesians

MAKASSAR: Lip-reading suddenly got tricky when everyone covered their face during the coronavirus pandemic, but Indonesian tailors have hit upon the perfect solution - see-through masks. One husband and wife duo in Makassar on Sulawesi island started producing cloth masks with transparent plastic in the middle to help fellow deaf people. “Since the pandemic started, everyone is wearing facemasks. For deaf people, we can't understand what others are saying because we can't read their lips,” said 52-year-old Faizah Badaruddin. “There were a lot of misunderstandings,” she added. Badaruddin and her husband used to sew cushions, bed sheets and curtains for customers. But when orders dried up, Badaruddin looked up instructional videos online to work out how to produce masks for the hearing impaired. — AFP

Murders of women in Mexico rise amid fears of lockdown violence

MEXICO CITY: Almost 1,000 women were murdered in Mexico in the first three months of this year, according to government data, showing a spike in violence that combined with coronavirus lockdown measures, advocates say, puts women in double jeopardy. The rate was 8% higher than in the same period last year, according to the data. “The deadliest pandemic for women in our country, more than the coronavirus, is femicidal violence,” said Congresswoman Martha Tagle from the opposition Citizens' Movement party. “Today, violence is the greatest threat to all the rights for women that we have had recognized with great effort,” she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Some 14,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been reported in Mexico, and more than 1,300 deaths, although testing rates are low. Of the coronavirus deaths, about 420 have been women, the government said. The government reported that at least 720 women were murdered in the first quarter of the year and 244 women were victims of femicide, where a woman is killed because of her gender. A year ago, at least 890 women were killed. Gender-based violence is widespread in the Latin American country.

The national statistics agency (INEGI) has said two-thirds of women in Mexico have experienced some form of violence, with almost 44% suffering abuse from a partner. The femicide rate has more than doubled in the past five years, and gang violence has pushed the murder tally to record heights. Most violent crime in Mexico goes unsolved. With coronavirus lockdown measures extended until at least the end of May, advocates

Iran newspaper accuses US of stealing its .com

TEHRAN: The government newspaper Iran has lost its .com website, with its publisher on Monday accusing the United States of “stealing” the domain name. The paper's .com edition is no longer available, although its .ir version remains active. Contacted by AFP, Mehdi Shafii, head of the media group that publishes Iran, accused the US Treasury of wanting to “block” and “confiscate” the company's domain names.

US President Donald Trump's administration has “so far shown that it is not at all rational or logical and therefore behavior such as stealing a newspaper's domain was not unexpected”, he added. “This is an inhumane act that violates human rights, in particular freedom of expression,” Shafii said. He called on “all international bodies, members of the media and all supporters of freedom of expression around the world to react and condemn this decision”.

The US Treasury, particularly its Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), acts according to US economic sanctions that the Trump administration has tightened considerably against Iran since 2018. As a result, some social media networks including Instagram have closed accounts belonging to Iranian officials named on the US Treasury's blacklist.

A search of the Iranian newspaper's .com domain name shows that its status was updated on April 23 and is now owned by “OFAC Holding” registered in Jacksonville, Florida. In 2013, Brian Krebs, an American investigative journalist specializing in



MEXICO CITY: Health workers of the La Raza Hospital demonstrate for the lack of medical material to care for COVID-9 patients, in Mexico City during the novel coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

worry that such alarming rates of violence may get worse. Calls and messages sent to the National Network of Shelters - a network of almost 70 refuges for female victims of violence - rose more than 80 percent between mid-March and mid-April when compared to the previous month. “It's terrible. I think many more women could die because of violence than COVID in this period,” said Patricia Olamendi, a lawyer who represents victims of violence and has written protocols on femicide investigations. She added that the government has not published a plan to address the spike in domestic abuse.

“There is a complete and absolute abandonment,” she said. “What's happening in the country is inhumane.” In a meeting last week regarding vio-

lence against women during the pandemic, Interior Minister Olga Sanchez Cordero said the country's 911 emergency hotline was key to battling the scourge. “We must join efforts to face the pandemic of violence (against women) that is the silent pandemic, but also the one that causes pain (and) costs thousands of lives a year,” she said.

The Interior Ministry did not immediately reply to a request for comment. Protests against gendered violence grew earlier this year, with millions of Mexican women staying home from work during a nationwide strike in March, a day after a series of protests across the country for International Women's Day. Mexico suffered its worst year for homicides in 2019, with a record 34,582 victims, according to data published in January. — Reuters

China slams Indian criticism over kits as ‘irresponsible’

NEW DELHI: China has criticized India's decision to stop using Chinese testing kits for the novel coronavirus because of quality issues as unfair and irresponsible in the latest strain in their ties. The Indian Council of Medical Research, the top agency dealing with the coronavirus outbreak, said on Monday it planned to return the kits for antibody tests procured from two Chinese firms because of poor accuracy. The Chinese embassy said it was deeply concerned by the Indian decision and Chinese authorities had validated the equipment produced by the two firms, Guangzhou Wondfo Biotech and Zhuhai Livzon Diagnostics.

“It is unfair and irresponsible for certain individuals to label Chinese products as ‘faulty’ and look at issues with preemptive prejudice,” embassy spokeswoman Ji Rong said in a statement. The Chinese companies had exported equipment to several countries in Europe, Asia and Latin America without any problem, she said. China was trying to help India fight the coronavirus with concrete action and it made sure the quality of its medical exports is a priority with manufacturers, Ji said.

Wondfo Biotech said in a statement it stood by the quality of its equipment and it had been validated by the Indian medical research body itself at the time of issuing an import license. The diplomatic flap comes days after China criticised an Indian decision to step up scrutiny of investments from neighboring countries, seen as a move to stave off opportunistic takeovers by Chinese firms during the coronavirus outbreak. — Reuters



TEHRAN: An Iranian woman exercises in a public outdoor gym in the capital Tehran, with the Milad tower in the background. — AFP

cyber security, reported on his blog that “OFAC Holding” was the signature of an American company, Network Solutions, and its parent company Web.com. According to Krebs, these two companies had seized hundreds of domain names linked to Syrian entities targeted by US sanctions for their links with President Bashar Al-Assad. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2020

10 HSBC profits halved as virus batters global economy**11** UN tells firms to make worker returns safe as lockdowns ease**11** Nokia clinches \$1 billion deal with India's Airtel

CARSON: Oil-storage tanks are seen from above in Carson after the price for crude plunged into negative territory for the first time in history. — AFP

Oil firms face hedging, debt tests

Industry in turmoil as oil price down 70% so far in 2020

LONDON: Independent international oil producers can cope with plunging oil prices better than higher-cost US shale firms but persistent low prices may still leave them struggling to repay debts and renew hedging facilities needed to protect revenues.

The drop in Brent crude to \$20 a barrel and less, or the even deeper slide of US crude into negative territory, has hammered US shale producers, which typically need more than \$40 to break even, forcing shut-ins and threatening insolvencies as the coronavirus crisis has thumped oil demand. Independent international firms, although they don't have the production-to-refining resources of majors such as BP or Shell, still have lower costs than shale producers, despite working in tough areas like the North Sea or Africa.

Meanwhile, the price of Kuwaiti oil edged lower by 48 cents to \$13.63 per barrel Monday as against \$14.11 pb the day before, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. The price of the West Texas Intermediate dropped by \$4.16 pb to \$12.78 pb and the Brent crude fell by \$1.45 to \$19.99 pb.

Independent producers such as Tullow, Kosmos, Genel, Premier and EnQuest put their 2020 cash flow breakeven at \$35 a barrel or less after cutting budgets, while hedging has further protected income for now. "We've taken capital out for prudence. In North America, the capital is coming out because it just is not economic," said Paul Blakeley, chief executive of

**Kuwait oil price
down 48 cents
to \$13.63 pb**

Jadestone, an independent focused on the Asia-Pacific region that starts generating free cash flow at \$27 a barrel. Hundreds of thousands of barrels per day of North American oil production has been shut-in since prices began crashing in March. Yet, in the North Sea, just two fields have been shut-in. EnQuest operated both, halting output of 6,000 bpd.

Hedging costs climb

Some US shale companies have not hedged against price falls or have programs that still leave them vulnerable to this year's dramatic price slump, which has sent prices down 70 percent since the end of 2019. Independent international producers, however, typically hedge about half of their output 12 to 18 months in advance with fixed floor prices, protecting them from any price slide below that level.

Tullow, an Africa-focused producer, had already

hedged 40 percent of its 2021 output with a floor price of \$53 a barrel. But the costs of such income insurance options are rising, making it a challenge to hedge further into the future. "To try to hedge at this current moment in the market is extremely difficult," Tullow Chief Financial Officer Les Wood told Reuters last week. Jadestone has a two-year hedge in place, with a floor of \$64.45, but it expires in September.

"There's absolutely no point in hedging, I think, probably anytime in the next several months," Blakeley said. In addition to the hedging challenge, independent producers, most of which are listed in London, have hefty debts to service. The London-listed firms have combined net debts of more than \$9 billion, while their total market capitalization on April 27 was less than half that, at \$4.4 billion.

Debt for equity?

North Sea producer EnQuest has been financing some of its existing debt with new borrowing, preserving cash flow now at the cost of a bigger debt burden later. "If oil prices remain anywhere below \$50 a barrel for an extended period, then we believe that EnQuest would have to do a debt for equity swap at some point," RBC oil and gas equities analyst Al Stanton said.

"(The) action being taken, along with realizations in the first quarter, are expected to lower EnQuest's free cash flow breakeven to (circa) \$25 per barrel of

oil equivalent for the rest of 2020," a spokesman for EnQuest said. "With no further bank repayments due in 2020, the group has sufficient liquidity for an extended period even if oil prices were as low (circa) \$10 a barrel."

Some of Tullow's financing is secured by its undeveloped reserves of oil and gas, or reserve based lending (RBL), a practice that is often used in the industry. Tullow has its RBL facilities reviewed, or redetermined, each six months. It secured a roll over in March, even as oil prices fell. But, before the rollover, it had said its future as a "going concern" was at risk if its RBL ran into difficulties. "Going into a crisis the lenders give the oil company the benefit of the doubt, but as their lower oil price outlooks solidify the redeterminations become a more challenging task," RBC's Al Stanton said. A Tullow spokesman said the company had hedging in place, was focused on reducing net debt and was committed to raising more than \$1 billion. It sold its stake in Ugandan oil fields this month for \$500 million in cash.

Meanwhile, other acquisition plans face threats. Premier, which restructured its debt after the last oil price rout between 2014 and 2016, is awaiting a ruling on whether it can extend its debt maturity by two years and raise \$500 million in equity to buy North Sea assets from BP. Bankers say current market valuations present a hurdle to capital raising. Premier did not immediately respond to Reuters for comment. — Agencies

Europe restarts car factories amid uncertainty

FRANKFURT: German carmaking giant Volkswagen resumed production at its biggest factory on Monday as part of a broader industry drive to get back to work in Europe, where the coronavirus pandemic has hammered demand and pushed up inventory levels. Encouraged by a fall in infection rates, Germany has eased lockdown rules and automakers are relying on the country's ability to trace and contain new coronavirus cases to safely restore operations in Europe's largest economy.

Volkswagen group, which also owns the Skoda, Audi, Bentley, Porsche and Seat brands, is resuming production at its plant in Wolfsburg, Germany, as well as at factories in Portugal, Spain, Russia, South Africa, and the Czech Republic this week. Production capacity at Wolfsburg will be just 10 percent-15 percent to begin with, and will reach around 40 percent of pre-crisis levels after about a week, Andreas Tostmann, the VW brand's board member responsible for production, told Reuters.

"The restart of Europe's biggest car factory after weeks of standstill is an important symbol for our employees, our dealers, suppliers, the German economy and for Europe," he said.

Volkswagen's plans mirror moves by rivals Renault, Peugeot and Fiat Chrysler to revive an industry crippled by dealership lockdowns and supply bottlenecks caused by restrictions to contain the pandemic. Fiat Chrysler has restarted Italian van production at its plant in Atesa and some other operations in the country, including preparatory works for upcoming hybrid and electric vehicles at Melfi and Turin's Mirafiori plants.

Swedish truck maker AB Volvo, whose brands include Mack and Renault trucks, is also looking to restart output, despite saying last week its net orders had turned negative since the end of March as customers cancelled more trucks than they ordered.

Dealerships

With dealerships closed in Germany until last week, it is hard for executives to gauge the level of demand. LMC Automotive analysts see an uneven pattern across the globe. "We assume that light vehicle sales will bottom out in April in Europe and North America, but the recovery, while broadly V-shaped, is unlikely to be rapid in the subsequent months," they said. Dealers might reopen next week in Italy.

"The point is not whether we open one week earlier or later. Most dealers have got huge stocks of cars now, we need to destock them before going back to buy from auto makers," said Plinio Vanini, chairman of Gruppo Autotorino, an Italian car dealer which sold over 29,000 new cars last year, with 1.2 billion euros in revenues. "We've got less ability to absorb new production now, especially given current estimates for a heavy market

**WOLFSBURG:** A worker wears a protective mask at the Volkswagen assembly line after VW re-starts Europe's largest car factory after coronavirus shutdown in Wolfsburg, Germany on Monday as the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) continues. — AFP

contraction this year".

Demand is seen down 20-30 percent for 2020 overall, with China being the only exception, thanks to its ability to impose social restrictions more forcefully than in the rest of the world. But even in China, sales are seen down 12 percent this year, LMC said.

Carmakers have overhauled production methods to try to reassure workers about the safety of returning to the production line. Volvo cars is offering employees tests to check the oxygen levels in their blood, while Hyundai Motor Co's South Korean workers are required to pass thermal cameras, which measure temperatures.

Even if Europe and Asia see economic activity gradu-

ally return, global demand will not rebound until the United States is able to restore confidence in its economy. The United Auto Workers union cast doubt on plans by US carmakers to resume production in early May, citing concerns about worker safety. Hyundai ramped up domestic production after South Korea got a grip on the virus outbreak, only to find its cars were sitting in US ports because of the hit to global demand.

In Wolfsburg, around 8,000 workers started building cars again on Monday, including the VW Golf. This week, 1,400 cars will be built, followed by 6,000 cars next week, VW said. VW workers are being told to measure their temperature and to get changed into their overalls at home, to prevent crowding in factory changing rooms.

Extra markings have been put on the factory floor so employees are able to keep at least 1.5 metres apart, and extra time is being provided for them to disinfect tools and surfaces. Volkswagen resumed producing components in Braunschweig, Kassel, Salzgitter and Hanover in Germany in early April. It restarted car manufacturing in Zwickau, Germany, and Bratislava, Slovakia, on April 20 and in Chemnitz, Germany, on April 23.

From May 3, it plans to resume production in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in the United States. Volkswagen is still working to whittle down inventory levels from before the crisis, it said, pinning its hopes on rekindled demand as lockdowns ease in many parts of Europe. The carmaker said around 70 percent of its dealerships in Germany had re-opened as of last week. — Reuters

Business

HSBC's Q1 profits halved as virus batters global economy

Lender reports pre-tax profits of \$3.2bn, down 48% from 2019

HONG KONG: HSBC yesterday said first quarter pre-tax profits almost halved as the banking giant was battered by the global coronavirus pandemic while it embarked on a major restructuring. The lender reported pre-tax profits of \$3.2 billion, down 48 percent from the same period in 2019, citing credit losses from clients struck by the economic slowdown as a major cause.

