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# Govt says no decision to end school year, suspends visas

4 new coronavirus cases in Kuwait • 54 deaths in Iran, highest one-day toll

## Xi visits Wuhan, says tide turning against epidemic

WUHAN, China: Chinese President Xi Jinping said yesterday that Wuhan has turned the tide against the deadly coronavirus outbreak, as he paid his first visit to the city at the heart of the global epidemic. Xi's visit came as unprecedented quarantine measures that have sealed off Wuhan and the rest of central Hubei province since late January appear to have paid off, with new infections dropping dramatically in recent weeks.



Xi Jinping

During Xi's trip, Hubei announced it would ease travel restrictions to allow healthy people in low-risk areas to travel throughout the province.

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By B Izzak and Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh said yesterday that the government has not decided to prematurely end the school year, as the government met lawmakers to discuss additional measures to contain the coronavirus outbreak. MP Saadoun Hammad however claimed the government has given provisional approval to end the school year now by promoting all students to higher classes next year and adopt the marks obtained by higher secondary students in the midterm exams as the final result.

Hammad said during the Assembly-government meeting, attended by the prime minister, several ministers and about 27 lawmakers, MPs demanded an end to the school year as a precautionary measure against the coronavirus. He called on the education ministry to make the announcement sooner rather than later.

Saleh also said Kuwait will renew a ban on flights to several countries if needed, adding that other countries have understood the Kuwaiti decision. The minister said the Cabinet is effectively in a state of continuous meetings to take appropriate decisions while facing the



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and government ministers meet National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and lawmakers to discuss additional measures to contain the coronavirus outbreak yesterday.

killer disease. Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said two lawmakers have been assigned to review health legislation to penalize people who conceal important medical information from authorities. He described confronting the coronavirus as

a national security issue, saying all are united at this point of time.

The interior ministry has suspended the issuance of all types of visas to Kuwait based on a decision by the Cabinet. This decision was implemented

yesterday at all immigration departments. According to an official of the interior ministry's public relations department who asked to remain anonymous, citizens of countries affected by

Continued on Page 24

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## Local

## Kuwait Fights Coronavirus

## Expats stuck outside Kuwait due to coronavirus could face problems soon

## Landlords can go to court in case rents aren't paid by deadline

By Nawara Fattahova

**KUWAIT:** The spread of coronavirus all over the world saw the suspension of flights between Kuwait and various affected countries. As a result, many people, especially expats living in Kuwait, are stuck abroad and are not able to return. According to the rent law, tenants are obliged to pay rent before the 20th of each month. This deadline is approaching soon, and tenants may face problems with their landlords.

According to a judge at the Hawally Court, the landlord has the right to file a case at the court to get an eviction order against a tenant for being behind on rent. "We don't have such cases yet, but if the tenant is not able to pay the rent through somebody during the legal period and the landlord files a case, he will have enough time to come back, as the first court session won't be held before a month from filing the case. It usually takes between a month to three months to set the date for the session," he told Kuwait Times.

"When the tenant comes back to Kuwait and real-

izes a case has been filed by the landlord to vacate the property, he should attend the court session and bring all the documents including the airline tickets, passport and so on to prove his absence and for missing the legal period for paying the rent, and the judge will take this into consideration," the judge said.

According to attorney Mohammed Al-Jassem, if the tenant used to pay the rent in cash to the haris and can't pay online from the country where he is now, he can transfer the money to a family member or friend here in Kuwait to pay the rent on his behalf. If he cannot do so, and the landlord doesn't provide him an option to pay online and files a case against him to get an eviction order, immediately after arriving in Kuwait he should pay the rent he missed while abroad at the court. He should then present the evidence of his excuse at the court session," he explained.

"If his absence lasts for a long period, he can appoint somebody to attend the sessions on his behalf or make a power of attorney for any lawyer for this purpose to follow the legal procedures. In this way, he will protect his rights as a tenant," Jassem added.



## Lawyer explains legal steps for tenants



**KUWAIT:** An aerial view showing buildings along the Arabian Gulf beach in this file photo.

## Campers urged to remove camps due to coronavirus

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Municipality said there will not be any extension of the camping season that will end on Sunday, March 15. The municipality called on camps' owners to remove them due to the current circumstances as a precautionary measure to boost the preventive measures against COVID-19. It said the decision is part of the implementation of the environment law, besides activating pre-

cautionary and preventive measures applied by the municipality in compliance with Cabinet and health ministry decisions.

Meanwhile the Municipality lauded citizens' cancellations of hall reservations and appreciated hall owners' cooperation in not holding any functions during the closure period out of social responsibility to cooperate with concerned municipal departments.

In the meantime, the funerals department at the municipality issued a new circular extending burial timings to start at 9 am, after Dhuhr (noon) prayers, after Asr (evening) prayers, after Maghreb (sunset) prayers and after Isha (night) prayers. It said burial can be carried out at any time, while gathering in condolences halls is not allowed. This measure is in compliance with Cabinet instructions to safeguard funeral attendees' health.

Social Affairs Ministry Undersecretary for Social Development Hanan Al-Hajeri said multipurpose halls and

society development centers are under the authority of the social affairs ministry, and are operated according to certain rules. She said the ministry is committed to closing the halls on the instructions of the Cabinet to combat COVID-19. She said reservations will be cancelled and the ministry will refund reservation fees.

Separately, MP Khalil Abul said the current school year cannot continue under any circumstances, and other alternatives must be contemplated. He asked about the number of public and private schools, universities and colleges, and how much soap, sterilizers, napkins and nurses are needed to check temperatures. "so we can talk about resuming school?" He wondered if just one case of COVID-19 is discovered among students, how will authorities deal with the student's family, teachers, their families and those they came in contact with. He said we are talking about tens, may be hundreds of cases, while the government does not have the facilities to deal with them.

## Municipality inspects compliance with MoH regulations in Ahmadi

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Municipality said Ahmadi municipal teams inspected various cafes, barbershops, spas and salons in the governorate's areas to make sure all Ministry of Health (MoH) regulations about using face-masks, gloves and sanitizers as well as banning shisha as a precaution against the potential spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) are fully respected and implemented. In this regard, the municipality's auditing and service follow-up manager Saad Al-Shaibah said the inspection tour covered 420 stores and resulted in filing 140 citations for hiring workers without health certificates and violating MoH regulations in some cafes and around 120 spas.

In other news, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) said its emergency teams had inspected 102 pharmacies, stores and vegetable outlets to make sure they followed standards regulations, adding that the tour resulted in filing 14 citations for various violations. In a different concern, MoCI announced that the total weight of precious metals it stamped in February was two tons, for which it collected KD 119,000 in fees. A statement issued by MoCI in this regard explained that the stamped precious metals included 1.4 tons of gold - comprising of 659 kg of local and 733 kg of imported gold. The statement explained that stamped 22 carat gold included 146.8 kg of local and 305.6 kg of imported gold, while 21 carat gold totaled 493.8 kg and 18 carat gold 942 kg.

## KRCS launches awareness campaign on COVID-19

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) launched yesterday a campaign on Coronavirus (COVID-19) in cooperation with the Kuwait's Health ministry to spread awareness among volunteers on how to deal directly with infected cases. Representative of the Information Office in Health ministry Dr Hadeel Al-Oun said in a seminar at KRCS that the Ministry took responsibility of spreading awareness in several places, including airport terminals, complexes and universities because the volunteers are in the "danger front line" on dealing with infected cases. She praised the KRCS in facilitating the task of the Health team on the emergency media campaign which started early February, stating that the goal is to raise awareness and give

people scientific information.

Oun added that the virus symptoms are cough, pneumonia, difficult breathing, sore throat, aches and pains, nasal congestion and runny nose, adding that anyone having those symptoms goes to quarantine as most of the cases come from airport. There are also ways of prevention such as washing hands, covering the nose and mouth, and avoid direct contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory system disease. She explained that in case volunteers travel for a relief mission, it is preferred to avoid crowded places with the necessity of wearing masks. On the sidelines of the campaign, the nursing team demonstrated proper sterilization methods and ways of wearing mask. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** A KRCS member explains how to properly use a protection mask. — KUNA photos

## Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait has so far recorded 69 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), most of which are for Kuwaiti patients who returned to the country from Iran, in addition to two Kuwaitis who returned from Egypt, an Egyptian national who returned to Kuwait from a visit to Azerbaijan and another Egyptian resident who came in contact with him. With the exception of four cases in critical condition, all cases are in stable condition and are recovering in quarantined locations designated by the government for this purpose, while dozens have been discharged after exhibiting no symptoms during their 14-day quarantine period, the Ministry of Health confirmed. Meanwhile, two people have recovered completely after previously been infected with the virus, the ministry said. Kuwait is taking measures to test Kuwaitis coming from infected areas for potential infection, as it has already tested thousands of people, the overwhelming majority of them have returned from Iran.