"The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our customers has been the main driver of the change in our financial performance since the turn of the year," newly confirmed CEO Noel Quinn said in a statement. Reported expected credit losses in the first quarter of the year were \$3 billion — \$2.4 billion more than the first quarter of 2019 and the bank's biggest bad loan bundle in almost nine years.

The Asia-focused lender has embarked on a huge cost-cutting initiative as it battles multiple uncertainties caused by the grinding US-China trade war, Britain's departure from the European Union and now the pandemic. Earlier this year it announced plans to slash 35,000 jobs, trimming fat from less profitable divisions, primarily in the United States and Europe.

But COVID-19 has thrown a spanner into the works with HSBC yesterday confirming many of the redundancies would be put on hold for now "to reduce the uncertainty" many of its employees would face in a decimated jobs sector. Banks are being hammered by market volatility and the economic slowdown caused by the virus crisis.

But they are also on the receiving end of huge

bailouts and support from central banks and regulators.

Major overhaul

Quinn took over as acting CEO after the shock ouster in August of John Flint. He was finally confirmed as the bank's head last month. He is tasked with transforming the sprawling international bank, which spans more than 50 countries but makes the vast majority of its profits in Asia.

In recent years HSBC's Asia business has done well-fuelled primarily by China-but Europe and the US have disappointed. Before the coronavirus went global the bank announced plans to make \$4.5 billion in cost cuts by 2022, with restructuring costs of around \$6 billion.

Many of the cutbacks will be in the European and US investment banking sectors, while units in more profitable Asia and the Middle East would be bolstered. The restructuring plans are the most ambitious since 2012 when HSBC was caught up in a Mexican money laundering scandal.

HSBC warned defaults would increase the longer the pandemic goes on, with the bank expecting between \$7 billion and \$11 billion in credit losses from clients in 2020. The biggest risks were currently coming from the "oil and gas, transport and discretionary consumer sectors", the bank said.

But Quinn added it was facing down the global pandemic "from a position of strength" with "robust levels of capital, funding and liquidity". Jackson Wong, an analyst at Amber Hill Capital, said yesterday's results were some of the worst for HSBC since



Redundancies put on hold for now



HONG KONG: Pedestrians wear face masks as they walk past HSBC signage outside a branch of the bank in Hong Kong yesterday. — AFP

the 2008 financial crash and that postponing some restructuring could help with operating costs.

And things could improve if countries make headway against the virus. "This could be seen as the worst has already happened," he told AFP. Last month HSBC was one of a number of banks to cancel dividends and buybacks at the request of British regulators. The move is part of an effort to bolster

cash reserves for the economic crisis but it caused anger among investors in Asia where some 90 percent of HSBC's profits are made. HSBC's shares plunged after dividends were scrapped. Before the lunchtime break yesterday, the bank's shares were up 1.77 percent in Hong Kong. In its results statement HSBC said it plans to review the scrapped dividends policy towards the end of this year. — AFP

Pakistan's younger women riding a digital wave

KARACHI: When Kainat Naz joined a women-friendly technology boot camp a year ago, she had no idea it would completely change her life and her views on how women can work in conservative Pakistan. Naz, 22, had never ventured far from her home in Orangi Town in Karachi, one of the five largest slums of the world, but was feeling dissatisfied with her current teaching job.

So she signed up for tech program called TechKaro, an initiative by Circle, a social enterprise that aims to improve women's economic rights in Pakistan, and is now working fulltime for a software company.

Naz said the course was challenging in many ways but she soon found that the women on the training were just as good as the men at tech skills like coding, web development and digital marketing, and also at presenting themselves at interviews. "From developing our CVs, to giving us tips on dressing for work, to conducting ourselves during an interview and how to battle some sticky questions ... we were groomed for everything," said Naz.

Women make up about 25 percent of Pakistan's labor force, one of the lowest in the region, according to the World Bank. It has set a target to increase this to 45 percent, calling for more childcare and a crackdown on sexual harassment to encourage more women out to work and boost economic growth. In Pakistan, women represent only 14 percent of the IT workforce, according to a 2012 study by P@SHA, the Pakistan Software Houses Association for IT and IT-enabled services (ITeS).

Gap in the market

Sadaf Abid, chief executive of Circle, set up TechKaro with the help of a few private foundations in 2018 seeing this gender gap, and took on 50 trainees in the first year of which 62 percent were women and 75 in 2019 including 66 percent women. Abid, who previously worked for a micro-finance institution, said she was delighted that women like Naz were proving that women could succeed in the tech world. "I am a firm believer that one of the most powerful uses of technology is to bring it to young women, especially from under-served communities, to unlock their talents, resourcefulness and creativity," said Abid.

"People told me I won't find women, or women will drop out in high numbers, or after completing the course, women won't find employment as the industry will not be open to hiring this unique diverse group with no degree in computer science. — Reuters



Kainat Naz works from home in Karachi. — Reuters

Boeing CEO sees slow rebound, no dividend for 'years'

NEW YORK: Boeing's head said Monday that restoring the dividend could take three to five years as the company girds for a slow air travel recovery in the wake of the coronavirus crisis.

The comment from Chief Executive David Calhoun was a signal that paying back debt and keeping up Boeing's manufacturing supply chain were bigger priorities than shareholder payouts for the foreseeable future. Speaking at the company's annual meeting, Calhoun offered a sober outlook on the near-term prospects for commercial air travel in the wake of the virus that is projected to cost the airline industry an estimated \$314 billion in 2020 revenues, potentially felling some carriers.

"Based on what we know now, we expect it will take two to three years for travel to return to 2019 levels and an additional few years beyond that for the industry's long-term trend growth to return," Calhoun said. Boeing announced earlier this month it would undertake a voluntary worker layoff plan. Sources have told AFP the company expects to cut 10 percent of its commercial airline workforce.

Even before COVID-19 broke out, Boeing was already under pressure after two crashes of its 737 MAX killed 346 people, leading to its global

Airbus warns staff on jobs with its 'survival at stake'

PARIS/TOULOUSE: European planemaker Airbus gave its starkest assessment yet of damage from the coronavirus crisis, telling the company's 135,000 employees to brace for potentially deeper job cuts and warning its survival is at stake without immediate action. In a letter to staff late last week, Chief Executive Guillaume Faury said Airbus was "bleeding cash at an unprecedented speed" and that a recent drop of a third or more in production rates did not reflect the worst-case scenario and would be kept under review.

Airbus said it did not comment on internal communications. Shares in Europe's largest aerospace group closed down 2.4 percent on Monday after notching up the biggest falls on the Paris CAC40 index. Aviation commentator Howard Wheelton said the letter showed the "realisation of there being little prospect of a large-scale order recovery any time soon". The letter was sent to employees days before the company is due to give first-quarter results overshadowed by a pandemic that has left airlines struggling to survive and virtually halted jet deliveries since mid-March.

Airbus has begun implementing government-assisted furlough schemes starting with 3,000 workers in France, "but we may now need to plan for more far-reaching measures," Faury said.

"The survival of Airbus is in question if we don't act now," he added. On Monday, Airbus furloughed 3,200 staff at its Broughton factory in Wales. Pressure to send workers home has been driven in part by a stackpile of extra wings built in anticipation of disruption from Britain's exit from the European Union. Industry sources have said a new restructuring plan similar to the company's 2007 Power8 which saw 10,000 job cuts could be launched in the summer, but Faury indicated Airbus



WASHINGTON: In this file photo, a Boeing worker in a face mask exits the Boeing Renton Factory, where the Boeing 737 MAX airliners are built in Renton, Washington. — AFP

grounding since March 2019. Around \$17 billion aimed at Boeing was included in the giant federal relief bill approved in late March under the CARES act, which restricts dividends and share buybacks from companies that take aid. Boeing has not said definitively whether it will take federal aid. Families of the MAX crashes' victims have petitioned US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to withhold funding for Boeing unless it meets stringent safety and governance standards, according to lawyers who are representing the victims in suits against Boeing.

Directors re-elected

The annual meeting was held remotely in light of



This file photo shows Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) Airbus A320 planes parked at the Copenhagen Airport in Kaastrop, Denmark. — AFP

was already exploring "all options" while waiting for clarity on demand. People familiar with the matter say Airbus is also in active discussions with European governments about tapping schemes to assist struggling industries, including billions of dollars' worth of state-guaranteed loans.

It has also lent its weight to calls for airlines such as Virgin Atlantic to be bailed out, believing that manufacturing aid would only defer the problem unless airlines also survived. Earlier this month, Airbus expanded commercial credit lines, buying what Faury's letter called "time to adapt and resize".

French union officials said they were preparing for a major restructuring in the summer and vowed to defend jobs.

To stem the outflow of cash, Airbus this month said it would slash benchmark narrow-body jet production by a third to 40 jets a month. It also issued targets for wide-body jets implying cuts up to 42 percent compared with previously published rates. "In other words, in just a couple of weeks we have lost roughly one-third of our business," Faury wrote in the letter, which was first reported by Fly News in Spain. "And, frankly, that's not even the worst-case scenario we could face". — AFP

social distancing policies and included brief remarks from shareholders who put forth proposals to reign in executives after the MAX disasters. Proxy advisor Institutional Shareholder Services had recommended "no" votes on four longtime Boeing directors in the wake of the problems, citing a failure to adequately oversee management strategy and corporate culture.

But shareholders opted to re-elect the entire slate, although two directors only received about 60 percent of the votes, according to a Boeing securities filing. A narrow 52 percent majority of investors did vote to require the chairman to be an independent member of the board.

Boeing, which has divided the roles of CEO and chairman as it navigates its current crisis, had opposed the measure. Calhoun defended the company's withdrawal from a \$4.2 billion deal with Brazilian company Embraer, which has said it will sue Boeing following the move.

Calhoun predicted the airline industry would have a strong recovery once the COVID-19 crisis is contained, but warned of a tough road ahead. The coronavirus will compel airlines to reconsider the way they manage flights, putting greater emphasis on hygiene. During a question and answer session with investors, Calhoun was asked whether Boeing expects planes to be reconfigured to meet social distancing guidelines. "Our customers without a doubt are going to have to create a new relationship with the flying public," Calhoun said, adding that "for all of us, it's going to be an education." — AFP

Lebanon offshore drilling finds no viable gas

BEIRUT: Drilling off Lebanon's coast has detected traces of gas but no commercially viable reserves, the energy minister and an exploration firm said on Monday. "Initial drilling results showed the presence of gas at different depths in the geological layers" of block 4, Energy Minister Raymond Ghajar told reporters at a news conference.

But after some two months of drilling "no gas reservoir, no commercial reservoir was found," he said. The results had been awaited with anticipation, with many Lebanese hoping a major hydrocarbon discovery could help redress the debt-burdened economy. A consortium composed of energy giants Total, Eni and Novatek was awarded the first two of Lebanon's 10 exploration blocks in 2018 — block 4, and block 9 near the Israeli border. French oil firm Total confirmed the poor outcome for the first ever exploration well off the Lebanese coast in block 4.

"Despite the negative result, this well has provided valuable data and learnings that will be integrated into our evaluation of the area," Total's Lebanon managing director Ricardo Darre said in a statement. Results from block 4 are needed to finalize a strategy on how best to probe block 9, where Ghajar said drilling would start as soon as possible. Exploration of block 9 has been more controversial as Israel also claims ownership of it. In the past, Total has said it was aware of a border dispute affecting less than eight percent of block 9 and would drill away from that area.

Lebanon is one of the most indebted countries in the world, with a burden equivalent to 170 percent of its gross domestic product. It is grappling with its worst economic crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war, now compounded by a nationwide lockdown to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus. — AFP

Business

UN tells firms to make worker returns safe as lockdowns ease

ILO study underlines need to rule out a resurgence of COVID-19

GENEVA: As some countries begin to ease their lockdown restrictions, governments and employers must prepare workplaces and ensure people can return safely to prevent a resurgence of COVID-19, the UN said yesterday. In a new study, the International Labour Organization stressed the importance of ensuring that workplaces meet strict

“In the face of an infectious disease outbreak, how we protect our workers now clearly dictates how safe our communities are, and how resilient our businesses will be, as this pandemic evolves,” he stressed. “It is only by implementing occupational safety and health measures that we can protect the lives of workers, their families and the larger communities, ensure work continuity and economic survival.”

The pandemic, which has killed more than 200,000 people worldwide and infected nearly three million, has taken a devastating toll on economies and businesses around the globe.

After weeks with more than half of humanity told to stay home, many governments and employers are eager to get back to business. But the ILO highlighted the dangers of allowing people return to their workplaces, stressing the need to prepare properly.

Yesterday's report stressed that risk control measures should be especially adapted to the needs of workers at the frontline of the pandemic, like health workers and those in food retail, but stressed that other workplaces also needed strategies to deal with the COVID-19 threat.

'Respiratory etiquette'

Employers, it said, should map hazards and assess risks of contagion in relation to all work operations, and should continue to make such assessments after work resumes. They should also adopt risk control measures adapted to each sector and each workplace, including for instance reducing physical interactions between workers, contractors, customers and visitors, improving ventilation, regularly cleaning surfaces, and



GENEVA: As some countries begin to ease their lockdown restrictions, governments and employers must prepare workplaces and ensure people can return safely to prevent a resurgence of COVID-19, the UN said yesterday. — AFP

providing protective gear like masks to any workers who need it.

Most importantly perhaps, according to ILO occupational safety and health expert Manal Azzi, is to remind people of the basic hygiene rules, like frequent hand-washing, covering sneezes and coughs, and keeping a proper physical distance. “You still see people not

respecting respiratory etiquette. So these are basic things that we need to be raising awareness on,” she told reporters in a virtual briefing.

She also suggested that companies could leave doors open “so people don't have to touch handles.” Employers should also provide mental health support for staff, ILO said. — AFP



Need to adopt risk control measures

occupational safety and health criteria before allowing people to return to their jobs, in order to minimize their exposure to the novel coronavirus.

“Without such controls, countries face the very real risk of a resurgence of the virus,” the United Nations agency said in a statement. The ILO's report comes as a number of European countries are beginning to gingerly scale back lockdown measures, and as authorities in China, which began loosening restrictions last month, fear a second COVID-19 wave could be looming.

The report stressed that by putting in place a range of measures, employers can minimize the risk of a second wave of contagion contracted at the workplace. “The safety and health of our entire workforce is paramount,” ILO chief Guy Ryder said in the statement.

BP announces \$4.4bn loss as oil prices crash

LONDON: British energy giant BP yesterday said it slumped into a \$4.4-billion net loss in the first quarter as the coronavirus pandemic crushed demand for oil, triggering a price crash. “Our industry has been hit by supply and demand shocks on a scale never seen before,” BP's new chief executive Bernard Looney said in an earnings statement, having seen crude prices plunge from around \$70 per barrel at the start of the year to under \$20 currently. “The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic coupled with pre-existing supply and demand factors have resulted in an exceptionally challenged commodity environment,” BP said, having reported profit after tax of \$2.9 billion in the first-quarter of 2019. BP said it planned to reduce cash costs by \$2.5 billion by the end of 2021 relative to 2019. “Some of these cost savings may have associated restructuring charges,” the company added. It expects also to produce less oil in the second quarter, with companies unable to store the excess crude. BP's first-quarter output dropped 2.8 percent to 3.7 million barrels per day.

Crude futures plunged to record lows this month, with US prices sinking briefly into negative territory, also following a vicious price-war between major oil producers Saudi Arabia and Russia.

BP yesterday added that its underlying replacement cost profit—a widely-watched measure stripping out exceptional items and changes in the value of oil inventories—stood at \$800 million in the first quarter, compared with \$2.4 billion for the same period a year earlier.

“The result reflected lower prices, demand destruction in the downstream particularly in March, a lower estimated result from (Russian partner) Rosneft and a lower contribution from oil trading,” BP on Monday said that crashing oil prices had prompted it to tweak the terms of a gigantic deal to sell off its Alaska operations.

Hilcorp Alaska in August agreed to purchase the assets, including operations in the mammoth Prudhoe Bay oilfield, for \$5.6 billion in a move that sees BP exit the US state after a 60-year presence.

The overall price tag remains the same but the structuring and phasing of payments has been modified. The first quarter meanwhile saw the departure of long-time chief executive Bob Dudley, with the American leaving after a decade at the helm. Soon after starting, Irish national Looney set BP a target to achieve “net zero” carbon emissions by 2050. — AFP



SOUTHGATE, Michigan: A BP gas station is seen with a sign displaying gas for \$ 0.99 per gallon. With the demand of oil crashing due to restrictions from coronavirus gas prices across the country have plummeted with some areas seeing prices fall under a dollar a gallon. — AFP

Nokia clinches \$1bn deal with India's Airtel

HELSINKI: Finnish network equipment maker Nokia has secured a multi-year contract to boost the capacity of one of India's largest mobile operators, the firm announced yesterday.

The deal, which an industry source told AFP is valued at almost \$1 billion (924 million euros), will see Nokia deploy 300,000 new radio units across the country by 2022, boosting network capacity and preparing the ground for the move to next-generation 5G, Nokia said in a statement. “This is an important agreement for the future of connectivity in one of the world's largest telecoms markets and solidifies our position in India,” outgoing CEO Rajeev Suri said.

With a population of 1.3 billion, India is the world's second largest telecoms market, which Nokia predicts will grow to 920 million unique mobile customers within five years as online demand soars.

The deal comes after a punishing six months for the Finnish networks giant after it downgraded its 2020 earnings forecast last October as attempts to break

into the 5G equipment market faltered in the face of fierce competition from Huawei and Ericsson. Nokia went on to beat expectations in a “challenging” 2019 and in February posted its first full-year net profit since 2015 of 7 million euros, before announcing a change of CEO in March.

Earlier this month Nokia's share price surged 12.5 percent on the basis of media reports that the firm was raising finance against a hostile takeover bid, a claim the equipment maker refused to comment on. — AFP



With a population of 1.3 billion, India is the world's second largest telecoms market, which Nokia predicts will grow to 920 million unique mobile customers within five years as online demand soars.

US payroll program: What has changed?

WASHINGTON: The Small Business Administration on Monday began allowing lenders to process \$310 billion in funds for the second round of its program to help cover payroll costs of small businesses hurt by the novel coronavirus disruption. To address concerns that some of the first tranche of money bypassed small businesses in favor of Wall Street companies and big business, Congress, the SBA and the U.S. Treasury Department have made changes to program rules. The second round will also include potentially hundreds of millions of dollars returned by big companies after the furor, on top of the \$310 billion.

Community banks, non-profits

In this round, Congress has ring-fenced \$60 billion for Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), Minority Depository Institutions (MDIs), community banks, credit unions, and certified development companies and microlenders whose small business customers are often minority-owned businesses. That includes \$30 billion for institutions with under \$10 billion in assets and \$30 billion for those with \$10 billion to \$50 billion in assets.

On Sunday, the SBA said in a memo it was setting a maximum dollar amount for individual lenders at 10% of Paycheck Protection Program funding, or \$60 billion per lender, in this round to prevent any single bank with back-logged applications dominating this round of funding. While it appears no single bank has hit the cap, “it seems a politically astute move,” said Jaret Seiberg, an analyst at Cowen Washington Research Group.

Paperwork, tech problems

In the first round, the SBA and the Treasury had to write the program rules on the fly, leading to confusion over its terms. In addition, thousands of lenders not signed up with the SBA had to create new accounts, which took days. These bottlenecks initially slowed the program down. While the rules still have some wrinkles and the SBA's system could struggle with the influx of applications, those teething problems have largely been addressed, lobbyists for the banking industry said.

The SBA will also take bulk applications from lenders submitting at least 5,000 loans. This should help financial institutions with a significant application backlog pending before money ran out in the first round. It could, however, also mean the new funds are depleted in roughly a week, bankers said.

Tightened eligibility

With intensifying scrutiny of hedge funds, listed companies and big restaurant groups that sought loans, the Treasury has tightened up on what businesses are eligible for under the program. On Friday, it said publicly listed companies may apply but must satisfy, in good faith, that the “current economic uncertainty makes the loan necessary to support ... ongoing operations.” Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin warned this week that many public companies could not make such a certification in good faith, raising the prospect they could be probed for fraud. The Treasury also said hedge funds and privately equity firms are ineligible because they primarily engage in investment or speculation, businesses already banned from SBA borrowing. — Reuters

stc provides MoH data link service to Int'l Hospital

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced that it has successfully implemented a data link connection between the International Hospital and the Ministry of Health (MOH) data center through its technological arm and Internet Service Provider (ISP) Qualitynet. The 50MB Data Link Service is provided by stc as a free service to support local entities in the battle against the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Mishari Al-Hamad, General Manager of Sales and Account Management at stc, lead the project with the Ministry of Health and highlighted that the purpose of establishing the link was to provide a seamless connection between the International Hospital in Salmiya and the MOH data center in the Sabah Health area, allowing ease of access to systems and applications at high data transmission speeds using stc's latest technology “Dedicated Data Access over 5G. Considering the necessity to obtain updated medical data related to the virus, it is essential to utilize the latest digital solutions to provide instant and reliable access to critical information.

stc expressed that the implemented 50MB data link service between the two entities will leverage the MOH data center's existing fiber optic connection to transfer data instantaneously at high speeds. This in return will enable the MOH to access the hospital's systems and applications stored in their data center, using stc's latest data transmission solution.

stc will continue to utilize its resources to provide a helping hand in protecting the nation against the COVID-19 outbreak. This initiative falls in line with the Executive Management's strategic framework at stc and runs parallel to its sustainable approach towards enabling digital transformation in Kuwait for new and existing customers, whether corporates or individuals.

Emphasizing on the strategic vision at stc in moving the business forward, we continue to see our actions transform into results. Following the launch of the new brand, stc, the Company's various departments have worked diligently to optimize operations, enhance systems and develop the largest 5G network in Kuwait, allowing stc to inch closer towards achieving its vision.

Moreover, successfully implementing this initiative comes as an additional milestone under the series of activities that stc has launched since the COVID-19 crisis. stc will continue to collaborate with local authorities and governmental entities to organize campaigns that complement the programs launched by the Kuwaiti government to contain the outbreak. The consistent level of support witnessed by stc and the private sector comes as an ongoing commitment to support the government in ensuring the health and safety of the people in Kuwait.

Through collaboration and aligning the Company's resources towards its strategic goal, stc aims to provide the latest digital solutions, considering all precautionary measures, beyond traditional telecom services. stc will continue to upgrade its services and offer the latest devices that will exceed its new and existing customers' expectations.

To better serve its customers, stc upgraded its digital channels to offer the Company's array of products and services to new and existing customers from the comfort of their homes. stc's online platforms also allow customers to seamlessly execute transactions related to their accounts online and hassle free. With the upgrade came a series of online exclusive offers to enrich the customers' experience at home, whether it be online gaming, working remotely from home or enjoying free services to fulfill their entertainment needs. To find out more about stc's promotion, sponsorships and events, follow stc's official social media platforms, visit one of stc's branches, download the stc mobile application, visit www.stc.com.kw or contact the customer service center by dialing 102 for around the clock assistance.

Health & Science

In Japan, doctors and nurses DIY a virus response

TOKYO: At any given time, seven out of eight beds in the intensive care unit of St. Luke's International Hospital in Tokyo are taken up by critically ill coronavirus patients.

"If we max out eight beds we can't place patients who suddenly take a turn for the worse, so we always keep one bed open," said Fumie Sakamoto, who manages the 500-room hospital's infection control division. The extra ICU bed also needs to stay open for any coronavirus patients who could arrive at any hour of the day in an ambulance, Sakamoto said.

"Our ICU is now really only for COVID patients," she said.

As the number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Japan tops 12,000, hospitals like St. Luke's are saving their limited ICU capacity for an increasing number of critically ill patients and improvising makeshift gear to protect frontline medical staff. With some hospitals reluctant to take in COVID-19 patients, the most critical cases are transferred to willing hospitals like St. Luke's, which are already inundated.

St. Luke's has a special designation as a facility for infectious diseases and so receives government subsidies to take in infectious cases. The pandemic has posed particular challenges in Japan where authorities are not legally empowered to enforce strict lockdowns like in other countries nor penalize businesses or individuals for not following isolation guidelines.

Although the government declared a nationwide state of emergency this month, it is unable to compel most hospitals to take in patients. Japan is also in the same scramble for protective gear and medical equipment seen in many countries around the world.

Some doctors and other experts say there has been a failure by the central and some local governments to provide adequate financial assistance and protective gear to hospitals and medical staff. "We do not have a legal tool to force (hospitals to take patients), but even if we did, I don't think we

should make such a request to hospitals that are not prepared for infectious diseases," said Yoshiyuki Sugishita, a senior official handling the coronavirus response at the Tokyo metropolitan government.

He said Tokyo had set up an online database this month where hospitals and public health centers can update the number of coronavirus cases they have admitted on a voluntary basis. More than 370 people have died of COVID-19 so far in Japan, with 100 of them in Tokyo.

Medical, financial risks

Accepting coronavirus patients carries significant risks – both medical and financial – for institutions not normally equipped to treat infectious diseases. Nearly 1,500 patients and medical professionals have either contracted COVID-19 inside healthcare facilities or have tested positive while working or staying at such institutions, according to a Reuters analysis of domestic news reports, as well as public disclosures by institutions and independent research by the Tokyo-based Medical Governance Research Institute.

Such outbreaks have prompted hospitals to suspend medical services, including non-urgent surgeries and outpatient care. "At this moment, private and some public hospitals can and do reject corona patients in critical condition," said an ICU doctor at a large hospital in western Japan who declined to give his name because he was not permitted to speak to the media.

The doctor, who treats coronavirus patients, said many hospitals rely on routine surgeries and short hospital stays for their revenue and cannot afford to shut down those services.

The Japanese Society of Intensive Care Medicine, which has more than 10,000 members working in ICUs nationwide, estimates that the number of critical coronavirus patients has doubled in the past two weeks. According to the same group, Japan has fewer ICU beds per 100,000 people compared to many other coun-

tries including Germany and Italy. It is possible to convert other hospital beds to those for critical patients, but staff in these units needed immediate reinforcement, they said.

In one of the worst examples seen so far, the ICU doctor said a coronavirus patient in his 80s had to be transferred more than 350 kilometers (220 miles) from his hometown to a hospital in Tokyo after he was repeatedly turned away by nearby hospitals. The man later died, far from his family, in Tokyo.

"Even if we decide among ourselves that we could take in a patient, when we report it up it can get shot down by the head of the hospital," he said, adding most hospitals taking in COVID-19 patients were doing so amid financial losses. In March, there were 931 cases in which emergency patients were rejected by five different hospitals or waited more than 20 minutes to find an emergency room in Tokyo, up by a third from a year ago, according to the metropolitan government.

In response to concerns by medical professionals, Japan's health ministry has allocated 149 billion yen (\$1.38 billion) in its supplementary budget to support medical facilities, including covering costs related to dispatching doctors and nurses to hospitals. Shiho Shimada, an official in the health ministry's coronavirus taskforce, said the additional budget would be used to secure beds in hotels for nurses and doctors and to buy equipment.

However, there were no measures aimed at helping hospitals that are forced to shut down some of their normal functions after taking in coronavirus patients, she said. Rather, officials at the health ministry pointed to the doubling of the daily rates hospitals would receive for caring for coronavirus patients in intensive care units and said those should go a long way in helping hospitals.

In an interview with Reuters, Aichi governor Hideaki Ohmura said the central government needed to do more to assist hospitals. Ohmura

announced this month that the prefecture will provide between 1 million and 4 million yen per patient in subsidies to hospitals that have taken in coronavirus cases since late January. "The government's plans to double the hospitalization costs is nowhere near enough," said Ohmura.

Protective gear shortage

Like its counterparts around the world, Japan's health ministry is racing to supply hospitals with necessary equipment. Officials say they are trying to supply 100 million surgical masks to hospitals every month, a quarter of what the Japan Medical Association says its members need.

Tired of waiting on the government, Noboru Hagino, a specialist in rheumatology in a prefecture east of Tokyo, has been working with three others to scour the country for masks, asking for donations from individuals and businesses. "Health ministry officials are too slow," said Hagino, but added that they didn't have the time amid the coronavirus outbreak to fundamentally fix the problem.

Other hospitals are testing whether face shields can be made using 3D printers or by taping together clear files.

The health ministry acknowledges shortages. "Compared to surgical masks, we hear that there's an even bigger shortage of N95s," said Takashi Chida, an official at the health ministry in charge of procuring supplies. He said there were no figures yet he could provide on the supply of heavy duty N95 masks, which are essential for protecting healthcare workers from contagion.

As for protective gowns, Chida said there was a "3 million gap" between the current state of supply and demand. At St. Luke's Hospital, Sakamoto said the staff were gearing up for a long fight.

"Hospitals cannot survive by relying on medical staff's sacrifice and good will," she said. — Reuters

CLINIC
PAGE

Kuwait Times
248 33 199

PLASTIC & RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY

These services include, but are not limited to, the below:

Non Surgical Procedures

- Fillers
- Botox injections
- Body fat transfer

Body Surgeries

- Liposuction
- Augmentation or reduction mammoplasty
- Body contouring & body lift

Facial Plastic Surgeries

- Surgery of the eyelids (Blepharoplasty)
- Nose surgeries (Rhinoplasty)
- Face lift

Reconstructive Surgeries

- Breast reconstruction
- Congenital defects



1808088 taibahospital.com
@taibahospital

PLASTIC AND RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY



Dr. Ahmed Al Borji
Specialist of Plastic Surgery



1808088 taibahospital.com
@taibahospital

Opthalmology Services

Dr. Rany Essam Mitwally
Senior Registrar

Dr. Ahmed Hosni Abd Elhamid
Consultant

Dr. Abeer Khattab
Specialist

Follow Us On Social Media
@hadidclinic

Tel: 1828282
Whatsapp Us
+965-8000 2184

Cataract Surgery **Glaucoma** **Retina** **General Opthalmology** **Follow-Up All Treatments**

To advertise on this Page



Call: 24833199 ext:101,102

To advertise on this Page

Call: 24833199 ext:101,102 or Direct line: 24835616 / 24835617
or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com

WELCOME

Dr. Tammam Abou Ali
Consultant ENT, Head & Neck, Facial Plastic Surgeon.

Endoscopic Sinus Surgery
Septoplasty and turbinate reduction surgery by laser or RF
Snoring and OSAP Surgery
Rhinoplasty with open and closed techniques
Microscopic Middle Ear Surgery and Tympanoplasty
Salivary gland and parotid surgery
Thyroid and parathyroid surgery
Micro laryngeal surgery

1 888 883
www.qmc-kuwait.com

qmcckuwait

Our Doctors Provide care For the entire Family

Book your appointments today!