## Countries' ban list

As a precautionary measure against the spread of the virus, Kuwait has suspended flights from and to the following countries:

- China
- Hong Kong
- Singapore
- Thailand
- South Korea
- Japan
- Italy
- Iraq
- Iran

In the meantime, Kuwait sent charter

flights to bring back Kuwaitis from infected areas, mainly Iran, Italy and Thailand, and test them before entering the country.

## Visa suspension

Kuwait suspended issuing entry permits and visas unless those issued through diplomatic missions. Previously, authorities have stopped issuing all kinds of visas (visit, work, etc) for Egyptian nationals, while allowing those who already have a visa to enter only after they take tests in Cairo before coming to Kuwait. In the meantime, Iraq has suspended flights from Kuwait, whereas Saudi Arabia stopped issuing umrah visas for all nationalities as precautionary measures. Furthermore, Kuwait suspended all flights for a week starting March 7 to and from the following countries:

- Egypt
- Lebanon
- Syria
- Bangladesh
- Philippines
- India
- Sri Lanka

This came two days after Kuwait suspended a decision which required travelers to conduct Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests at certified clinics before coming to Kuwait from the Philippines, India, Bangladesh, Egypt, Syria, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Georgia, and Lebanon.

Meanwhile, the health ministry announced that all persons who have arrived in Kuwait from Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Lebanon, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Syria must follow preventive health proce-

dures and guidelines, and are obliged to implement compulsory home quarantine for a period of two weeks from the date of departure. The suspension will end at midnight on March 13, 2020. Only Kuwaiti citizens and their first-degree relatives (parents, husbands, wives and children regardless of nationality) will be exempted from the entry ban provided they prove their relationship and undergo the standard medical procedures to be followed. Domestic helpers will be allowed in only if they arrive with their sponsors on the same flights. Citizens of the abovementioned countries will only be allowed into Kuwait if they spend 14 days in a non-infected third country. It added that passengers wishing to travel to any of the seven countries can do so via third country airports.

The Civil Service Commission directed all government agencies to bar employees placed under any form of quarantine from resuming work. The ban is applicable on Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti employees. Salary payments will continue as usual to all Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti employees under all kinds of compulsory quarantine.

## Types of quarantine

Kuwait has set three quarantine categories for people returning from countries with confirmed novel coronavirus cases.

The first category stipulates compulsory quarantine at government quarantine centers for 14 days for people returning from:

- China
- South Korea
- Hong Kong

- Italy
- Iran
- Iraq

The second category stipulates compulsory home quarantine for 14 days and following up with health authorities in case symptoms develop for people returning from:

- Singapore
- Japan
- Thailand
- Bangladesh
- India
- Philippines
- Sri Lanka
- Egypt
- Syria
- Lebanon
- Azerbaijan

The third category stipulates noncompulsory yet preferred home quarantine for 14 days, avoiding gatherings and following up with health authorities in case symptoms develop for people returning from:

- Germany
- France
- Spain
- United States of America
- The Netherlands
- Norway
- The United Kingdom
- Belgium
- Sweden
- Switzerland

## Precautions

State departments have been on high alert to take precautions against the potential spread of the virus. The Ministry

of Commerce and Industry has taken measures to make sure that facial masks, hand sanitizers and other goods remain accessible to the public. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education has suspended classes for March at all public and private schools (for both students and teaching staff): first from March 1 to March 12, and later extended it until March 29. In the meantime, the Civil Service Commission suspended the biometric fingerprint system for staff attendance until further notice.

## 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)



# Amir, Crown Prince receive senior Kuwaiti officials



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Furthermore, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, as well as Board Chairman and Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Sheikh Mubarak Duaij Al-Sabah. —KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Board Chairman and Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Sheikh Mubarak Duaij Al-Sabah.

## Officer honored for humanitarian gesture towards expats



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Anas Al-Saleh honored Captain Meshal Al-Hajri for his dedication and humanitarian gesture when he recently volunteered to distribute water bottles to expatriates waiting outside the Subhan polyclinic

to be tested for possible novel coronavirus (COVID-19) infection. Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Essam Al-Nahham and Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic and Operations Maj Gen Hatem Al-Sayegh attended the honoring at the minister's office in the Interior Ministry's building yesterday.

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## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Kuwait Towers captured at sunrise. — Photo by Mohammad Rasheed (KUNA)

## ‘Small fire’ in Information Ministry building extinguished

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By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Firemen put out a small fire in a Kuwait Radio administrative office inside the Ministry of Information's building in Kuwait City yesterday, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFS) said yesterday. Employees on the second floor, where the fire started, evacuated the area as a precaution without affecting regular work. No significant damage was reported, KFS said.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Fire Protection Association issued a statement in which it said fire accidents are occurring more frequently in private and investment residences and claiming innocent lives, with great regret, the latest of which was the fire in Sabah Al-Ahmad that claimed the lives of eight children. The association commended the instructions of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his fatherly gesture to comfort his people. The association urged citizens and expats to install smoke detectors, fire alarms and extinguishers, in addition to having an evacuation plan and training children on it. The statement said the association offers free consultation with the aim to protect lives and property against fire, as per its strategic goals. May Allah protect Kuwait against all evil under the wise leadership of HH the Amir and HH the Crown Prince, it added.





# Kuwaiti Cabinet restricts public gatherings to contain COVID-19

## Eight recommendations approved to prevent potential virus spread

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwaiti Cabinet, in its weekly meeting on Monday, has taken a series of measures to limit public gatherings to help stop the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The Cabinet, which held its meeting at Al-Seif Palace under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, extended closures of all educational institutions in the country for additional two weeks, ending March 26, ordered shutting down of cinemas, theaters and wedding halls, as well as suspension of all sports events until further notice.

In a statement following the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh pointed out that the Cabinet listened to a briefing from Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basal Humoud Al-Sabah, who leads the interagency taskforce on COVID-19, on the latest figures of global outbreak of the epidemic and the related reports on its impact worldwide as well as Kuwait's efforts to control the spread of the virus and offer treatment to the infected people. He added that the Cabinet has reviewed the recommendations presented by the ministerial committee spearheading the state efforts to counter the new coronavirus and decided the following:

1) Extending closure of all schools, universities; government and private colleges and military colleges as well as the educational centers of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs for an additional two weeks and assign-

ing the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education to prepare plans for dealing with future scenarios and repercussions of the current suspension and to come up alternatives to traditional educational process, tests and procedures.

2) Instructing concerned authorities to close all cinemas and theaters, as well as public and private wedding halls and ban setting up makeshift wedding reception tents until further notice.

3) Calling on sports federations to halt sports activities and friendly matches until further notice.

4) Assigning the Ministry of Interior, in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Health, to stop issuing all types of entry visas and confine visa issuing to the Kuwaiti diplomatic missions abroad.

5) Assigning the Ministry of Finance to allow the Ministry of Health to use the Kuwait International Fairground as a medical examination center.

6) Assigning the Kuwait Municipality in coordination with the Ministry of Health to consider setting rules to funeral ceremonies to be in line with the health guidelines to control spread of infection.

7) Obliging all government agencies to make sure that Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti employees, placed in quarantine or ordered to stay at home, will not be allowed to go to work before the end of their quarantine period.

8) Issuing the necessary guidelines from



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

the Ministry of Health to regulate the entry of returnees from different countries according to the following categories: Returnees who will be subject to compulsory quarantine for a period of 14 days; returnees who will be placed in home quarantine for 14 days and will be ordered to implement instructions of the health ministry and call the hotline 24970967 in case of observing any of coronavirus symptoms; and returnees who will be under health observation which includes providing them with instructions and guidelines and advise them to isolate themselves for a period of 14 days except in cases of necessity, avoid gatherings and call the hotline 24970967 if they observed any of coronavirus symptoms.

### Financial appropriations

The Cabinet has also assigned the Ministry of Finance to prepare a draft law to allocate additional financial appropriations to cover the costs of the efforts to counter coronavirus. It also asked the Fatwa and Legislation Department to coordinate with the Ministry of Health to prepare a draft law amending some provisions of Law No 8 of 1969 to tighten the

penalties stipulated by the aforementioned law. The Cabinet has called on all citizens and residents to take all precautions and strictly adhere to the health instructions and guidelines that are constantly announced in all official media outlets in order to preserve their health and safety. It urged all ministries and relevant authorities to continue to take all precautionary and preventive measures in line with the relevant Cabinet decisions.

The Cabinet emphasized that the government sticks to transparency in everything related to new coronavirus outbreak. It therefore urged everyone to not to pay attention to rumors and to seek information from the state official sources. The Cabinet also reviewed a letter from the Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait, Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel to His Highness the Prime Minister. The letter focused on an initiative from the CBK to establish a fund worth KD 10 million to which all Kuwaiti banks contribute to support the state efforts to combat the new coronavirus. The Cabinet expressed appreciation to the banks for this generous initiative, praising their national sentiments and positive responsibility towards Kuwait.

### Int'l developments

Then the Cabinet discussed political affairs in the light of reports related to latest regional and international developments. In this regard, the Cabinet condemned the terrorist attack that took place near the American embassy in Tunisia, which resulted in a number of casualties among Tunisian security men. The Cabinet also condemned the terrorist attack on a celebration in the city of Kabul in Afghanistan, which resulted in the death and injury of a large number of people, stressing the consistent position of the State of Kuwait in rejecting all acts of violence and terrorism, whatever their motives and objectives. Then the Cabinet expressed great sorrow for the death of former United Nations Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, recalling his positive role, principled stances and good efforts in supporting world peace and security. It congratulated President Umaro Sissoco Embalo on the occasion of his swearing in as President of the friendly Republic of Guinea-Bissau, wishing him success and more development and prosperity to the friendly Guinean people. — KUNA



### Govt urges public to take all precautions

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8) Issuing the necessary guidelines from

## ABK steps up efforts to safeguard employees' health

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) has partnered with Global Medical Services Care, a leader in providing accessible healthcare solutions and services, as part of the bank's commitment to reduce the societal and economic impact of COVID-19.

As the number of coronavirus COVID-19 cases exceeds 90,000, and with the World Health Organization having declared the virus as a public health emergency of international concern, ABK are putting in place plans to help minimize the risk of exposure to the virus for employees and customers.

The three most common indicators of COVID-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus, are elevated temperature, coughing and difficulty breathing. ABK are extending cautionary protocols to all employees including screening employees for symptoms and temperature testing to help prevent the spread of the disease. In addition, ABK have extended their knowledge sharing to customers and the general public through



**KUWAIT:** ABK employees undergo temperature tests conducted by Global Medical Services Care nurses.

the dissemination of precautionary advice shared on social media platforms and via direct communication.

To help prevent the spread of the disease through the touching of contaminated surfaces ABK has installed hand sanitizers in all branches and across all

ATMs, including offsite ATMs. Through continued risk assessment, ensuring good hygiene practices in the workplace and training employees on the key facts and risks ABK will continue to make every efforts to reduce the spread of the disease.

## Kuwait concerned over Syrian children's situation

**GENEVA:** Kuwait expressed its deepest regret over a recent report issued by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (IICI Syria), on the conditions of Syrian children affected by war. The remarks were made by Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN and International Organizations Jamal Al-Ghunaim yesterday, during the United Nations Human Rights Council's 43rd session.

held from February 24 to March 20, 2020. He expressed his deepest sorrow over the fact that millions of Syrian children know nothing about life other than war. The ongoing war destroyed thousands of schools and deprived over two million children of education, said Ghunaim. He added that many children are also held captive to pressure other parties to exchange prisoners or to demand ransom.

Meanwhile, he spoke of Kuwait's prominent efforts to provide Syrian children with proper education, financial support to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) programs for Syrian children. The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) also built schools in Syria's neighboring countries to help these children, he added. The ambassador also mentioned the call of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber

Al-Sabah to approve programs on supporting the Syrian refugees' children and youth. Kuwait strongly condemns the violations mentioned in the IICI's report, including attacks on schools, medical staff and use of heavy artillery against civilians, he noted.

There are currently over 5.6 million Syrian refugees and 6.2 displaced Syrians due to the deteriorating conditions caused by the ongoing military operations, said Ghunaim. Kuwait calls on all countries to commit to their financial pledges towards Syria, made during the donors conferences held in Kuwait, London and Brussels, said the ambassador. Kuwait also expressed its concern over citizens going missing during conflicts, leading the country to adopt an initiative under article number 2474 on the matter, during its non-permanent membership at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) last year. — KUNA

## Kuwaiti company takes delivery of massive gas tanker

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC) received yesterday a giant gas tanker as part of a major fleet overhaul, the company said. KOTC has entered the fourth phase of its fleet overhaul, which entails the delivery of eight carriers, three of which are gas tankers built by South Korean ship building firm Hyundai MIPO, the company's CEO Ali Shahab said. With the delivery of the massive gas tanker, the company now owns 28 carriers of various forms, he added, saying the tanker was built to the highest quality standards set by the International Maritime Organization, using the most cutting-edge technology. KOTC has said that its 2021 fleet modernization plan aims for a significant increase of its gas and petroleum product vessels based on the needs of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation. — KUNA



## Drastic lifestyle change in face of COVID-19

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** After the government decided to cancel classes for two more weeks, children remain stuck in their houses, playing, studying, watching movies or fiddling with gadgets. They are not permitted to go out and parents are strictly implementing new rules of avoiding physical interaction with playmates.

"This is a completely new way of life for everyone, not just my family. We all want a safe environment for our children, so I am strictly implementing the rules for their sake," said Rasha, a Syrian mother. "My kids are bored and they are voicing their desire to go out to the malls and enjoy; I explained to them about the virus, and they understand and are cooperative," she said.

Rasha has two children, aged 9 and 10. "They need physical activities every day, so what I do is join them in walking outside our house in Hawally. I am also teaching them to do household chores so they can use their muscles. I accompany them to their grandparents' house so they can interact with them. I don't allow them to go out of the house - I don't allow them to even visit their classmates. They just have to stay at home. When it comes to food, I don't eat or order from restaurants. I cook their food every day. I am hoping that one day I wake up and hear news about a vaccine against it," she said.

The gravity of the disease is being felt globally. "I have two kids - one in Manila and one here in Kuwait; we also have several cases of coronavirus there. I am worried because I want them to be safe at all time, and I will be at their side as much as I can. I told my son back home that since they also have no classes in the Philippines, he has to stay home and never go out except for buying foodstuff," said Josephine, whose children are both in college, one in the Philippines and the other in Kuwait.

Rachelle, a Filipina with three children, is doing the same for her children. "Since we cannot go out, I spend most of my time at home doing school activities with them. We revise a lot, because when they return to school, they have to take exams. I want them to not forget their lessons, so I review them frequently," she said. Rachelle also doesn't allow her kids to go out of their house in Farwaniya. "It's too scary, because Kuwait is a small country, unlike the Philippines, where we are separated by islands so we can escape. Last Friday, early morning, I took them to the seaside, but told them to only play on the shore. After that they wanted to eat, but I was afraid to enter a restaurant with my kids, so we ordered through the drive-thru and ate in the car," she said.