Dr. Kiran Turaka
Ophthalmologist



Dr. Zareena Zahir
Ophthalmologist



Dr. Hasan Khan
Senior Cardiologist



Dr. P. Seshendra Nath
Orthopedic Consultant (AUSTRIA)
Specialized in Neck, Shoulder
Hip and Knee



50721507
24551555
www.exircenterku.com

EXIR MEDICAL SUBSPECIALITIES CENTER
Block No.4 Jahra - Kuwait



Tel: 24568857 / 24568859 info@exircenterku.com www.exircenterku.com

WE ACCEPT ALL MAJOR INSURANCES

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY
Canadian Board of Otolaryngology
Head & Neck Surgery and Facial Plastics.
Fellow of Royal College of Surgeons-Canada
A rare Subspecialty in Microscopic Ear Surgery, Cochlear implant & Ear diseases

- Diagnosis/Treatment of General Ears, Nose, and Throat conditions in adults & pediatrics
- Minimally Invasive Endoscopic sinus surgery including Balloon sinuplasty
- Minimally Invasive Microscopic & Endoscopic Ear surgery
- Diagnosis & treatment of Otolaryngology and Audiology (Hearing loss, Tinnitus & balance disorders)
- Facial Plastic and reconstructive surgeries (Rhinoplasty, Otoplasty, Fillers & Botox injections)
- Diagnosis & treatment of snoring & obstructive sleep apnea in clinic without surgery
- Diagnosis & Treatment of voice and swallowing disorders.
- Diagnosis & Treatment of Head and Neck benign & malignant tumors.

Salmiya, Belajat Street, Tel: 1881122

@Malhajry

DR. FAHAD S BUHAIMED
Consultant Cosmetic Dermatologist & Hair Transplant, NY

ACADAMIC CERTIFICATES:

- Dermatology board certified.
- Fellowship training program in cosmetic dermatology and hair transplant, New York, USA.
- Member of American cosmetic dermatology society.
- Referee reviewer of International journal of Dermatology.

SPECIALIZED IN:

- Dermatology & Cosmetic Treatments.
- Laser Treatments.
- Hair Transplant & Restoration.
- Body & Face Contouring.
- Injectable Fillers & Botox.

SHARQ, Ahmad Alalber st., Building 88, Floor 13.
Tel.: (+965) 22060777
@DrFahadmed, @Renovabbb, @dardonabb
Email: drfahadmed@beautybeyond.com.kw
www.beautybeyond.com.kw

BEAUTY & BEYOND

To advertise on this Page

Call: 24833199 ext:101,102
or Direct line: 24835616 / 24835617
or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com

Dr. Ahmad Alaeddine
Head of Cardiology departmenta at Dar Al Shifa hospital

- Consultant Interventional and conventional cardiologist.
- Specialised in the Diagnosis and treatment of all adult cardiac diseases, including those cases that need urgent intervention in Cath lab (primary angioplasty).

مستشفى دار الشفاء
Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tele:1802 555

daralshifa

DR KHALED ALMERRI
Consultant Interventional Cardiology
Department: Heart & Vascular Center

Specialized in:

- 1-Diagnostic and therapeutic cardiac catheterization (Angiography and Angioplasty). Aortic valve implantation.
- 2- Diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery diseases
- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
- 4-Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- 5- Diagnosis and treatment of syncope, palpitations and cardiac arrhythmias.
- 6- Non-invasive diagnostic procedures echocardiography, exercise stress test, and 24 hour blood pressure and Holter monitoring

alsalam.int.hospital

Dr. Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj
ENT Consultant, Laryngologist

- Kuwait Board of Otolaryngology.
- Laryngology Fellowship, McGill University- Canada.
- Fellow of the European Board of Otolaryngology - Head & Neck surgery.
- Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery.
- Member of the British Laryngological Association.
- Member of the European Laryngological Society.
- Member of the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery.

Experienced In:

- Management of benign and malignant vocal cord lesions.
- Vocal cord augmentation.
- Diagnosis and treatment of spasmodic dysphonia.
- Adenotonsillectomy using latest techniques.
- Myringotomy and ventilation tube insertion.
- Surgery for the deviated nasal septum.
- Endoscopic sinus surgery.
- Diagnosis and treatment of allergic rhinitis.
- Tympanoplasty.
- Diagnosis and treatment of vertigo.
- Thyroid surgery
- Diagnosis and treatment of snoring.

2536 0000
www.royalehayat.com

مستشفى زوال الحياه
ROYALE HAYAT HOSPITAL

IC
INTERNATIONAL CLINIC
الكلينيكية العالمية

American Board Certified in General Surgery
Member of the Society of American Gastrointestinal & Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES)
Higher specialization in Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary surgery & Organ Transplantation
Member of many prestigious surgical societies.

- Day case surgeries
- Diagnosis, treatment and follow up of all surgical emergencies
- Surgery for morbid obesity (sleeve, gastric bypass)
- Hernia repair
- Surgery for reflux disease
- Minor surgeries (lipoma, sebaceous cyst, ingrowing nail)
- Hemorrhoids, fistula & anal fissure surgeries
- Breast surgeries
- Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
- Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
- Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries

Dr. Hani Haider
General Surgery Consultant

http://www.international-clinic.com **Tel: 1886677**

ic_kwt

Scope of Clinical Practice:

- General & Laparoscopic Surgery
- Single Port Surgery
- Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, including Colorectal Cancer
- Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abscess
- Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- VAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)
- Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- Stomach Balloon insertion & removal
- Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery
- Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment
- Laparoscopic mini bypass
- Transanal minimally invasive surgery

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

- American Board of General Surgery
- Fellow of American College of Surgery
- Canadian Board of General Surgery
- Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- American Board of Colo - Rectal Surgery
- American Board of Surgical Critical Care

Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad
Surgery Department
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo - Rectal Surgeon

مستشفى دار الشفاء
Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tele:1802 555

daralshifa
Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com

DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American
Board in Pediatrics-Canadian
Board in Pediatric Emergency

Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368

Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St.1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B

DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED
Consultant of General Surgery
Laparoscopic and Bariatric Surgery

Academic Certificates - Training

- Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- (IFSO) member .
- Faculty member of (BEST).
- Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

Scope of clinical Practice.

- Bariatric surgeries.
- Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- G.I. surgeries.
- Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- Anal surgeries.

email: wbuhaimed@gmail.com **Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228**

Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 - Clover Center Mazaya Building

Lifestyle | Features



View of the entrance to the Ocala drive-in theatre in Ocala, Florida.



People watch the movie Trolls from their cars, separated from other cars by a 10-foot orange fencing in an effort to respect social distancing.—AFP photos



Pandemic brings life back to Florida drive-in theater

Since the United States closed its movie theaters in March to halt the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, a small drive-in cinema in Florida has enjoyed a revival that recalls life in the 1950s. “The old cliché that ‘the show must go on’ is not a cliché. It’s a way of life to us,” said John Watzke, owner of the Ocala Drive-In in the Florida town of Ocala. He said that his is one of only 11 still operating across the nation during the lockdowns. The rusting sign surrounded by stars revives memories of the heyday of the drive-ins, when movie-goers would park their cars in front of a huge screen and order drinks and popcorn from servers who would come to their car window.

“We are a rarity right now,” said cashier Jeff Mellott. “We’re helping people.

Everybody is cooped up. So this is a chance for some people to get out.” The viewers, many of them wearing face masks, park their cars on the open field to see the movies as night falls. “Everybody stays their distance, the customers outside are all parked 12 or 14 feet apart,” said Watzke. Of the four films being screened at the weekend, two had already debuted online in recent weeks, “Trolls: World Tour” and “Resistance.” Since customers stay in their own cars during the show and thereby avoid gatherings of more than 10 people, Watzke’s business is permitted to remain open, offering a welcome outlet to people in the midst of the pandemic lockdown.

Hansel Sanchez drove almost two hours from Sanford, another city in Florida “just to break the monotony of sitting at home.”

“My daughter has never been to a drive-in. Neither has my wife. So it’s something cool to do,” he told AFP. In a world of online streaming services and smart phones, drive-ins have all but disappeared. The pandemic may trigger something of a comeback. The United Drive-in Theatre Owners Association estimates that there are currently 305 businesses that qualify as drive-ins in the United States, where once there were thousands. The Los Angeles Times reported that other drive-ins in California, Kansas, Oklahoma and Missouri have also seen a bump in ticket sales.—AFP



Wearing masks for patrons is not mandatory as they wait to pick-up their order from the concession stand respecting social distancing.



Different sizes of the tattoo sketch of Sweden’s state epidemiologist Anders Tegnell, the face of the country’s response to the novel coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic are pictured.—AFP photos



Tattoo artist Zashay Tastas (right) tattoos 32-year-old Gustav Lloyd Agerblad with a portrait of Sweden’s state epidemiologist Anders Tegnell.

Face of Sweden’s virus response immortalized in tattoo

While Sweden’s softer approach to the new coronavirus has drawn international attention, the country’s state epidemiologist Anders Tegnell has become a household name for Swedes and on Monday, his face was immortalized in a tattoo. Strange tattoos are plentiful around the world, but you’d probably still be hard pressed to find one of a star epidemiologist. But on Monday, 32-year-old admirer Gustav Lloyd Agerblad from Stockholm had a portrait of Tegnell’s stern-looking face permanently inked on his left arm. “I like to have tattoos that represent something for me and, I mean, this COVID-19 will be a part of my life, for the rest of my life,” Agerblad told AFP while reclining in the tattoo parlour’s chair. “So I wanted to have the Swedish face of the crisis on my arm,” he added.

Both Agerblad and tattoo artist Zashay Tastas were surprised by the interest shown by local and international media, who turned up at the small parlour in Stockholm’s Södermalm district on Monday to document the inking. Agerblad said he was inspired to get the tattoo after Tastas advertised the design for a temporary rub-on tattoo on Instagram. “I’ve been drawing people whose profiles I like, and he was one of them, and I just made it spontaneously,” Tastas told AFP. Sweden has not imposed the extraordinary lockdown measures seen across Europe, instead urging people to take responsibility for social distancing and follow official recommendations. The strategy has come under scrutiny both in Sweden and abroad.

Giving updates at daily press briefings, Tegnell, the state epidemiologist at

Sweden’s Public Health Agency, has come to represent the Swedish approach, which has remained steadfast even as other countries have opted for much more restrictive measures. The soft-spoken but firm Tegnell often comes across as unfazed amid the criticism. A growing number of supporters have also put his face on tee-shirts and wall-prints. A Facebook group called “We support Anders Tegnell & co”, referring to the epidemiologist and the public health agency, has garnered some 85,000 members, while another called “Anders Tegnell Fan Club” has more than 29,000 members. Asked about the tattoo last week by newspaper GP, Tegnell laughed and simply said Agerblad would have to “take responsibility” for the tattoo himself.—AFP

Street artists stay home — mostly — to recount the lockdown

In normal times, their canvas is the great urban outdoors, their collages and mosaics speaking to passers-by from city walls. But like everyone else, street artists must now stay home. Despite long inhabiting a legal grey area, the majority of urban art creators have taken COVID-19 isolation measures to heart, choosing to work online and from home, sometimes revisiting old work with a confinement-inspired twist. The most famous of them all, Britain’s Banksy, has stuck to the letter of the law, having his trademark rats run riot in his bathroom, with one taking a tinkle on his toilet seat. “My wife hates it when I work from home,” was the droll caption to his Instagram post.

But for a few, old habits die hard. French street art star JR covered the deserted Paris street outside a friend’s apartment with a trompe-l’oeil image of a person peering through blinds for the cover of this week’s

Time magazine. “We couldn’t do it with permits because everything is shut down, so we decided to just do it the old way, old school” in the wee small hours of the morning, said the artist, who has spent the lockdown delivering food to the homeless for the Refettorio charity. But he appears to be a high-profile exception. Invader, whose “space invaders” mosaics live on city walls worldwide, took to Instagram with a piece he created on a wall of a Paris hospital featuring popular television character Dr. House. “I made this... four years ago but it has never been as relevant as nowadays,” he said. “Big up to the doctors and all the people who work in hospitals and who save lives.”

Prophetic

And he isn’t the only one whose old work has been given a fresh perspective by events. American artist

Eddie Colla’s collage of a woman wearing a mask surrounded by Chinese characters is being shared anew after haunting Paris walls for eight years. “For me the piece is about isolation and fear and when your external environment becomes the thing that threatens your existence,” said Colla, who prefers to base himself in France but is currently stuck in California. “It does touch upon a lot of the same issues. It was just a time when they weren’t as relevant,” he told AFP by Skype.

The same is true for Ender, whose angels, gargoyles and children populate the walls of central and eastern Paris. “The work I did over the past year goes completely with what we are living through now,” he told AFP. His collage of a blindfolded girl hunkered down holding her knees now appears on his Instagram feed with the caption “Confinement”. “She is oppressed, just like the current atmosphere.” Under the figure is a

sticker with the word “fragile” — also the name of the series of works by Ender that deals with vulnerability.

For Ender, like his colleagues, bending the rules to get back to the streets is unthinkable — even if staying in is affecting his creative flow. “I need to walk around to have ideas. And right now that’s pretty complicated.” Isolation has had the opposite effect on Angel Crow. In his Paris apartment, work is piling up — some of which is related to the virus. “I have many things to put up because I’ve kept on creating this whole time,” he said, showing his paintings he has composed of characters behind bars or even a “man-virus”. The artist first tackled the subject “when the virus was gaining ground in the world” in February. —AFP



Street artist Angel Crow wearing protective mask stands next to one of his artwork on a wall in Paris.—AFP photos



This picture shows a woman and children walking near a street art poster depicting a “Super Nurse” by French artist Combo in Paris.



A piece of Banksy street art titled ‘The Girl with the Pierced Eardrum’, now adorned with a protective face mask, is seen at Albion Dock, amid the spread of the coronavirus disease, in Bristol, Britain.—Reuters

Lifestyle | Features



Bahraini entrepreneur Nada Alawi displays a colorful protective mask created by her company Annada amid the COVID-19 pandemic, on the outskirts of the Bahraini capital Manama.—AFP photos



Bahraini entrepreneur Nada Alawi wears a colorful protective mask created by her company Annada.



Bahraini entrepreneur Noor Khamdan displays protective masks designed by her at a workshop in Abu Saiba village.

Two Bahrainis bring fashion world to masks

As the world combats the spread of the novel coronavirus, two Bahraini entrepreneurs are adding a little color to an item that is now almost part of everyday life — masks. Noor Khamdan and Nada Alawi want to raise awareness and add enthusiasm to wearing masks in the small Gulf country. Khamdan's designs include symbols from Gulf culture, ranging from the traditional ghutra (headdress) or the Bahraini flag to the local viral hashtag #Team_Bahrain. "The mask you are wearing is to protect you and others against COVID-19 and to also bring color and joy into your life in these hard times," Khamdan, founder of BH Masks, told AFP.

"By giving people the option to invest in colorful, washable masks, we are ensuring medical masks are saved for those who need it the most, such as medical staff," said the mother of three whose masks cost around \$3. Like many other Gulf countries, Bahrain has made it mandatory to wear masks outside the home, having eased some restrictions at the start of

the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. It has so far recorded more than 2,700 infections, including eight deaths. Alawi, co-founder of the lifestyle brand Annada, repurposes uniquely-designed scarves into masks, saying she wants to cater for people who want "something different".

"Some people want to wear something that gives them a bit of happiness, a bit of inspiration," she told AFP. "With masks being mandatory... you can't tell someone's feelings, you can't tell if they're smiling at you." "At least, this is a way to tell someone's personality when they have color on their face." Annada's masks, which come in a set of three, are giftwrapped in a teal box with a ribbon and cost about \$52. Twenty-five percent of the proceeds go to charity. "Even at times like this, you want to get a surprise and to feel like you're getting beauty," said Alawi.—AFP



Bangladeshi worker Hussain Nazmul displays a protective mask designed by Bahraini entrepreneur Noor Khamdan (unseen).