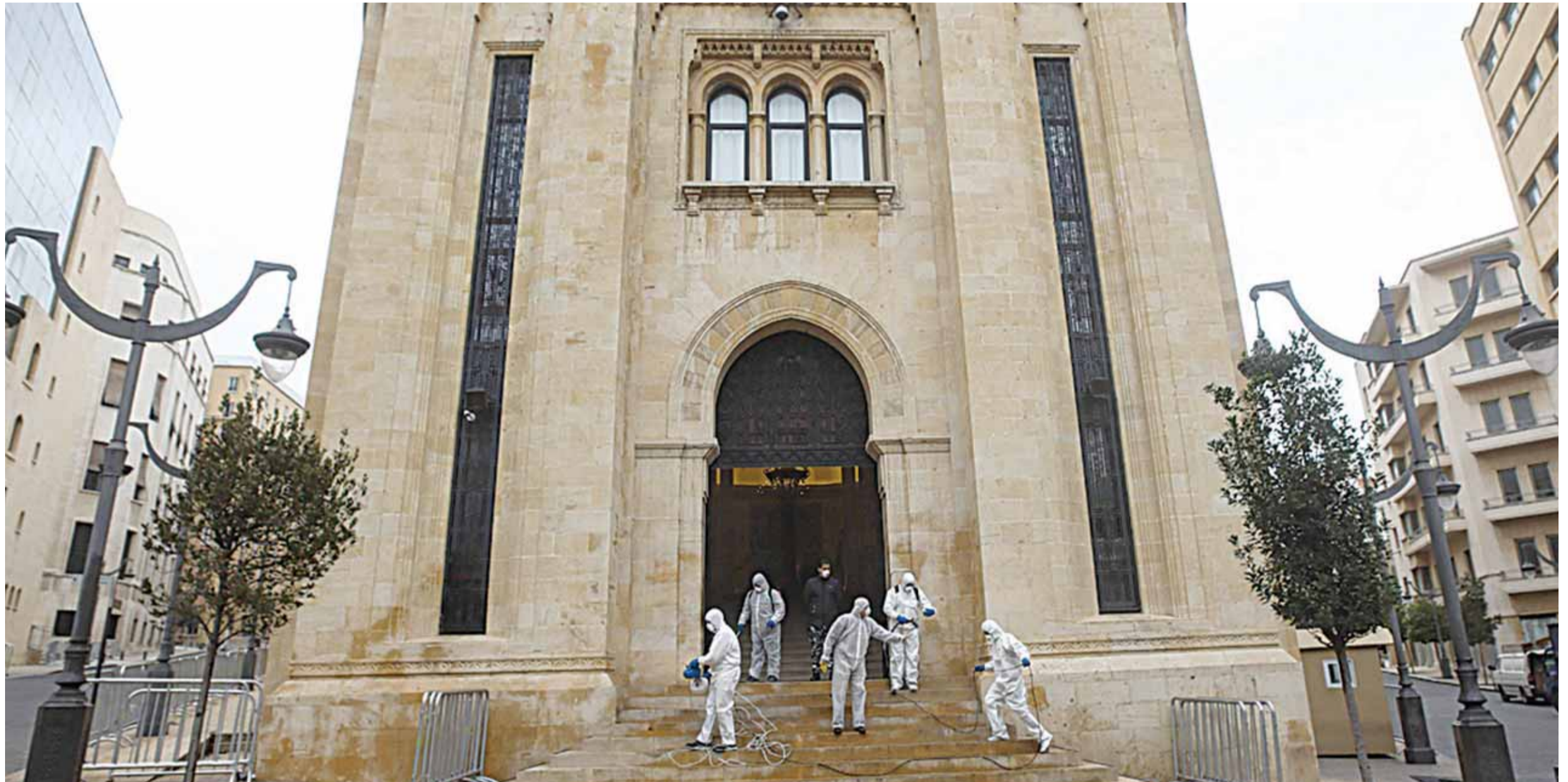
"When opening the door of the car, I use tissue paper. We open the door for them. I tell them to never touch the elevator buttons - I do it for them. I teach them to wash their hands. I have bought rubbing alcohol and sanitizers to keep my family safe. This virus is scary and we are affected every day, because it's growing rapidly," she said. There is one positive aspect in their life that she thanks - prayers every day. "Thank God, but no thanks to the virus, they now understand the meaning of prayers, and because of this, we make it a point to pray every day together as a family. It has become part of our daily routine to pray to God and ask for help. I love seeing my kids praying to God asking for help, not just for themselves, but for others and to eradicate the virus," she said.





Dutch king apologizes for excessive violence during Indonesian war

## US begins military pullout from two Afghan bases



BEIRUT: Sanitary workers disinfect the entrance of the Lebanese Parliament in central Beirut yesterday amid the spread of coronavirus in the country. —AFP

# Lebanon records first virus death

## Germany, Canada reports coronavirus deaths

BEIRUT: A Lebanese man died yesterday from the novel coronavirus, a health ministry official said, marking the country's first recorded death from an epidemic that has infected 41 people nationwide. The 56-year-old had been receiving treatment at Beirut's Rafic Hariri state hospital, the ministry official said, adding that he had recently returned from Egypt, where coronavirus infections have also been detected.

Lebanon, already hit by economic collapse and anti-government protests, is now grappling with an outbreak of the deadly COVID-19 virus - its latest in a long list of crises. Health Minister Hamad Hassan said last week that the country has moved beyond the phase of "containment" and was bracing for a more serious outbreak. Schools, universities, cafes, pubs and other public places have since been ordered shut over fears of the virus. Sport tournaments have been postponed and cultural events cancelled. According to the health minister, the origins of Lebanon's cases have mostly been traced to other countries. Lebanon has said it would deny entry to non-resident foreigners arriving from China, South Korea, Iran and Italy, which are among the hardest hit by the epidemic. But domestic concern is still high amid fears that Lebanon is not equipped to face a mass outbreak. With a grinding liquidity crunch and dwindling foreign reserves, Lebanon has struggled to secure the dollars needed for medical imports even before coronavirus arrived. Prime Minister Hassan Diab announced on Saturday that the country would suspend payment on Eurobonds.

### Death recorded in Canada

Also, Canada has recorded its first death from the new coronavirus, health officials in the westernmost province of British Columbia announced Monday. The victim, a man living at an elderly

care facility, "was infected with COVID-19 (and) passed away last night," the province's health officer Bonnie Henry told reporters.

Officials have not released the victim's age. Henry said he had been a resident of the Lynn Valley Care Centre in North Vancouver. Two other residents and two caregivers had also tested positive for the disease. The facility is designed to house around 200 elderly people. Canada has recorded more than 70 confirmed coronavirus infections, nearly all of which are in British Columbia or Ontario, the most populated province.

The Quebec government confirmed two new cases Monday, including one person who was exposed to the virus during a trip to France. The person is currently in self-quarantine at home. Montreal MP Anthony Housefather told CTV he had also self-quarantined after learning that an attendee at a conference he went to in Washington had tested positive for the virus. Housefather added that he felt fine. The virus has killed more than 4,000 people and infected over 110,000 worldwide since it emerged late last year.

### German coronavirus deaths

In another development, Germany confirmed its first two deaths from the coronavirus yesterday as its overall number of new infections rose by 20% to 1,139, the latest signs that the epidemic is spreading rapidly in Europe's largest economy. Germany's tal-

ly, far short of Italy's 7,300, included a cluster of 322 in one municipality. Officials in the western state of North Rhine-Westphalia said an 89-year-old woman had died in the town of Essen and that a 78-year-old man with pre-existing health conditions had died in the badly affected region of Heinsberg. The patient in Essen had tested positive with coronavirus on March 3 after being taken to hospital in already critical condition, local authorities said. The patient in the Heinsberg district, in Germany's rural far west had been admitted on Friday with pre-existing heart problems and diabetes, said Stephan Pusch, administrative head of the district. "This shows again that older people and people with pre-existing health problems are particularly at risk," he said.

### No large events

To limit the spread of the virus, the regional government in the also badly affected southern state of Bavaria decided to ban all events with more than 1,000 participants, the Augsburg Allgemeine newspaper reported. The decision followed a plea by German Health Minister Jens Spahn to call such large events off nationwide, along with a promise to discuss mitigating the economic consequences of that decision.

Chancellor Angela Merkel's governing coalition agreed to make it easier for companies to claim subsidies to support workers on reduced working hours until the end of the year. That would make it



BEIRUT: Lebanese Christian Maronite priest Majdi Allawi holds the Blessed Sacrament before embarking on a flight at the airport near the capital Beirut to protect the country from disease amid fears of the spread of the novel coronavirus. —AFP

possible for firms to cut the hours and wages they offered their workers, with the government making up nearly two-thirds of the shortfall, preventing layoffs that might otherwise become necessary. Several German companies have been badly hit, including the carmaker Daimler and the airline group Lufthansa, which has cancelled half its flights over the coming months.

Merkel said on Monday she expected Finance Minister Olaf Scholz and Economy Minister Peter Altmaier to present further measures this week to help companies bridge liquidity problems due to the coronavirus. Scholz told the RND media group on Monday that, if the epidemic pushed the economy into a severe crisis, the government would do "everything necessary" to stabilize it. Officials estimate that Berlin could put together a stimulus package worth up to 50 billion euros (\$57.30 billion), without ditching the government's policy of not increasing debt. —Agencies



41 people infected in Lebanon

## Prince Harry and Meghan wave UK royalty goodbye

LONDON: Prince Harry and his wife Meghan bowed out as senior royals on Monday, joining Queen Elizabeth II for a Commonwealth Day ceremony in London before setting off on their own. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex were cheered as they joined other members of the royal family at Westminster Abbey in their final public engagement before stepping back from their roles on March 31. Meghan, wearing an emerald green dress and hat, joined Harry as they briefly spoke with dignitaries, before the arrival of the queen. They appeared to mouth "hello" to Harry's brother William and his wife Kate as they took their seats, despite rumors of a rift between the siblings. The couple, who unlike last year were not part of the monarch's procession, watched on as singer Alexandra Burke performed and boxer Anthony Joshua gave a speech about the "shared vision" of the Commonwealth community. They chatted with choirboys on the way out of the famous central London church, before heading into their car and disappearing from the royal limelight.