Bahraini entrepreneur Noor Khamdan (right) inspects protective masks designed by her and sewed by tailors at a workshop.

Airbnb unveils new cleaning protocols in bid to revive bookings

Airbnb announced new protocols Monday for cleaning and sanitizing its listed properties in an effort to reassure travelers and revive bookings for the home-sharing platform, which is reeling from the coronavirus pandemic. The initiative set to



This file illustration photo shows the logo of the online lodging service Airbnb displayed on a tablet in Paris.—AFP

launch in May calls for "enhanced procedures and guidance on how to clean every room in a home," and a certification program to identify properties meeting the new standards. Airbnb said it was establishing the new safety policy based on guidance from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other experts in the field, amid signs of an easing of anti-virus restrictions in some countries.

"As governments handle the health crisis and begin to review restrictions in advance of reopening their communities for travel, at Airbnb we are working hard to support our community and prepare for the future of travel, focused

on health and prevention," the company said in a statement. "The host cleaning protocol will include specific information on COVID-19 prevention, such as the use of personal protective equipment, like masks and gloves for hosts or their cleaners, as well as disinfectants that are approved by regulatory authorities." The new standards will include a 24-hour waiting period between occupancies. Hosts unable to meet the new protocol may instead opt for a "booking buffer" of 72 hours during which time no reservations will be allowed.

The tourism industry as a whole is taking a massive hit from the deadly global pandemic. Airbnb, one of the pillars of the "sharing economy," has apparently shelved plans for a share offering this year, and raised \$1 billion in new equity to ride out the crisis. The San Francisco start-up has also agreed to reimburse hosts some \$250 million for virus-related cancellations. Airbnb said it hopes the new protocols will help contribute to a rebound in the troubled tourism sector. "Although risk in travel can never be fully eliminated, and the science is still evolving, this initiative is designed to support and protect our stakeholders," the company said. "Guests will be able to search for and easily identify Airbnb listings that meet their needs and expectations and are part of the program. Hosts will have access to expert-backed cleaning educational materials and will be supported to show that they take cleanliness and prevention seriously."—AFP

Virtual film festival to feature work from Cannes, Venice

The globe's top film festivals including Cannes, Venice, Toronto and Berlin will participate in a free 10-day virtual cinema program starting next month, New York's Tribeca festival announced Monday. YouTube will host screenings for "We Are One: A Global Film Festival" beginning May 29 and including feature films, shorts, documentaries and round tables. The festival will benefit the World Health Organization, and encourage viewers to donate to COVID-19 relief efforts, organizers said. They have not yet announced a precise program for the digital event.

Earlier this month organizers of Cannes, the premier festival held each year on the French Riviera,

indicated that glittering event would be difficult to put on "in original form" due to the coronavirus pandemic. Initially planned for May 12-23, the festival was postponed to late June, but the French government then banned all large festivals until mid-July at the earliest in a bid to stem the outbreak. The highly contagious and potentially fatal novel coronavirus has stalled cultural events worldwide, shuttering theaters and museums and forcing the cancellation of spring programming as much of the globe's population is urged to stay home. "We often talk about film's uniquely powerful role in inspiring and uniting people across borders and differences to help heal the world," said Tribeca festival CEO Jane Rosenthal in a statement. "All of the world needs healing right now."—AFP

MICHELLE OBAMA BOOK TOUR DOCUMENTARY HITS NETFLIX

Michelle Obama will star in a new documentary out next week which follows the former first lady's global book tour for her smash-hit memoir. Netflix said Monday. "Becoming," out May 6, is the Obamas' latest collaboration with the streaming giant after last year's "American Factory," which won the best documentary Oscar in February. The movie "shares the stories of the amazing people I met after the release of my memoir," tweeted Obama following the surprise announcement Monday. "During this difficult time, I hope you'll find some inspiration and joy in this film."

The book of the same name by Obama — America's first African American first

lady and wife of the first black US president — became a publishing sensation upon its release in 2018, selling more than two million copies in North America in two weeks. Obama toured 34 cities over several months to promote the book accompanied by cinematographer Nadia Hallgren, who makes her feature directorial debut with the "rare and up-close" documentary. The film chronicles Obama's "current experience — where she is in this moment and the way she's reflecting on the entirety of her life, not just her years in the White House," said Hallgren. The producers said the movie is a "portrait of a moment in time told through Mrs Obama's story."

Obama added: "I treasure the memories and that sense of connection now more than ever, as we struggle together to weather this pandemic." "It's hard these days to feel grounded or hopeful, but I hope that like me, you'll find joy and a bit of respite in what Nadia has made." The first offering from the former first couple's Higher Ground Productions company, "American Factory," told the story of a manufacturing plant in the US Midwest reopened by a Chinese billionaire.—AFP



Oprah Winfrey interviews former first lady Michelle Obama as she kicks off her 'Becoming' arena book tour on November 13, 2018 in Chicago, Illinois.—AFP photos



"Becoming", a book by former first lady Michelle Obama, is displayed at the 57th Street Books bookstore in Chicago, Illinois.

Chop, chop! Swiss barbers back in business

Barbers were doing a roaring trade among shaggy-haired customers on Monday as Switzerland started to ease restrictions imposed to control the coronavirus pandemic. The Swiss stopped short of full confinement in emergency measures introduced last month to combat the spread of COVID-19. But on Monday the country started the first of a three-stage lifting of the restrictions, requiring affected businesses to put in place protection plans for their customers and employees. Doctors' surgeries, dentists, nursery schools, hairdressers and massage and beauty salons were permitted to reopen, along with hardware stores, garden centres and florists.

Wearing a fabric mask and a plastic face shield, Anita Ayma, boss at the Anita Coiffure salon in Geneva, was working through a 12-hour string of bookings. Just inside the door, a homemade sign next to a dispenser bottle read: "Please disinfect your hands and put on a mask. Thank you."

Bookings filling up

"I'm delighted that we're starting up again. If we don't work, things are dead," she told AFP. Ayma said she was reliant on state financial support for businesses forced to close. Customer Sergey Ostrovsky said: "Super! I'm very happy!", as he ran his hands through his newly-cropped hair. "A minute after I heard they were reopening, I booked an appointment," the 44-year-old music professor said. A nearby Mod's hair branch was

doing brisk trade, with busy staff, the phone ringing constantly and pencilled-in bookings rapidly filling up the weeks ahead. "We've got work on," said hairdresser Ines. "Clients were here as we opened."

"We respect all the rules: two meters (six feet) between customers, disinfectant, we disinfect each chair after each client." Every second chair in the salon was left empty to ensure physical distancing. In Lausanne, people queued in the street to get their hair cut — keeping two meters apart as they did so. Long queues were reported outside hardware stores around the country.



A hairdresser wearing a protective face mask and plastic gloves cuts the hair of a customer at Giauquinto hair salon after Switzerland started to ease the restrictions imposed to control the COVID-19 pandemic due to the novel coronavirus, on Monday in Lausanne.—AFP

Florists' new risk

More than 29,000 people in Switzerland have tested positive for coronavirus, while more than 1,300 have died in the landlocked European country of 8.5 million people. Schools and other shops can reopen on May 11, with the final lockdown measures scheduled to lift on June 8. The health ministry's COVID-19 chief Daniel Koch said it would take two to three weeks to tell if infections were increasing following the first easing of restrictions.

In Geneva — which has the Alpine nation's highest positive test rate, at more than one in 100 people — it wasn't just hairdressers who were happy to return to work on Monday. Fragrant multi-colored bouquets of roses, hortensias and bellflowers were back outside Philippe Willemin's reopened florist's shop. During the lockdown, Willemin Fleuristes took telephone bookings and did deliveries but the shop had to close. "All our contracts were cancelled. We had one person working out of seven. We were keeping up appearances," said Willemin. "We're pleased to be open again but now it's a new challenge, a risk, because we don't know if we'll do any business." "It's a perishable product. I can put out a choice of flowers, but are they going to sell?" he said, with most people still staying at home. However, customers have been popping in. "Plenty of people have come. They're so happy because they have missed having flowers in the house."—AFP

Arab doctor leads Israeli hospital's anti-virus fight

HAIFA: Each morning since February, Israeli Arab doctor Khitam Hussein has woken up before dawn to rush to a job on the frontline of the country's fight against the novel coronavirus. Hussein, 44, has emerged as a prominent member of Israel's often marginalized Arab community which is now playing an essential role in confronting an unprecedented health crisis.

She heads the outbreak response at the Rambam Hospital near Haifa, the largest hospital in northern Israel, and has been working 12-hour days for months. "It is incredibly difficult work, no day is like another," she told AFP. "Our lives have been turned upside down." Israel has registered more than 15,000 cases of COVID-19, with 202 deaths.

Hussein said that amid the global pandemic, individual moments with patients have created some lasting memories. She recalled an elderly couple arriving at the hospital, both seriously ill with the virus. As the husband's condition deteriorated rapidly, they allowed the couple a final moment together. "We allowed his sick wife, despite her condition, to speak to her husband-to say goodbye," she said. The husband died shortly after. "As a human it's difficult, all the medical staff were saddened."

Coexistence?

Israeli Arabs are the descendants of Palestinians who remained on their land in 1948, the year the Jewish state declared its independence. They make up around 20 percent of the population and are heavily represented in the med-

ical profession. In 2018, the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pushed through parliament a controversial law declaring Israel the nation-state of the Jewish people. It sparked fury among Israeli Arabs and other minorities who saw it as denying their right to live in the country.

The health crisis has reignited the debate, with frontline medical workers highlighting the role Arabs play in Israeli society. Famous Israeli artists have held online fundraisers for the Rambam hospital, holding it up as a symbol of coexistence between Arabs and Jews. Hussein has personally been highlighted multiple times. Yair Lapid, head of the largest opposition party in Israel's parliament and a critic of the nation-state law, said Netanyahu had consistently ignored the contribution of Arab medics.

"If... you're an Arab doctor or nurse in a hospital who hasn't shut an eye in weeks, you should know that they won't amend the nation-state law," Lapid said in a recent tweet. Netanyahu, a right-wing premier in power since 2009, is currently finalizing a coalition government with his centrist election rival Benny Gantz, a former Lapid ally. Lapid broke with Gantz when the ex-military chief decided to seek an alliance with Netanyahu.

Tears down a line

For Hussein all that matters is saving lives—whether a patient is Arab or Jewish. She was born in the northeastern town of Rameh, but now lives in the city of Karmiel in the Galilee. The coronavirus crisis has taken a heavy toll on her family life, she said. For nearly two



HAIFA: Israeli Arab doctor Khitam Hussein, head of the COVID-19 response division at the Rambam Hospital near Haifa in northern Israel, talks to a member of staff at the medical center. — AFP

months she hasn't visited her ageing mother for fear of transmitting the virus. Her husband, a lawyer, is at home with their two daughters, aged eight and 10.

Hussein said being apart from the girls is the toughest part, knowing how fast they are growing up. When she gets home after a long shift she immediately puts her clothes in the wash and show-

ers before seeing her daughters. "I arrive late most of the time when they are already asleep but sometimes they wait up for me."

Some of her colleagues no longer go home at all due to the long hours or for fear of infecting family members. "I have stopped myself from seeing my parents, but I couldn't stop seeing my daugh-

ters," Hussein said. "I cannot describe how I miss them." Recently her younger daughter Hala called while she was in the middle of a hectic shift. "She was crying down the phone, saying 'I miss you, when are you coming home?'" "For a few minutes I thought I would collapse. Then I gathered myself and went back to work." — AFP



AL-AIN: A picture shows palm trees in a field in the desert oasis of Al-Ain, in the United Arab Emirates. — AFP

As society opens, Saudi women...

Continued from Page 1

But Mousa graduated in the midst of changes in the kingdom that have seen women flood the labor market. She got a job working the evening shift as a receptionist at a government institution in Riyadh — part of a mixed team of 10 women and six men. And although the coronavirus has threatened a global recession and put Mousa in lockdown for now, she is confident the long-term trend of getting women into the workforce is here to stay.

"I wanted to do my best during my studies so that I could get a job in academia afterwards, because that was the best option available for us. But big changes happened during the past four years," she told AFP. "Almost all of my friends are now working, and when one of them doesn't get a job, it seems strange." For decades, straitlaced Saudi society offered limited opportunities for women seeking a paid job and the few who did find work were mostly restricted to the health and education sectors.

An oppressive "guardianship" system also gave male relatives the right to object to the women's professional aspirations. But change came in mid-2016 when Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman unveiled his "Vision 2030" plan aimed at diversifying the kingdom's economy and ending its addiction to oil. The national blueprint promotes the tourism and entertainment sectors, while opening wide the doors of the labor market to millions of women by paring back the restrictions that had constrained them.

'The crisis will pass'

Fatima al-Dakhil got her big break as a sales manager at a French company in the Saudi city of Khobar after months of job hunting, but just weeks later Saudi Arabia took strict measures to combat coronavirus. The kingdom has so far recorded the highest number of cases in the Gulf with more than 17,000 infections and 139 deaths.

Despite being frustrated by the lockdown, which has forced her and hundreds of thousands of others to abandon their offices and work from home, Dakhil is confident that women across the country will continue to pursue careers. "All my girlfriends

have joined the labor market," the 25-year-old told AFP, solemnly expressing hope the virus "crisis will pass". Saudi women have now penetrated professional spheres at all levels — they are bankers, business owners, heads of financial institutions, border crossing officers, civil defence members, food cart vendors and shoe sellers.

Male employees report that their workplaces have changed dramatically — among the many small revolutions are women's toilets which have been introduced for the first time in some places. Saudi saleswoman Sarah Al-Dosari, 23, works at a clothing store run by three women at the Panorama Mall in the centre of Riyadh. "People's perspective towards working women was bad," said Al-Dosari. But this attitude has been consigned to history, she said. "Now customers say they are proud of us."

The number of working women in Saudi Arabia reached 1.03 million in the third quarter of 2019, 35 percent of the total workforce, compared to 816,000 in 2015, according to official figures. Rodina Maamoun has been tasked by the owner of five stores selling women's accessories with introducing women onto a formerly all-male staff. "Customers, especially women, feel more comfortable with female assistants — sales and profits have risen," said the Saudi who employed 19 young women, almost entirely replacing the men.

A woman's world?

Since the rise of Prince Mohammed, Saudi Arabia has witnessed major social and economic changes. Women are now allowed to drive cars, cinemas have reopened and genders are permitted to mix at events, including concerts, and in public places. The reforms have also been accompanied by a crackdown on dissent that has drawn widespread criticism. Some of those detained and allegedly tortured in custody are women's rights activists who were prominent in the campaign to end the driving ban.

Although the changes have been uneven, they have emboldened Saudi women to address decades of discrimination and marginalization, including graduates who are returning from Europe and the United States to seek jobs at home. "Empowering Saudi women means empowering the Saudi family," said Rania Nashar, CEO of Samba Financial Group, the first Saudi woman to hold such a senior position. Saudi women "are ambitious and passionate about playing a role in shaping the future of their country", she said. — AFP

UAE wages war on scourge threatening date palms

AL-AIN: Said Al-Ajani looks proudly over his lush date plantation, which recently survived a plague of red weevils—a destructive insect wreaking havoc across the Middle East and North Africa. "For 24 years, we cultivated our land normally. Then, we had to start spraying five to six times a year against the weevil," said the 60-year-old Emirati, wearing traditional robes with a red and white checkered keffiyeh.

In Wiqan, located in the United Arab Emirates but nestled against the border with Oman, he settles down on a carpet rolled out on the ground in the midst of his six-hectare plantation, to share lunch with his relatives and neighbors. Fittingly, the meal served under the spreading palm fronds will end with succulent dates to accompany the coffee.

In the Arab world—and particularly during the holy month of Ramadan—the date is more than a fruit, it is a symbol of prosperity and hospitality, and it has played an important role in the development of nations carved out of these hot and arid regions. It is this status that in December saw the date palm inscribed on UNESCO's list of humanity's intangible cultural heritage.

But the fan-shaped, long-leaved plant—the palm is in fact not a tree—is under serious threat from the red weevil, the world's most dangerous and destructive palm pest, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The insect, which is native to Asia and a few centimeters in length, infiltrates the interior of the stipe—the false trunk of the palm—and produces hundreds of larvae which feed on the soft tissue inside, ultimately killing their host.

Millions lost every year

The bug, which is also a pest in coconut and oil palm plantations, began infesting date palms in the Middle East two decades ago, before creeping across Africa and Europe. According to the FAO, 60 percent of the world's 100 million date palms are in the Arab world, which produces some 70 percent of date exports, with the UAE a leading exporter. "The weevil causes economic losses in the millions of dollars annually, whether through lost production or pest-control costs" in Gulf countries and the Middle East, the UN agency said, making it a major economic issue.

Some of the dates exported by the UAE come from Al-Ajani's crop, which earns him about one

million dirhams (around 250,000 euros) annually. After previously spraying his 1,000 palms, he turned to a technique that is more effective and less harmful to the environment and human health. In recent years farmers have carried out targeted injection of pesticides in cooperation with Abu Dhabi authorities, who since 2013 have run a project to control the palm pests.

Delicate operation

Elsewhere in the area, other plantations are not faring as well. At another farm on the Oman border, a technical team sent by the agricultural authorities tackles a three-hectare field with a number of palm trees infested by the red weevil. In white overalls, with masks on their faces and gloved hands, three workers carry out a delicate operation. One drills a hole inside the stipe so his colleague can thread a long, thin tube inside, while another worker takes out a large syringe and injects pesticide into the plant's core.

"Our research has shown that the technique of injecting pesticides instead of spraying is more effective in treating infested palm trees," Safaa Al-Hachem told AFP at a UAE laboratory where she studies the insect's behavior. At the lab, the insects and their larvae are enclosed in dozens of transparent jars where they suck honey or molasses, sweet foods that they thrive on.

The Abu Dhabi Authority for Agriculture and Food Security (ADAFSA) has carried out extermination at most of the 24,000 date plantations in Abu Dhabi and the number of infested plants has decreased by 33 percent since 2016. But the intensive use of pesticides can pose risks to farmers, consumers and the environment. "We limit the quantity of pesticide we injected because our goal is also to reduce environmental pollution," ADAFSA official Mansour Al-Mansouri told AFP, adding that they are also developing natural pest control methods.

They include pheromone traps—using molecules secreted by insects to which they are drawn. The technique, also used in Saudi Arabia which is another major date exporter, "has proven to be effective," the FAO said in a report this year. Along with the UAE, Saudi is a major contributor to the organization's program to fight the red weevil, which helps countries with fewer resources like Mauritania, where the FAO says the spread of the red weevil has been arrested. — AFP

Hayef demands list of MPs intervening...

Continued from Page 1

minister of social affairs to discuss the issue of thousands of expat workers whose countries have so far refused to take them back and also discuss the population structure file. This comes after interior or ministry authorities said that more than 17,700 expat workers who were living illegally in Kuwait have benefited from a month-long amnesty to go back home.

But only 2,000 people, all of them Filipinos, have left for their country, while 15,700 others, mostly

Indians, Egyptians and Bangladeshis, are living in shelters set up by authorities because their countries said they are not ready to take them back. Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah expected on Monday that these countries will take their nationals very soon, but he did not set a date.

Speaker Ghanem said yesterday that an informal meeting by MPs decided that a session should be held to discuss issues and legislation related to the coronavirus crisis. MP Majed Al-Mutairi said MPs agreed to hold a session within the next two weeks and Assembly panels will meet next week to finalize the issues and legislation to be debated and approved by the Assembly. MP Ahmad Al-Fadhl said MPs agreed to give priority to legislation linked to the coronavirus like the population structure, worker towns, the right to obtain information, bankruptcy and trafficking in persons.

Stars

Daily SuDoku

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | | 4 | | | | 7 | | 9 |
| | 1 | | | | 7 | | | 5 |
| 6 | | | 3 | | | 2 | | |
| | | | | 3 | 2 | 8 | | |
| | | 2 | 4 | | 1 | 5 | | |
| | | 1 | 6 | 5 | | | | |
| | | 9 | | | 4 | | | 8 |
| 8 | | | 7 | | | | 5 | |
| 1 | | 5 | | | | 4 | | 7 |

hard

Yesterday's Solution

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 3 | 9 | 8 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 7 |
| 8 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 6 |
| 4 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 8 |
| 3 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 6 | 4 |
| 9 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 8 | 2 | 1 |
| 1 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 9 |
| 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 9 | 8 | 5 |
| 7 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 9 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 3 |
| 5 | 9 | 1 | 6 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 2 |

medium

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You might encounter some rather disturbing opinions or emotions from a friend, neighbor, or relative, Aries. This person could be upset over something and not communicating his or her feelings. It isn't appropriate to try to coax this person into sharing with you now. They aren't upset with you, but they might be if you push! Back off and let this person come to terms with the problem. Your friend will talk when the time is right.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Some gossip about a friend could reach you today, Taurus, and it might seem a bit shocking at first. Money could be involved. However, don't accept what you hear at face value. Whoever got the rumor going is apt to be less concerned with the truth than serving a personal agenda. Call your friend and try to learn the facts without prying. The situation is probably far less dramatic than the gossip implies.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Today you might read a book on exercise or nutrition that seems a bit unsettling, Libra. According to the book, you're doing everything wrong! Remember that what the author is probably outlining is a certain practice that worked for him or her. Everyone is different. Don't change your habits for practices that don't feel right. Consult a professional if you're still concerned.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Memories and emotions welling up from the past might excite your creative impulses today, Scorpio. You may not quite be able to understand what all of this means, but the pictures should keep coming to you nonetheless. It might be a good idea to take some notes, even though you might not comprehend all you write. This may be more a process of releasing ancient traumas than creating great masterpieces, but even so, it's worth pursuing.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Today you might find that others are turning to you for advice today and you are honored to be in such a position, Gemini. Friends could ask for some information they know you have. It might involve telling a story or giving practical advice. Whatever it is, you might find it difficult to explain without going into some pretty heavy detail. You can do it! Talk slowly and let what you have to say unfold on its own.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

A subject you're researching, perhaps for a class or workshop, might prove more difficult than you expected, Sagittarius. The resources you consult might be very scholarly and thus difficult to read. If you can't find anything comprehensible, try to rent or buy a video on the subject. What's most important is that you grasp the big picture and broader strokes of the concepts you are studying.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Today you might take up some form of esoteric study, such as astrology, numerology, or alchemy that seems incomprehensible to you at first, Cancer. As a result, you could be tempted to abandon it. Don't! Once you get past the jargon, you'll probably find it fascinating. Keep a dictionary handy, and don't worry if you have to go over something several times. You have the brains to do it. Now just put in the time.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

A housemate or family member may offer to help you with some chores around the house, Capricorn, but you may well sense that their heart just isn't in it. This person is probably overly burdened with worry and just needs some kind words and a little advice. Just accept that even though you have help, you'll probably end up doing most of the work yourself. Offer what support you can, and think of it as banking good karma.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

A friend might be in such a dour mood that you wonder if this is the same person you know and love, Leo. During the day you might be tempted to try to analyze what's going on, but this is apt to raise more questions than answers. Probably this is a case of too many problems hitting your friend at once. Don't pry, but make sure your friend knows you're there if needed.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Filling out forms regarding your finances could be a real drag for you today, Aquarius. You'll have to get it done, but you'd rather be elsewhere. It might also seem a little confusing. If you get to it early and concentrate, you should finish it quickly and then get on to what you want to do. After a morning of intense concentration and jumping through bureaucratic hoops that lead to the occasional dead end, reward yourself with something less tedious.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

A friend or romantic partner might need your advice, Virgo, and want to discuss a few things that you don't really understand. This could concern this person's job, which involves a lot of technicalities with which you're unfamiliar. Don't be afraid to stop occasionally and ask for an explanation. If you're going to be of any help, you have to have some idea of what this person is talking about.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

A contract of some kind might require your careful consideration today, Pisces. You could find it a little difficult to understand, as it could be full of fine print and legalese. Don't be afraid to ask someone who has a bit more expertise than you to explain what you're trying to read. It's important to know all the ins and outs before signing anything.

Join the dots

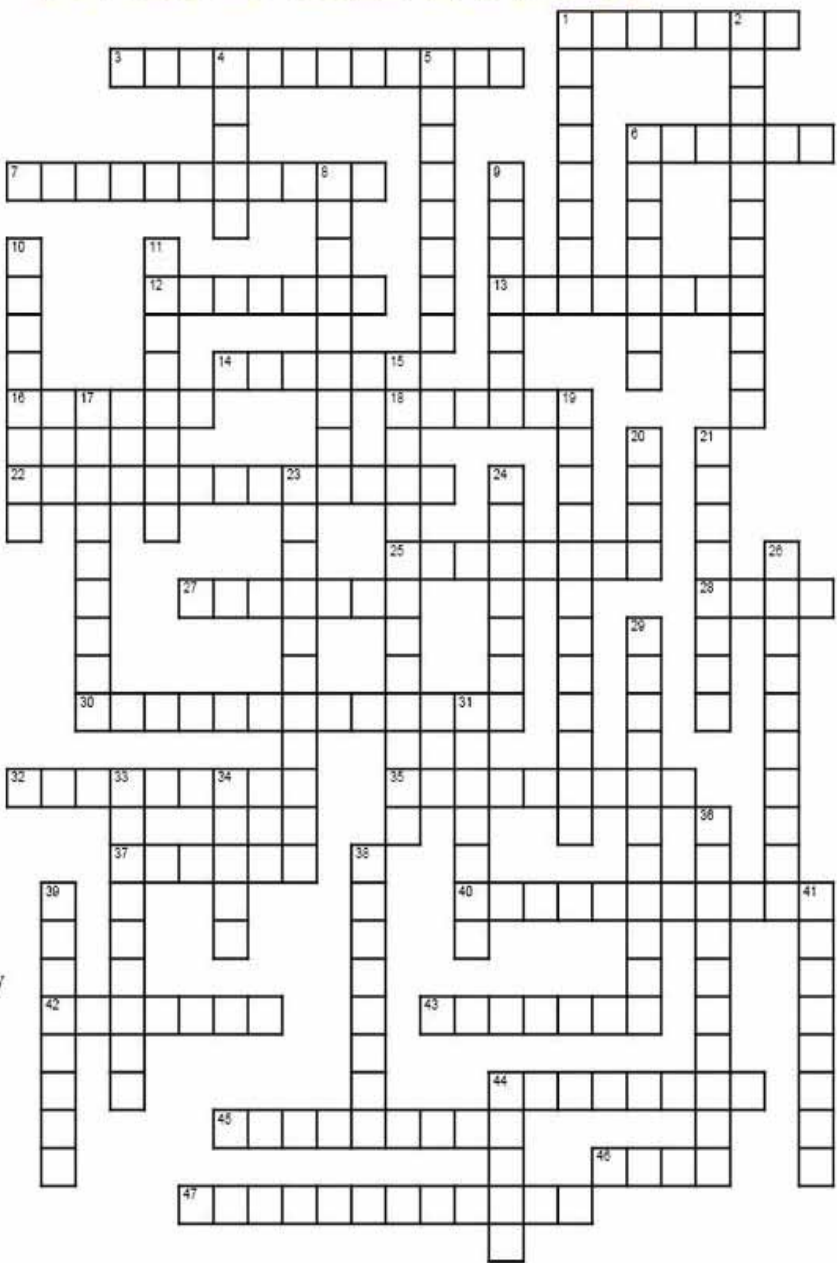


Crossword

STATE CAPITALS

- Across
- 1. Montgomery
 - 3. Charleston
 - 6. Juneau
 - 7. Bismark
 - 12. Indianapolis
 - 13. Jefferson City
 - 14. Topeka
 - 16. Honolulu
 - 18. Salem
 - 22. Boston
 - 25. Denver
 - 27. Helena
 - 28. Salt Lake City
 - 30. Raleigh
 - 32. Santa Fe
 - 35. Trenton
 - 37. Carson City
 - 40. Providence
 - 42. Atlanta
 - 43. Montpelier
 - 44. Annapolis
 - 45. Baton Rouge
 - 46. Des Moines
 - 47. Harrisburg

- Down
- 1. Little Rock
 - 2. Jackson
 - 4. Austin
 - 5. Lincoln
 - 6. Phoenix
 - 8. Nashville
 - 9. Cheyenne
 - 10. Oklahoma City
 - 11. Lansing
 - 15. Columbia
 - 17. Madison
 - 19. Concord
 - 20. Columbus
 - 21. Frankfort
 - 23. Pierre
 - 24. Tallahassee
 - 26. Olympia
 - 29. Hartford
 - 31. Albany
 - 33. St. Paul



34. Boise
36. Sacramento

38. Springfield
39. Richmond

41. Dover
44. Augusta

Sports

Photo of the Day



SOCHI: Egor Posokhin performs at Rosa Khutor Peak in Sochi, Russia. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Short-track Olympic champ Ahn retires

MOSCOW: Six-time short-track Olympic champion Viktor Ahn announced Monday he is retiring due to repeated injuries. Ahn, 34, was born in South Korea but became a naturalised Russian before the 2014 Sochi Olympics where he won three gold medals.

In a letter published by RIA Novosti news agency he said permanent knee pain and other injuries were behind his decision stop competing.

"It has become harder and harder to stay in shape, which is why I decided that it was time to stop the sport," Ahn is the most successful competitor in the discipline.

Competing for South Korea as Ahn Hyun-Soo, he won three gold medals at the Turin Olympics in 2006 and bronze in the 500m.

Ahn was unable to participate at the 2010 Vancouver Games undergoing several knee operations, and, following disagreements with his team, became a naturalised Russian.

His success on the rink and camaraderie with Russian President Vladimir Putin meant he was one of the faces of the Sochi Games in 2014. Ahn was not named on a list of athletes eligible to compete at the 2018 Pyongyang Games, after the World Anti-Doping Agency alleged a state-sponsored doping program in Russia.

He described his exclusion as "scandalous", saying there was "no concrete reason" that he not be allowed to compete in his native country. — AFP

Australia's NRL heavily fines four players for quarantine breaches

Beaumont v/s Pichot as World Rugby chairman election kicks off

SYDNEY: Australia's National Rugby League heavily fined four players for breaching coronavirus lockdown rules yesterday, underlining the disciplinary difficulties facing the sport as it seeks to resume play next month.

The NRL said the punishments, which come with the threat of suspensions for further breaches, sent a strong message to players who are hoping to gather soon in Sydney to begin training under tight restrictions.

It said the offenders showed "blatant disregard for public health orders" and significantly damaged the NRL's reputation ahead of the planned restart.