### Anger and dismay

Harry and Meghan rocked the monarchy with their announcement in January that they wanted to break free from the constraints of royalty, and will no longer represent the monarch as they pursue a new, financially independent life based in Canada. They com-

plained about media intrusion - a long-running issue for Harry, who watched how photographers pursued his mother Diana until her death in a Paris car crash in 1997. Their decision to leave prompted anger and dismay among many royal fans in Britain, but both Harry and Meghan have received a warm welcome in their final flurry of engagements. The couple received a standing ovation as they took their seats at an evening of military band music at London's Royal Albert Hall on Saturday. And Meghan drew shrieks of delight from school children in Dagenham, east of London, when she made an unannounced visit on Friday.

"She really is beautiful, innit?" head boy Aker Okoye, 16, told the audience after the duchess asked him up on stage and he greeted her with a kiss on the cheek. In a visit to mark International Women's Day, Meghan paid tribute to the women whose strike at the nearby Ford Motor Plant in 1968 helped pave the way for the 1970 Equal Pay Act. "No matter what colour you are, no matter what gender you are, you have a voice and you certainly have the right to speak up for what is right," she told the children.

### Always serving

Harry is the youngest son of the queen's eldest son and heir, Prince Charles. Despite stepping back from the royal frontline, the 35-year-old will remain sixth in line to the throne. But from the end of this month, he and his wife will no longer use the "Royal Highness" style or use public funds, except for their security.

The couple had previously spoken about their struggle with the limelight since their fairytale wedding in May 2018, and the birth of their first child Archie the following year. At one of his final events last week, with injured military veterans, the prince expressed his pride at serving the monarch. "Once served, always



LONDON: Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex arrive to attend the annual Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey in London. —AFP

serving!" Harry, a former soldier who served two tours in Afghanistan, told the audience at the Endeavour Fund.

He will no longer perform any duties associated with his military appointments, but said that he would always support the armed services. "A lot of you tonight have told me you have my back, well I'm also here to tell you, I've always got yours," he said. But both he and Meghan will keep their personal patronages, and his military posts will not be filled for a year. The queen and the couple have agreed to review the new arrangements in 12 months time, giving them a route back to royal life. The monarch, 93, told Harry during lunch last week that they would always be welcome. The Sun reported. —AFP

## 'Caged' Pope receives guests from afar as virus takes its toll

ROME: Pope Francis, who complained of feeling "caged" while addressing the faithful by livestream because of the new coronavirus, received 30 French bishops on Monday - at a healthy distance. Pictures released by the Vatican showed the bishops seated in armchairs spaced a meter apart, in keeping with government regulations aimed at fighting an illness that has killed 366 people in Italy in just over two weeks.

All were kept a good distance away from the 83-year-old pontiff, who addressed the 30 bishops, a prelate from Peru and two foreign ambassadors to the Holy See by microphone. But everyone still shook hands, a participant said. "After 2:40 non-stop with Pope Francis, I can assure you that he is in great shape," Francois Jacolin, the bishop of Lucon, said on Twitter.

The Argentine-born pope has been out with a cold for more than a week, cancelling many of his public appearances. Although he had a part of a lung removed when he was young, the pope has enjoyed a life of good health and follows a rigorous schedule. His unusual absence during the coronavirus scare prompted immediate speculation that he had contacted COVID-19.

A newspaper reported last week that the pope had been tested for the virus and came out clean, although the Vatican never confirmed it. On Sunday, obeying instruction from the Italian government, the pope delivered his traditional Angelus Prayer and message to the world's 1.3 billion Catholics by livestream instead of from his window facing Saint Peter's Square. The measure was designed to keep the crowds down and the risk of contagion low.

But the pope still took a peek out the window and waved after he was done, drawing a cheer from a few faithful who had still turned out to watch the pope's appearance on a giant screen. "It is a little strange, this Angelus Prayer today, with a pope in a cage in a library," Pope Francis remarked Sunday. "But I see you - I am close to you," he added. Famous for his geniality and gregarious style, the pope will sit down and record another livestream today, replacing his weekly "general audience" appearance on Saint Peter's Square. —AFP



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis gathers his thoughts while celebrating a daily mass alone in the Santa Marta chapel at the Vatican, as part of precautionary measures against the spread of the new coronavirus COVID-19. —AFP



## International

## Ethiopia Airlines crash report focuses on Boeing 737 MAX's faulty systems

## Addis Ababa links crash to Boeing's automated system

**ADDIS ABABA:** Ethiopian investigators singled out faulty systems on a Boeing 737 MAX plane in an interim report on last year's Ethiopian Airlines crash that killed 157 people, piling pressure on the US jetmaker on the eve of the disaster's anniversary. The accident, following the 2018 crash of the same model plane in Indonesia killing 189 people, led to the grounding of Boeing's 737 MAX worldwide, wiped billions off the company's value and sparked hundreds of lawsuits from bereaved families.

Monday's report focused purely on technical matters and identified no issues with the airline or pilots' handling of the brand-new 737 MAX, which crashed shortly after take-off. Inaccurate sensor readings activated the MCAS anti-stall system that pushed the plane down as pilots struggled to right it, the report said. The fully loaded jet burrowed into a field with its nose down 40 degrees and dropping at 500 feet a second. "Most of the wreckage was found buried in the ground," it said.

The interim report bolstered findings of Ethiopia's initial assessment, which linked the crash to a Boeing automated system. It said two sensors recording the plane's angle - known as the "angle of attack" or AOA - differed in readings by 59 degrees. Under the plane's design, regulators have found that flight computers were only capable of consulting one AOA sensor at a time, meaning there was no backup beyond the presence of trained crew, due to miscalculation of the risks of failure.

The 130-page report devoted some 20 pages to listing a cascade of problems caused by the loss of accurate AOA data, including flight computer and throttle settings, signaling where Ethiopian authorities will

argue the root cause lies. But the US Federal Aviation Administration adopted a cautious stance and suggested it would consult other reports, while remaining open to human as well as technical factors.

"We believe it's important to have the full final report to evaluate it against other independent reports so that we might fully understand all of the factors - both mechanical and human - that played a role in this tragic loss of life," it said. The Ethiopian interim report contrasted with a final report into the Lion Air crash by Indonesia which faulted Boeing's design of cockpit software on the 737 MAX but also cited errors by airline workers and crew.

Safety experts say most airliner accidents are caused by a cocktail of factors. Ethiopian authorities did not release the report at a press conference, and neither the transport ministry nor the airline answered calls seeking comment. In a short statement, Boeing reiterated condolences to relatives of victims and said it looked forward to seeing full details and formal recommendations in Ethiopia's final report.

## 'Moment of grief'

Passengers from 33 nations had been aboard the plane and families from many nations gathered in the capital of Addis Ababa ahead of a memorial at the crash site yesterday. Some welcomed the report, but others said they were too consumed by grief to read it. "We wish the report had come earlier or after this moment as we are now in a moment of grief, and want to focus on remembering our loved ones," said Zekarias Asfaw Shankut, 42, who lost his brother. "Now it is actually a distraction."

The Ethiopian report criticized Boeing for "inade-

quency" training for pilots flying the new model because it had not included scenarios where MCAS was erroneously activated. Some industry experts have questioned certain aspects of the pilots' handling of flight ET302, including the engines being left at hard-to-manage take-off power, while acknowledging they were grappling with overwhelming physical forces and flawed control software. The airline strongly denies any pilot error. But the report said the throttles did not move during



**NAKURU:** In this file photo, people attend the burial ceremony of Paul Karanja's wife and three children who died in the crash of Ethiopian Airlines' Boeing 737-MAX aircraft at Kiangai Village in Nakuru. —AFP



## 737 MAX fleet grounded after two crashes

## War footing: French hospital in frontline of coronavirus fight

**MULHOUSE, France:** "Have you called your doctor? Have you been in contact with anyone? Are you taking antibiotics?" ask the phone operators at the Emile Muller hospital in the eastern French city of Mulhouse. The phones are ringing incessantly at the hospital in a city that has emerged as one of the main hubs for infection in France, even if it insists that the situation is for now under control. In one of the three rooms opened to deal with calls, thirteen doctors and assistants attempt to differentiate regular emergencies from calls related to the coronavirus.