"We are focused on resuming the competition on May 28, something our fans and stakeholders are excited about," NRL action chief executive Andrew Abdo said in a statement. "Players who do not comply with community and NRL protocols will face sanction." Three of the players — Latrell Mitchell from South Sydney Rabbitohs, Melbourne Storm's Josh Addo-Carr and Newcastle Knight Tyrone Roberts-Davis — went on a camping trip at Taree in rural New South Wales with friends over the weekend.

They were caught after footage of Addo-Carr shooting rifles and Mitchell riding trailbikes was posted on social media. Another high-profile player, Nathan Cleary of the Penrith Panthers, apologised after photographs were published of him ignoring social distancing rules to party in a room full of women.

Mitchell and Addo-Carr were each fined Aus\$50,000 (US\$32,000), with

Aus\$30,000 suspended, while Roberts-Davis and Cleary were ordered to pay Aus\$10,000, with Aus\$6,000 suspended.

All will be suspended at least one match for any repeat offences. The NRL fines far exceeded the standard Aus\$1,000 police fine for violating social distancing rules. Mitchell and Addo-Carr

without crowds and under strict isolation restrictions. Australian authorities still need to approve the plan, and the latest social distancing breaches, on top of rugby league's long history of off-field scandals and discipline problems, could easily derail the restart attempt.

"It's bad timing," Australian Rugby League Commission chairman Peter V'landys admitted to reporters before the fines were issued. "On the surface of it it's very disappointing, I don't want to pre-judge it but they've got a lot of explaining to do."

Meanwhile, Voting for World Rugby's next chairman opened on Monday with incumbent 68-year-old former England captain Bill Beaumont facing competition from ex-Argentina skipper Agustin Pichot.

Beaumont or Pichot, 45, must claim a majority of the 51 votes to be elected on a four-year term with results set to be announced on May 12. Beaumont, who retired 12 years before the sport turned professional in 1995 has campaigned with the promise to open up the sport.

Current vice-chairman Pichot, who hung up his boots in 2009 after a club career in France, would like to see the body modernised and has used the hashtag #GlobalGame on social media. The pair were behind scrapped plans for a Nations Championship as countries were worried about potential relegation from the top level of the global game. "Going forward I'm sure there will be a variant of that," Beaumont told AFP last week.

Pichot said he would bring in different aspects to the competition other than the

“

It's bad timing

”

were also hit with that fine.

In addition, police said yesterday that officers in Taree had charged two men with firearms offences. National broadcaster ABC identified the two as Mitchell and Addo-Carr. The NRL season was suspended on March 24 after just two rounds amid government shutdowns of all non-essential gatherings in a bid to stem the spread of coronavirus.

The cash-strapped league is desperate to resume its season and meet commitments to the broadcasters who bankroll the game. Scenarios for resuming the competition as reported in local media include having all 16 teams, including the New Zealand Warriors, base themselves and play their games in Sydney. Organisers say the competition would be played



KYOTO: File photo taken on May 10, 2017 shows World Rugby chairman Bill Beaumont (L) and deputy chairman Agustin Pichot pose during a press conference following the Rugby World Cup Japan 2019 pool draw in Kyoto. Beaumont, the outgoing president, is facing his former ally Pichot in the vote for the presidency of World Rugby. — AFP

Tier One male sides. "I will start the discussions with the Nations Championship blueprint, but I'm not sure if that will be the outcome," he told AFP earlier this month. "It will talk about the emerging nations, more money for the women's game," he added. Beaumont has overseen a \$100 million relief package for the game during the coronavirus pandemic while Pichot sees the outbreak as a chance for the sport to restart.

The election process has been overshadowed by last Tuesday's resignation of Fiji Rugby Union (FRU) chairman Francis

Kean from the world body's council after accusations of "rampant homophobia".

Beaumont's bid was seconded by the FRU but World Rugby stressed the former lock's nomination came from the FRU, rather than from Kean. Fijian support for Beaumont is seen as a counterbalance to Pichot, who is believed to have strong support among other second-tier nations. Continental body Rugby Europe, who have two votes, said earlier in the day they have supported Beaumont in an electronic ballot process which runs until Thursday. — AFP

NHL's Blackhawks axe veteran team chief McDonough

LOS ANGELES: Chicago Blackhawks president and chief executive John McDonough was sacked on Monday, with team management saying they wanted to use the coronavirus shutdown to set a new course for the National Hockey League franchise.

McDonough, a pillar of sports in Chicago who had spent 25 years with the Chicago Cubs baseball team before joining the Blackhawks in 2007, was widely credited with helping transform the NHL outfit.

Under McDonough the Blackhawks won Stanley Cups in 2010, 2013 and 2015, comfortably the most successful era in the team's history. However, in a statement on Monday Blackhawks chairman Rocky Wirtz said the suspension of the NHL season had prompted a rethink. "Thirteen years ago, I recruited John to the Blackhawks because of his leadership, direction and vision," Wirtz said. "John brought all of that to the table and more. His contributions went well beyond leading the team to three Stanley Cup Championships. He rebuilt the front office and helped guide the organization toward a winning vision."

"As difficult as this is, we believe it was the right decision for the future of the organization and its fans," McDonough was also instrumental in turning the Blackhawks into a commercial juggernaut. The team had sold out a record 531 consecutive home games prior to the COVID-19 shutdown. Wirtz said the coronavirus crisis and the league suspension had prompted a review of the team's management. "While we can reassure our fans there will be hockey again, no one knows what that will look like," Wirtz said.

"What we do know is that it will take a new mindset to successfully transition the organization to win both on and off the ice," Wirtz's son Danny Wirtz, 43, will serve as interim team president as the hunt for McDonough's replacement gets under way, a statement said. — AFP

Virus gives baseball exiles a chance to shine

SEOUL: Years after giving up on their dreams of Major League stardom, the coronavirus pandemic is offering journeymen US baseball players in South Korea a moment in the spotlight. Korea Baseball Organization (KBO) clubs have more than 20 Americans on their books who were only ever marginal MLB players, or never made it to the big time at all.

But soon they will be among only a few professional athletes in competitive action anywhere in the world, with almost all sporting leagues on hold in the face of the virus. South Korea once had the largest outbreak outside China, where the disease first emerged, but appears to have brought it under control with an extensive "trace, test and treat" programme.

And the delayed baseball season — the country's most popular spectator sport, after being brought to the peninsula by US missionaries — will start next Tuesday, albeit behind closed doors.

In a world where sports fans are starved of live action, sports channel ESPN is in negotiations for broadcasting rights. That could give

players like the Kiwoom Heroes' pitcher Jake Brigham a chance to shine.

"I'm 32 years old," he told AFP. "I definitely have more baseball behind me than in front of me but to get that exposure would be nice." After a decade in the minors, Brigham was finally called up by the Atlanta Braves in 2015, but pitched only 16.2 innings, with an abysmal earned run average of 8.64.

He sought refuge in Japan before being scouted by his Seoul-based team and has spent three seasons as their starting pitcher, racking up 34 wins and becoming their biggest foreign star — his 2020 contract is worth nearly a million dollars.

He never really had an opportunity to "stick year after year" in a big league, he said, but the KBO had proved a "great" opportunity. With US coronavirus cases approaching one million and the entire MLB season under threat, former teammates were "jealous" of his chance to play, he added.

"The thought of having no baseball season back home is hard to even comprehend... but that's the situation we are in right now."

SPITTING MAD

The KBO is made up of 10 professional clubs, all of them named for the conglomerates that own them rather than their home cities. The Heroes are an exception, founded by businessman Lee Chang-suk — who was jailed for embezzlement in 2018 but remains the largest shareholder — and changing their name according to their main sponsor.

South Korean baseball is renowned for the

passion of its fans, who sing and cheer relentlessly no matter the score "from the first pitch to the last pitch", as Brigham put it.

Empty stadiums will be a marked contrast, he adds. "To not have them (fans) here is really really gonna hurt everyday games." In Taiwan professional baseball restarted earlier this month with cardboard cut-outs of spectators filling the stands, but livestreams have drawn US fans despite them having to wake up in the middle of the night to watch.

Other restrictions have been imposed by the KBO: players must have their temperature checked twice before the games, and umpires are required to wear facemasks. And while the players are allowed to have their faces uncovered while on the field or in the dugout, they are banned from spitting — a rule that outraged Heroes infielder Taylor Motter.

"Asking us not to spit on the field is (like) asking us not to chew our food before we swallow," he said. Motter played for the Tampa Bay Rays, Seattle Mariners and Minnesota Twins in a three-year MLB career from 2016, hitting 10 home runs with a batting average of 0.191.

Never quite good enough to secure regular starts, his search for action has taken him to Venezuela, Mexico and the Dominican Republic as well as South Korea. "I am not saying I was a star over there by any means cause I wasn't," he said of his time in the MLB.

"I was a bench player who came off the bench to play. I came here to kind of get back to be that player that I thought I could have been." — AFP

Sports

Fate of Hundred in balance as English cricket chiefs meet

New 100-balls-per-side format, to be played by eight franchises

LONDON: England cricket chief Tom Harrison says the controversial Hundred has become “even more important” due to the economic damage from coronavirus ahead of a meeting that will decide the fate of the new competition.

Last week, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) further delayed the start of the 2020 season until July 1 at the earliest but said the inaugural Hundred would be on the agenda this Wednesday.

The new 100-balls-per-side format, to be played by eight franchises rather than English cricket's established 18 first-class counties, is meant to start in July. ECB officials have long insisted it will attract a new audience vital to safeguarding cricket's future, with some matches set to be broadcast live on terrestrial television.

But public health restrictions, the problems of bringing in overseas stars and the issue of launch costs at a time of economic crisis mean a delay appears inevitable.

“We'll look at how the situation impacts the Hundred, which was envisaged as being a tournament that enabled us to widen the audience for the game,” said Harrison. “With an in-stadia environment, with international players, it's going to be very, very difficult.”



Congested calendar

itself forecast the Hundred would make a loss in its first five seasons.

Costs in the first year, including the 1.3 million pounds (\$1.6 million) paid to each county, were estimated at 58 million pounds, against an income of 51 million pounds. Not playing the Hundred could potentially save the ECB millions at a time when it has launched a 61 million pounds virus aid package for the domestic game.

But Harrison is convinced it will make money in the

OPPOSITION VOICES

Many voices within English cricket have been opposed to the Hundred from the outset, arguing there is no space for a new format in an already congested calendar. They say many of the ECB's aims could be achieved with better support for the existing Twenty20 Blast.

But Harrison, one of the key movers behind the competition, said current conditions made it more important than ever. “If anything this crisis and the implications, long-term or medium-term, mean the case for the Hundred is even more important,” he said.

“So I don't think this in any way dilutes the case for the Hundred, it absolutely accelerates it and makes it something cricket needs to get behind.” Even before the pandemic, the ECB had



Tom Harrison (left)

long run — and help preserve the existing county set-up. “It will help us achieve one of our priorities, which is keeping the lights on through the network — making sure county cricket is really healthy and

strong long, long into the future,” he said.

“And it will help broaden the audience for the game. There will be a huge clamour for audience coming out of this crisis, for all sport.” — AFP

Pakistan's Umar Akmal gets three-year ban

LAHORE: Controversial Pakistani batsman Umar Akmal was banned Monday from all forms of cricket for three years after pleading guilty to failing to report match-fixing approaches, the country's cricket board announced.

Umar, who turns 30 in May, last month withdrew a challenge to the charges. The batsman's ban is effective from February 20, when he was provisionally suspended by the board under its anti-corruption code, which states a player must report being approached to fix games.

The decision was announced by a disciplinary committee after a brief hearing of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), which charged the player with two breaches.

“The PCB referred the matter to the chairman of the disciplinary committee after determining that the batsman had not requested a hearing,” said the board.

Asif Mahmood — the PCB's anti-corruption and security director — said authorities took no “pleasure in seeing a promising international cricketer being declared ineligible” for three years on corruption charges, but defended the ban as necessary.

“I request all professional cricketers to stay away from the menace of corruption and immediately inform relevant authorities as soon as they are approached,” Mahmood added.

Umar was whisked away by his driver without speaking to the media after the sentence was delivered.



Umar Akmal

The batsman burst onto the scene with a century in his first Test in 2009, but his career has been marred by disciplinary problems, resulting in various bans and fines.

He was arrested in February 2014 after a scuffle with a traffic warden who stopped him for a signal violation. Umar last represented Pakistan in two Twenty20 internationals against Sri Lanka in Lahore last year, falling to first ball ducks on both occasions.

He has so far played 16 Tests, 121 one-day games and 84 Twenty20s for Pakistan. Umar's ban is the latest in a series of match- or spot-fixing punishments

meted out to Pakistani players.

In 2000, former captain Salim Malik was banned for life and six other players — including greats such as Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis — were fined after a judicial inquiry on fixing.

A decade later then-Test captain Salman Butt, Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Amir were banned for five years in a spot-fixing case over an incident during the team's tour of England. The Pakistan Super League's second edition in 2017 was also marred by a fixing scandal, resulting in a five-year ban on Sharjeel Khan and Khalid Latif. — AFP

Jordan docu fills TV void for NBA fans

MEW YORK: A new Michael Jordan television documentary has become a smash hit for NBA fans whose hope of watching the playoffs these days was scuttled by the coronavirus pandemic.

“The Last Dance” details the career of the NBA legend who led the Chicago Bulls to six titles in the 1990s, with editions three and four of the 10-part saga telecast on Sunday. It was the top ESPN telecast in the advertiser-prized 18-to-34 demographic since the shut down of sport due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In all, 6.1 million people watched the opening episodes in the United States, making the documentary Twitter's top trending topic and ESPN's most watched original program since the network began producing such shows 16 years ago. An average of 5.9 million viewers watched the latest episodes aired in the US on Sunday.

“The Last Dance” mixes previously unaired behind-the-scenes footage taken by a special camera crew with the Bulls during their 1997-98 NBA championship run with the retelling of Jordan's amazing story from his youthful days to Chicago's amazing dynasty run of six 1990s NBA titles.

The project was set to be broadcast in June when the NBA Finals were scheduled, but when sports programs were wiped out due to the global virus pandemic, ESPN advanced the release date.

The Jordan documentary's block-

buster success looks likely to spark similar projects. Kobe Bryant, the Los Angeles Lakers superstar who died in a January helicopter crash, had a personal camera crew follow him around during his final NBA season, ESPN reported last week, hinting that behind-the-scenes footage could become part of a Bryant documentary.

Bryant, a five-time NBA champion, scored 60 points in his final NBA game in 2016, which capped the worst season in Lakers history at 17-65. Dwyane Wade, a member of the 2008 US Olympic “Redeem Team” that won Beijing gold after a 2004 bronze at Athens, says he is already executive producing a documentary about that collection of NBA talent.

ESPN has aired discussion shows about the documentary after telecasts, with Sunday's episodes about Jordan's lingering hatred of the Detroit Pistons leading to Monday interviews with former Detroit star Isiah Thomas, notably about the Pistons snubbing the Bulls for post-game handshakes when Chicago swept the defending champions out of the 1991 playoffs.

“I hated them,” Jordan said in the fourth chapter of the documentary. “And that hate carries even to this day.” Thomas was not selected as a member of the 1992 Barcelona US Olympic gold medal “Dream Team” — an NBA all-star lineup that featured Jordan — and Thomas said Monday on ESPN that he hoped the handshake snub wasn't the reason why he didn't make the historic lineup.