"We've rarely seen anything like it. Often, it's temporary. But here, the problem is that it's lasting," said Doctor Laurence Maka. Healthcare workers in Mulhouse, a city near the Swiss and German borders, are racing to contain a coronavirus outbreak that is one of the most severe in the country. Many of the cases have their origin in a week-long church gathering organized by an evangelical church attended by some 2,000 people which has seen cases since travelling as far as South America.

"At the moment we probably have a

dozen or so patients in intensive care in very serious condition," said the head of accident and emergency in the hospital, Marc Boizet. Jean-Luc Reitzer, the local MP for the Haut-Rhin department who was the first French lawmaker to test positive for the virus, is among those in intensive care. Local authorities said late Monday that there were 193 cases of coronavirus in the Haut-Rhin region where Mulhouse is located, one of the highest concentrations in France. Most of the cases in all of eastern France were linked to the meeting of the Christian Open Door Church in Mulhouse from 17-24 February, a statement by the local authorities said.

## 'Not managing to pick up'

Jean-Marie Delfandre's mother-in-law attended the religious gathering at the Christian Open Door church. "That's when (she) was infected. The problem is that she stayed with us for a week," the 49-year-old said between coughs from behind his protective mask at the hospital. He has since tested positive for the virus. Those who attended then spread the virus across France and even as far as the overseas department of French Guiana in South America.

Delfandre was waiting at the hospital entrance for his wife's results, who was sent for tests by the emergency medical hotline. Phone calls to the hospital have exploded since the outbreak. "We regis-



**MULHOUSE, France:** People work at the SAMU 68 dispatch center room at the Emile Muller Hospital on Monday. —AFP

tered 1,900 calls" on Monday, of which 1,200 were in relation to the coronavirus, said Noizet at the press conference. There are still "a third of calls that we're not managing to pick up," he said. In normal circumstances, the emergency hotline line receives 450 to 500 calls.

The situation has forced the establishment to take drastic action to face the unprecedented crisis, said Corinne

Krencker, who leads the region's hospital network. The director activated the "white plan" on Saturday, a series of measures designed to deal with exceptional health situations. "It is a huge challenge. We are on a war footing," she said. The "white plan" was also put into place at the Colmar hospital, another establishment in Mulhouse treating people infected with COVID-19. —AFP

## Spotlight returns to Iran's nuclear program

**VIENNA:** Tehran's nuclear program is back under the spotlight after the UN's nuclear watchdog revealed the extent of Iran's uranium enrichment drive and reprimanded it for denying access to two locations. The revelations may lead to heated exchanges at the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) latest quarterly board of governors meeting which started on Monday in Vienna.

## Which limits is Iran breaking?

Since May 2019, Iran has announced successive breaches of the deal struck four years earlier with world powers which restricted its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. The breaches were in reaction to US President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the agreement in 2018 and reimposition of harsh

sanctions on Iran. The latest announcement came in January, when Iran said it was no longer bound by any restrictions on its nuclear program. An IAEA report issued on March 3 said that the announcement itself did not lead to any noticeable changes, but also revealed the cumulative effect of Iran's previous breaches.

There has been a dramatic increase in Iran's uranium stockpile, which now stands at over 1,000 kilograms - more than five times the limit fixed in the deal. The centrifuges being used for enrichment are also more numerous and more advanced than foreseen under the deal. Experts say the latest developments mean Iran's so-called "breakout time" (the period needed to acquire the weapons-grade fissile material for a bomb) may well have fallen to a matter of months.

The 2015 deal was meant to ensure the breakout time was at least a year. However, diplomats caution that none of the current stockpile is enriched beyond 4.5 percent, with much of it at a lower level than that. It would need to be enriched to roughly 90 percent for use in a bomb, not to mention all the other work required to produce a weapon. Moreover, the IAEA's extensive monitoring of Iran's current nuclear activities

Baragwanath, one of the largest healthcare centers in Africa. There, she said that an obstetrician nonchalantly told her that her uterus was removed after she delivered her baby in 2005. She is one of dozens of women whose lives were wrecked by forced sterilization conducted at 15 public hospitals in the country's largest provinces of Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal, a recent investigation found.

In a scathing report published last week where it documented 48 cases of coerced sterilizations, South Africa's Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) said it uncovered "cruel, torturous or inhumane and degrading treatment" targeting black women who were mostly HIV positive. The procedures - mostly undocumented in the hospitals' records - were conducted on women who gave birth via caesarean section between 2002 and 2015.

While Msibi is not HIV-positive, she was just 17 years old at the time of the procedure. When she returned to the hospital in 2016, she was told the step had been taken to save her life - although nobody had informed her of this at the time. South African health laws forbid forced or



**VIENNA:** An empty chair of Iran's ambassador to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is seen at the opening of the IAEA Board Meeting at the agency's headquarters in Vienna, Austria on March 9, 2020. —AFP

- often cited as an achievement of the 2015 deal - is continuing, Iran insists its nuclear program is purely for civilian ends. —AFP

coerced sterilization, although doctors may sterilize without consent in special circumstances, to save a life.

Tamara Mathebula, who heads the CGE, told AFP that the probe revealed that in most cases healthcare professionals told patients that sterilization was necessary "because you are HIV-positive, because you have TB (tuberculosis), because we feel you have too many babies... you are poor, we can't allow you to continue". But "that's not the compelling reason for a doctor or a nurse, to tie your tubes, or to take out your uterus," she said.

In testimonies to the commission, victims claimed that hospital staff had threatened to deny them medical attention if they refused to sign the consent papers, the report said. Others were forced to sign while in "extreme pain", unaware of what they were consenting to, it added. But for Msibi, there was no consent form, nor were there records to show what procedure was done on her. For the past three years, she has waged an uphill battle - writing to, and staging a sit-in at, the health department - in search of answers about her missing uterus. —AFP

## News in brief

## Bus collision kills 35 in Ghana

**ACCRA:** Thirty-five people, including women and children, were killed Monday when two buses collided on a busy road in Ghana, officials said. The accident, which happened in the Bono East region around 430 kilometers from the capital Accra, also left six people in critical condition. "I can confirm that the death toll has risen to 35," Bono East Regional Minister Kofi Amoakohene said. The minister said that 27 of the victims were "burnt beyond recognition". "Six of the survivors are in critical condition and are currently being monitored," he said, adding that "one person escaped unharmed." The police confirmed the toll and have launched an investigation into the crash. "What we know per preliminary investigation is that the driver of the bigger bus veered off his lane and collided head-on with the smaller one," Francis Adjei Brobey of the Kintampo police motor traffic unit told local media. —AFP

## 'Vigilante' attacks kill dozens

**OUAGADOUGOU:** At least 43 people have been killed in attacks in northern Burkina Faso, the government said on Monday, in what local sources described as apparent vigilante reprisals for jihadist violence that has claimed hundreds of lives. Burkina Faso, one of the world's poorest countries, has battled a jihadist insurgency since 2015, but the conflict has also provoked attacks on Fulani herders whom other communities accuse of supporting militants. "On Sunday, attacks were carried out on the villages of Dingoula and Barga... in Yatenga province. The provisional toll is 43 victims," the government said in a statement. It said six people were hospitalized with injuries. The statement did not blame any group for the attack or mention the Fulani community, but a local source reached by telephone blamed "self-defense groups who are acting in reprisal against jihadist attacks". —AFP

## Over 100,000 flee Nicaragua

**GENEVA:** More than 100,000 people have fled Nicaragua in the two years since the central American country plunged into political and social crisis, the United Nations refugee agency said yesterday. Even after the initial surge of violence in April 2018 subsided, students, human rights defenders, journalists and farmers in particular have continued to flee at an average rate of 4,000 a month, said UNHCR spokeswoman Shabia Mantoo. "More than 100,000 people have fled reported persecution and human rights abuses in the country, seeking asylum abroad," she told reporters in Geneva, putting the total worldwide at 103,600. "With no resolution to the internal crisis in sight," the agency "expects these numbers to grow". Neighboring Costa Rica is hosting some 77,000 Nicaraguan refugees and asylum seekers, while just over 8,000 have fled to Panama and 9,000 to Europe. Mexico is sheltering some 3,600. —AFP

## 20 killed in raid on army post

**KAMPALA:** Twenty people including three soldiers were killed in an attack on an army post in Uganda close to its northwestern border with Democratic Republic of Congo, a military spokesman said yesterday. Around 80 raiders, including members of Congolese militias, carried out the March 6 attack. They were armed with bows, arrows, machetes and spears, and were intending to steal guns, said deputy spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Deo Akiki. Loosely controlled by Congolese authorities, the country's eastern border region has long been plagued by insecurity, with fighting between rival militias seeking to exploit patches of territory and mineral and other resources riches often spilling into Uganda. The Ugandan army had stepped up border patrols in response to last week's attack, Akiki said. —Reuters

## Lives shattered by South Africa's forced sterilizations

**JOHANNESBURG:** Four years ago, Bongekile Msibi, already a mother of a now 15-year-old girl, consulted a doctor after trying unsuccessfully to have a second child. She was shocked, shattered and bewildered, she said, when the doctor told her that she could not conceive because she did not have a uterus. "I couldn't comprehend what the doctor was saying. How possible is that because I have (had) a baby (before)?" the 32-year-old told AFP, holding back tears. "That means I had a uterus."

She traced her steps back to the only hospital she had ever been admitted to, Johannesburg's Chris Hani



## International

## Italy wakes up to deserted streets in unprecedented virus lockdown

## Anyone travelling will have to declare why

ROME: Italy woke up on to deserted streets in an unprecedented lockdown yesterday after the government extended quarantine measures across the entire country in a bid to slow Europe's worst outbreak of the coronavirus. The measures, announced late on Monday by Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, widen steps already taken in the rich northern region of Lombardy and parts of neighboring provinces, clamping down on movement and closing public spaces.

"The future of Italy is in our hands. Let us all do our part, by giving up something for our collective good," Conte said in a tweet, encouraging people to take personal responsibility. For at least the next three weeks, people have been told to move around only for reasons of work, for health needs or emergencies or else stay at home. Anyone travelling will have to fill in a document declaring their reasons and carry it with them.

Large gatherings and outdoor events, including sports, have been banned, while bars and restaurants will have to close from 6 p.m. Schools and universities will remain closed until April 3. "The whole of Italy is closed now," was the headline in the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper. As day broke, the streets of Rome were eerily much quieter than normal, with cars circulating freely under a clear blue sky in the normally traf-

fic-clogged centre, reflecting the atmosphere in the financial capital Milan, already under stricter controls.

Rome commuters could easily find seats in the usually jam-packed underground system during the morning rush hours. People wearing masks in the streets of the capital was more widespread than before. Shortly after the measures were announced, shoppers in Rome rushed to late-night supermarkets to stock up on food and basic necessities, promoting the government to declare that supplies would be guaranteed and urging people not to panic buy.

## The future of Italy is in our hands: PM

Shops are allowed to remain open as long as customers maintain a minimum distance of a metre between them. The measures came after the latest data showed the coronavirus outbreak continuing to rise, with 9,172 positive cases recorded as of

Monday and 463 deaths, the second highest-level in the world after China.

The World Health Organization has praised Italy's "aggressive" response to the crisis, since the first cases emerged near Milan almost three weeks ago but the economic cost has been huge.

On Monday, the Milan stock exchange dropped over 11% and Italy's borrowing costs shot up, reviving fears that an economy already on the brink of recession and struggling under the euro zone's second-



SICILY: A deserted car boarding area is pictured at the ferry terminal in Messina, Sicily yesterday as Italy imposed unprecedented national restrictions on its 60 million people to control the deadly coronavirus. —AFP

heaviest debt pile could be plunged into crisis. Conte has already promised "massive shock therapy" to help deal with the immediate economic impact of the crisis

and yesterday, Industry Minister Stefano Patuanelli said the government would approve measures worth around 10 billion euros. —Reuters

## President Trump feels the heat as virus stalks US

WASHINGTON: Concern that President Donald Trump himself could be exposed to the coronavirus through contact with two Republican lawmakers loomed Monday as US stocks plummeted, feeding growing national anxiety. Trump, who flew back to Washington after a weekend golfing at his Florida resort and having dinner with Brazil's right-wing president, has spent weeks dismissing the seriousness of the threat.

But after an emergency meeting with administration staff, he told journalists that he would propose "very substantial" economic measures to Congress on Tuesday. These will include tax relief and aid for workers in the gig economy who worry about calling in sick. Trump said he would hold a press conference to discuss the measures on Tuesday, adding the coronavirus - which has killed 26 people in the US - has "blindsided the world."

The run on stock market prices robbed Trump of one of his main talking points ahead of the November presidential election. The Dow Jones closed 7.8 percent lower in the worst session since 2008. And with pictures of a virus-hit cruise ship constantly on live television, Trump's tweet Monday that "life & the economy go on" seemed increasingly out of touch. Alarm mounted further after at least two Republican lawmakers who recently met with the president announced they were going into self-quarantine, fearing that they were exposed to the virus at a conservative conference just outside Washington.

One of them, Representative Matt Gaetz, had traveled with Trump on Air Force One on Monday. Another, Representative Doug Collins, was with Trump Friday during a coronavirus briefing at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention headquarters. Trump's incoming chief of staff, Mark Meadows, also went into self-quarantine Monday after learning he may also have been exposed at the same conference.

Although he is not exhibiting symptoms, and a precautionary test came back negative, "he'll be self-quarantined till the 14 day period passes Wednesday," his spokesman said on Twitter. The spreading virus also raises questions over whether Trump will be able to continue holding the large rallies at the heart of his reelection campaign. Trump has not been tested for the virus, White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham said Monday evening.

"He has neither had prolonged close contact with any known confirmed COVID-19 patients, nor does he have any symptoms," she said in a statement. Stories of new cases flooded in across the country - from a Washington DC church rector to the head of New York's ports authority, while some stores ran out of hand sanitizer and masks. On the West Coast - where most of the US deaths have occurred - the Grand Princess cruise ship docked at California's port of Oakland, for more than 2,400 passengers to be taken into treatment or placed in quarantine, in a delicate, days-long operation.

Grisham said there was no need for worry, denying reports that staff had been instructed to limit face-to-face meetings. "While we have asked all Americans to exercise common-sense hygiene measures, we are conducting business as usual. I want to remind the media once again to be responsible with all reporting," Grisham said.

Trump himself appeared to be less than strict about sanitary guidelines, shaking hands with well-wishers while in Florida on Monday. Since the epidemic began, Trump has veered between defending his government from accusations of incompetence to accusing Democrats and the media of exaggerating the outbreak in an attempt to hurt his standing. The crisis has seen him struggle to retain control over his messaging that he will ride the booming economy to certain victory in November. —AFP

## Dutch king apologizes for excessive violence during Indonesian war

JAKARTA: Dutch King Willem-Alexander apologized to Indonesia yesterday for "excessive violence" during the former colony's independence struggle in the 1940s. The king made the remarks during a state visit to the country with Queen Maxima after a ceremony with Indonesian President Joko Widodo in the capital Jakarta. Indonesia declared its independence on August 17, 1945 following a brief wartime occupation by the Japanese and several hundred years as a Dutch colony.

"The past cannot be erased, and will have to be acknowledged by each generation in turn," the king said in a joint statement. In the years after the independence proclamation "a painful separation followed that cost many lives... I would like to express my regret and apologize for excessive violence on the part of the Dutch in those years," he added. "I do so in the full realization that the pain and sorrow of the families affected continue to be felt today."

In 2013, the Dutch government publicly apologized to Indonesia for mass killings by its army in the 1940s war of independence, in the first general apology for all executions. But the apology yesterday was a first by a Dutch monarch, according to two sources, including a senior Indonesian government official. The Dutch embassy in Jakarta declined to comment. Previously,

## Berlin to take up to 100 children from Greek refugee camps

BERLIN: Berlin will take in 80 to 100 children from Greek refugee camps, an official in the German capital said yesterday, as concern mounts about migrants amassing on the Turkish-Greek border. European politicians are struggling to agree what to do about the tens of thousands of migrants who have been trying to enter Greece, a member of the European Union, since Ankara said last month it would no longer keep them on Turkish soil.

Germany's coalition parties said on Monday they were ready to take in several hundred children from

## Spain steps up anti-coronavirus plan to 'avoid Italian scenario'

MADRID: Spain shut down schools in several regions, suspended flights from Italy and closed the lower house of parliament for at least a week after a lawmaker tested positive for the coronavirus, in the hope of stemming a growing outbreak. The government recommended avoiding travel both within and outside Spain and banned indoor gatherings of more than 1,000 people in the regions most affected by the virus - Madrid, the Rioja wine-growing region and two areas in the northern Basque Country.

"We are working on avoiding the Italian scenario," Health Minister Salvador Illa told reporters. "With these measures we believe that we can avoid it. And if we have to take additional measures, we will take them." Italy is the hardest-hit European country, with a nationwide lockdown, 9,172 cases and 463 deaths. Spain, the euro

zone's fourth-largest economy, reported 35 deaths and 1,622 confirmed coronavirus cases yesterday, a ten-fold increase in cases in a week.