“If I'm not part of the Dream Team for that lapse of emotion, for not shaking somebody's hand, then I'm more disappointed today than I was back then when I wasn't selected,” Thomas said. — AFP

NBA set to allow workouts not before May 8

NEW YORK: The NBA informed clubs Monday that it plans to allow individual workouts by players at team facilities no sooner than May 8 in areas where allowed by government regulations. The league shut down its 2019-20 season on March 12 after Utah's Rudy Gobert tested positive for the coronavirus and this marks the first small step toward resuming the campaign, although no timetable for that has been announced.

The move comes as several state and local governments have started easing stay-at-home orders on non-essential business activity. Georgia and Oklahoma were among the first states with NBA teams to relax quarantine regulations, opening the door to possible workouts at club gyms and courts, with more states set to follow suit in the coming days. “The purpose of these changes is to allow for safe and controlled environments for players to train in states that allow them to do so, and to create a process for identifying safe training options for players located in other states,” the league said in a statement.

While advising that May 8 was the target date for allowing players into team facilities, the league warned it might push back the timing as developments warrant regarding the deadly virus outbreak.

Team facilities would be available for workouts or treatment on a voluntary individual basis provided no government restrictions against such activities are in

place. That is expected to open the door for as many as 10 NBA clubs to have players in team facilities, seen as secure environments, within a few days and potentially several more clubs by the opening date. Another concern for the league is the potential fitness advantage some teams could gain over others based upon the ability to conduct workouts in team facilities. The NBA said it will work with teams to “identify alternatives” for any team that is prohibited from making its facility available to players due to government restrictions.

In theory, that could include having players working out at facilities of rival NBA clubs, possibly based upon where players reside or are located. The NBA said no more than four players would be permitted at a facility at the same time and that no head coaches or assistant coaches could participate in any workouts. Group activities, including practices or scrimmages, remain banned, and players are also prohibited from using non-team facilities such as public health clubs, fitness centers, or gyms.

The NBA regular season was halted with more than a month remaining in the campaign. The NBA playoffs, which last two months, were to have opened on April 18. NBA commissioner Adam Silver said he would not examine a timetable for resumption of games before May, with speculation the league could go as late as early September in trying to stage a full post-season schedule. Scenarios for resuming games while complying with coronavirus health restrictions have centered upon playing matches at a venue with teams gathered at one location and players sequestered, potentially for months, to avoid catching and spreading coronavirus. — AFP

Bundesliga could ‘go under’ unless season resumes

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund chief executive Hans-Joachim Watzke has warned that the Bundesliga could “go under” unless Angela Merkel's government grants permission for the German football season to resume next month despite the coronavirus pandemic.

“It's about nothing more and nothing less than saving football,” Watzke told Sky Sport News. “If we don't play for the next few months, the whole Bundesliga will go under. It will no longer exist in the form we have known it.”

The league ground to a halt in Germany on March 13 due to the virus outbreak, with defending champions Bayern Munich four points clear of second-placed Dortmund in the table. Last week, the German Football League (DFL) signalled that it is ready to resume from May 9, albeit behind closed doors and with players tested regularly for the virus.

The DFL still needs permission from German Chancellor Merkel and the leaders of the states, who are due to meet today. Some leading scientists and health advisors have been highly critical of the Bundesliga's plans to resume amid the pandemic. Germany has recorded almost 6,000 coronavirus deaths.

Watzke insists clubs are not looking for “special” treatment. “We just want to pursue our profession,” he said. Germany's top clubs want the league to be finished by June 30 to free up an instalment of television money worth around 300 million euros (\$325 million).

Magazine Kicker claims 13 of the 36 clubs in the top two leagues are on the verge of insolvency. Both Werder Bremen and Schalke 04 have admitted their finances have been badly affected by the crisis.

Former Bayern Munich president Uli Hoeness believes holding games behind closed doors — known as ‘ghost games’ in German — is the only viable alternative. “In principle, I consider ghost games to be questionable, but in view of the economic situation facing some clubs, they are vital,” Hoeness told Kicker.

Hoeness also backed calls for pay-per-view broadcasters Sky and DAZN to allow the nine remaining rounds of Bundesliga games to be screened on free television to help boost morale in football-mad Germany.

With so many teams struggling financially, there are also calls for the league to adopt a salary cap. Fortuna Dueseldorf's CEO Thomas Roettgermann wants salaries capped because player wages are “a large part of the expenses and you are in a never-ending rat race” with other clubs.

“It would be possible to calculate a salary cap based on the total turnover of the respective club,” he told the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung newspaper. “All clubs, indeed all over Europe, are currently prepared to talk about this topic,” Roettgermann added.

Augsburg's managing director Michael Stroell also wants a financial rethink. “Everyone must have realised in the past months that ‘higher, faster, further’ is not always the right way, and, especially in times of crisis, is enormously dangerous,” Stroell told local paper the Augsburgischer Allgemeine. — AFP

Sport Times

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2020

18 Australia's NRL heavily fines four players for quarantine breaches



19 Fate of Hundred in balance as English cricket chiefs meet

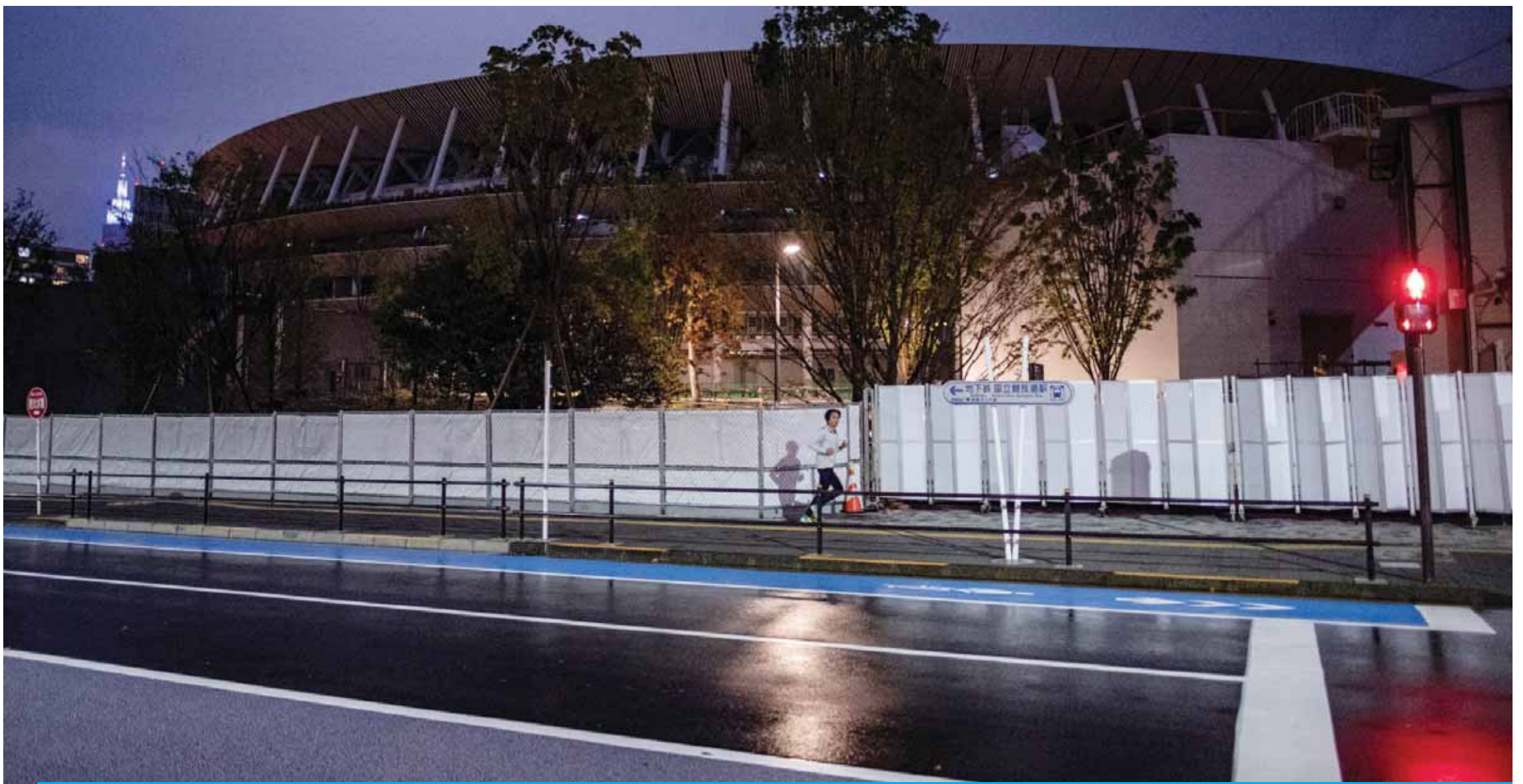


19 Pakistan's Umar Akmal gets three-year ban



Next year's Olympics may be cancelled: Mori

If pandemic isn't brought under control



TOKYO: A man runs in front of the construction site of the National Stadium, a venue for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, in Tokyo on April 20, 2020. A Japanese expert who has criticised the country's response to the coronavirus warned that he is "pessimistic" that the postponed Olympics can be held even in 2021. — AFP

TOKYO: The postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics will have to be cancelled if the coronavirus pandemic isn't brought under control by next year, the organising committee's president said in comments published yesterday.

The pandemic has already forced a year-long delay of the Games — which are now scheduled to open on July 23, 2021 — but Tokyo 2020 president Yoshiro Mori said no further postponement was possible. In an interview with Japan's Nikkan Sports daily, Mori was categorical when asked if the Olympics could be delayed until 2022 if the pandemic remains a threat next year, replying: "No."

"In that case, it's cancelled," Mori said. Mori noted the Games had been cancelled previously only during wartime, and compared the battle

against coronavirus to "fighting an invisible enemy".

If the virus is successfully contained, "we'll hold the Olympics in peace next summer", he added. "Mankind is betting on it." Masa Takaya, a Tokyo 2020 spokesman, declined to comment on a possible cancellation of the Games, telling reporters that Mori's remarks were based on "the chairman's own thoughts".

Japanese organisers and the International Olympic Committee, under heavy pressure from athletes and international sports federations, agreed in March to a year-long postponement of the Games.

Organisers and Japanese officials have said the delayed Olympics will be a chance to showcase the world's triumph over the coronavirus, but questions

have arisen about whether even a year's postponement is sufficient.

Yesterday, the head of Japan Medical Association warned it would be "exceedingly difficult" to hold the Games next year if a vaccine has not been found. "I would not say that they should not be held, but it would be exceedingly difficult," Yoshitake Yokokura told reporters at a briefing.

And last week a Japanese medical expert who has criticised the country's response to the coronavirus warned that he was "very pessimistic" that the postponed Olympics can be held in 2021.

"To be honest with you I don't think the Olympics is likely to be held next year," said Ken-terao Iwata, a professor of infectious diseases at Kobe University, at a briefing. But Tokyo 2020

spokesman Takaya countered that even medical experts said it was too early to make a judgement on such a possibility.

In the interview, Mori also said organisers were considering holding joint opening and closing ceremonies for the Olympics and the Paralympics in an effort to cut costs. Under the plan, the Paralympics would join the Olympic opening ceremony on July 23, and the Olympic closing ceremony would be integrated into the Paralympics closing event in September. But Mori admitted that Tokyo organisers had not yet obtained the consent of the IOC and their Paralympic counterparts on that plan. "It's going to a considerable cut in costs and a big message of victory against the global crisis, but it's not easy," Mori said. —AFP

In Italy, time running out for Serie A return

MILAN: The Italian government has ruled out team training before May 18, leaving Serie A chiefs with their backs against the wall if they are to finish a season interrupted by the coronavirus crisis.

Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte on Sunday delayed a decision on restarting football despite allowing top athletes to resume training in a week's time. From next Monday, individual athletes will be able to resume training.

But for team sports, in particular football, it remains a waiting game, in a championship suspended since March 9. So, while cyclist Vincenzo Nibali will be able to resume his usual training, Cristiano Ronaldo of Juventus will not.

Sports Minister Vincenzo Spadafora was cautious, warning: "It's not a given that football will resume." "On May 18? We will see, for team sports, such as football, rigid safety protocols are needed," Spadafora told Italian television.

Spadafora spoke of "shortcomings" in the health and safety protocol presented last week by Italian football federation (FIGC) officials. FIGC president Gabriele Gravina insisted Monday they were "working to restart football safely", warning of the damage not finishing the season would en-

tail. "We're working tirelessly to define the best conditions for the completion of the suspended championships, responsibly planning all the steps to be taken, but also to define the various scenarios," said Gravina. For the Italian sports press the government's announcement was "a cold shower" in the words of Turin-based Tuttosport. "Two-speed recovery," wrote Gazzetta dello Sport of pushing a decision on team sports back, while Corriere dello Sport branded it "a joke".

Lazio sports director Igli Tare said football clubs felt like they were being "discriminated" against. The Roman club are second in Serie A just one point behind leaders Juventus and within sight of a first league title since 2000.

"It is news that I did not expect," said Lazio midfielder Marco Parolo. "I don't understand why we footballers with a suitable sports centre can't resume our sessions normally. You can go running in the parks, but it doesn't make sense if I have a suitable sports centre to do it."

"Formello (Lazio's training centre) is equipped with five pitches. By splitting up, we can avoid contact and we can vary the schedules of individual sessions," he said. "We respect the indications of the govern-

ment but all the conditions are there to be able to resume training safely."

Italian football chiefs had already pushed back the end of the Serie A season from June 30 to August 2.

The FIGC's objective of a return to competition in early June has become impracticable, shifting the date towards June 10-14. With at least three weeks of preparation needed, and, in some cases, 13 rounds to be played, beyond mid-June it would be impossible to play all the remaining matches.

Another solution being touted would be a play-off to allocate the Scudetto and qualifying places for European competition and relegation places. "This yes, I would accept it," Lazio president Claudio Lotito told La Repubblica.

Any change of format would have to be communicated to European football governing body UEFA by May 25 at the latest. Serie A's 20 clubs have voted unanimously to complete the league season, but the final decision will be down to the government.

But in a football-mad country clubs may not be able to count on the support of a public grieving over 27,000 dead. Recent polls have suggested that two-thirds of Italians are opposed to a return to the pitch. —AFP

UEFA allocates 236m euros to aid member federations

LAUSANNE: UEFA said on Monday it had allocated 236.5 million euros (\$256 million) to its 55 member associations to help overcome the financial impact caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Each national federation will receive 4.3 million euros which can be used towards "its own priorities in light of the negative impact of the coronavirus on football at all levels," the body said in a statement.

The funds come from UEFA's Hat-Trick assistance programme which was created in 2004 to support development projects for each member federation. The programme will have distributed 2.6 billion euros by 2024, UEFA said. "Our sport is facing an unprecedented challenge brought about by the COVID-19 crisis. UEFA wants to help its members to respond in ways that are appropriate to their specific circumstances," said UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin.

"As a result, we have agreed that up to 4.3 million euros per association, paid for the remainder of this season and next, as well as part of the investment funding, can be used as our members see fit to rebuild the football community."

Last week European football's governing body released almost 70 million euros in benefit payments to clubs struggling financially during the health crisis. The money was originally put aside to be paid to clubs who had released players for international matches after the completion of the European Championship qualifying play-offs.

Global governing body FIFA announced on Friday it would release \$150 million to its 211 member associations "as the first step of a relief plan". Those funds originate from the Forward 2.0 programme, which was launched in 2016 and will provide \$1.746 billion in total. —AFP