The government announced it was cancelling all direct flights from Italy for at least two weeks from today to try to avoid further contagion. State-funded pensioners' travel will also be suspended, while the government will evaluate whether to ban large events on a case-by-case basis beyond the worst-affected areas. "We recommend... avoiding travel whenever possible, both inside and outside Spain. If these are not essential trips, we ask you not to travel," Illa said.

## Behind closed doors

Far-right lawmaker Javier Ortega Smith was diagnosed with the virus and the party said all its parliamentarians would be working from home until further notice, prompting the lower house of parliament to suspend activities for a week. The metro of Madrid has started using hydroalcoholic solutions to clean handrails, seats, armrests and door controls to prevent infection. Major sports events have also been hit. All of Spain's La Liga football matches will be played behind closed doors for at least two weeks, the top soccer league said.

Across the Madrid region, parents pre-



BOGOR: King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands (2nd left) and Queen Maxima (left) wave to the media along with Indonesia's President Joko Widodo (2nd right) and his wife Iriana Widodo during their meeting at the Bogor presidential palace in Bogor yesterday. —AFP

pared for a two-week school shutdown starting there today. "It was chaos yesterday when I learnt about it. The phone started ringing and we started to see how we could organize ourselves. Thank God both the father and myself can work from home," said Ester Force, as she dropped her child

Dutch royals said they were "deeply saddened" at news of a fatal boat crash that killed seven Indonesian government employees and injured 20 others, including two Dutch embassy staff. The accident happened as officials secured an area in Indonesia's section of Borneo island where the royal couple were to visit this week. —AFP

Greek refugee camps together with other EU countries, with the focus on children who are sick or younger than 14 and unaccompanied. Asked when children might arrive in Berlin, the capital's senator for interior affairs, Andreas Geisel told broadcaster RTL: "It now depends on how quickly the German government implements this decision. I think it's more like today than tomorrow."

Greece has a large number of people waiting in refugee camps and hoping enter the EU, many of them fleeing war, persecution and poverty in the Middle East and Africa. It is refusing to open its borders to the refugees now trying to enter from Turkey, which hosts about 3.6 million refugees from Syria. Greece and the EU accuse Turkey of deliberately goading the migrants to cross the border as a way of pressuring Brussels into offering more money to host the refugees or supporting Ankara's geopolitical aims in the Syrian conflict.

More than 3,000 children in Greece need to be

found homes, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said. While welcoming a move by Finland to take in 150 unaccompanied children, Afshan Khan, UNICEF Director, Special Coordinator, Refugee and Migrant response in Europe, said far more was needed. "We need Europe to stand alongside both Greece and Turkey and the other frontline Mediterranean states to be able to help shelter and house many of the unaccompanied children," she told Reuters on Monday after a visit to the Turkey-Greece border.

France, Portugal, Finland and Luxembourg have also offered to take in some children. Khan described large numbers of women and children near the border who dream of crossing into Europe, but camp in cold and wet open fields in tents or under plastic sheeting. The EU wants to avoid a repeat of 2015 when more than a million people, mostly from the Middle East, reached its shores via Turkey and Greece. —Reuters



MADRID: A sign written in Spanish and Chinese offers an apology to costumers for the use of protective masks in light of the novel coronavirus outbreak, inside a store in the Usera neighborhood yesterday. —AFP

at a Madrid primary school. The closure of schools - from kindergarten to universities - in Madrid will affect at least 1.53 million pupils and students, regional authorities said, with tens of thousands more affected by school shutdowns in Rioja and in the Basque country. —Reuters



## International

## Afghanistan 'Game of Thrones' jeopardizes the peace process

## Political rivals hold separate swearing-in ceremonies

KABUL: Afghan President Ashraf Ghani was sworn in for a second term on Monday, but the ceremony was marred by a rocket attack and a rival held his own inauguration ceremony in an escalating political feud compounding challenges to ending the 18-year war. Both Ghani and former chief executive Abdullah Abdullah say they are Afghanistan's rightful leader following a disputed election last September. The standoff threatens political chaos days after the United States and the Taliban signed a deal on the withdrawal of US-led international forces.

Planned morning ceremonies were postponed and guests kept waiting while US Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad tried to broker a last-minute deal between the longtime political foes - but there was no word of a breakthrough. Ghani eventually took an oath at the presidential palace in a ceremony attended by foreign diplomats including Khalilzad and NATO forces commander Scott Miller.

Abdullah held a ceremony at his own compound nearby attended by supporters. Hours after the competing ceremonies, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo issued a statement saying that the United States "strongly" opposes the creation of a "parallel government, and any use of force to resolve political differences." The warning appeared primarily aimed at Abdullah. But Pompeo also withheld congratulating Ghani on being sworn-in to a second five-year term.

Instead, he expressed support for a pledge by Ghani to continue talks for the next two weeks on forming an "inclusive government that unifies the country and prioritizes peace." Ghani's ceremony was disrupted by the sound of rockets hitting the edge of the compound of the presidential palace in an attack later claimed by Islamic State. The Ministry of Interior said four rockets were launched from a car, injuring one policeman. As some attendees ducked and ran for cover, Ghani briefly paused

his address, saying: "Do not be afraid of one or two explosions, stay in your seats."

Returning to his speech, Ghani said he would stick to his previous cabinet for two weeks before selecting new members who would include people beyond his political camp to form "an inclusive government." He plans to finalize a negotiating team for talks with the Taliban on Tuesday and to make a further announcement on demands by the militants for the release of 5,000 prisoners. The Taliban, which has waged an insurgency since shortly after its fall from power in 2001, has made their release a condition for talks but Ghani has rejected the demand.

## 'Complete mess'

Despite Ghani's announcements, many diplomats, experts and civil society members believe the political crisis does not bode well for talks with the Taliban, known as "intra-Afghan talks", under a US brokered peace process. "It's a worst-case scenario for sure," said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the Wilson Center. "The question is how you get two separate Afghan governments into an already complex negotiation with the Taliban?"

The talks are intended as a follow-up to the Feb 29 pact on the withdrawal of US troops.

US and Western diplomats told Reuters that an arrangement will have to be brokered quickly before the two start appointing rival ministers. "It's a complete mess, the two men refuse to negotiate a deal," said a senior American official in Kabul. Ghani and Abdullah had been holding talks with Khalilzad as the US special envoy tried to secure a deal to avert the parallel inaugurations, officials from both camps said. The US State Department declined to comment.

The Election Commission last month announced that

identifiable individually. In a country where virtually everyone owns a smartphone, doxing - maliciously spreading private information about individuals and businesses online - has long been a problem.

And the consequences have been sometimes been embarrassing, even brutal, with the National Human Rights Commission describing them as "human rights violations". "We can't help but worry about the situation where the confirmed patients become subject to secondary damages, such as being criticized, ridiculed and abhorred online," it said in a statement. Two confirmed patients have been accused of having an extra-marital affair, after their travel logs showed similarities.

One Samsung Electronics employee who tested positive said she received hateful comments online after a city mayor revealed her boyfriend is a member of Shincheonji, the controversial religious sect linked to more than half the South's cases. "I am having a hard time mentally, more so than (physical) pain," she wrote on her Facebook account, which she has since turned private, asking other users not to share her personal information. "I'm so sorry to my family and friends," she added.

Michael Hurt, a sociologist at Korea National University of Arts, said that while the alerts reassure the public that authorities are dealing with the epidemic, they can unintentionally lead to "the stigmatization of areas as infected or 'dangerous.'" Companies identified as visited by infected people have been hit. "I'm

multiple launchers each with four firing tubes, striking what appeared to be an island target.

Other pictures showed smaller-caliber projectiles and artillery shooting salvos of rounds. Kim, wearing a Russian-style hat and a khaki military jacket, watched from a trench next to an officer in a black facemask. Pyongyang has closed its borders and imposed strict conditions as it seeks to avoid the worldwide coronavirus outbreak. The three joint firing drills Kim has supervised in the last fortnight were his first military-related activity this year, Seoul's unification ministry said yesterday.

"It is for strengthening internal solidarity and externally, attracting the attention of the US and South Korea and pressuring their change in attitude," it added in a statement. North Korea is under multiple sets of United Nations, US and other sanctions over its weapons programs. Washington and Pyongyang talks have been deadlocked since Hanoi over sanctions relief and what North



This picture released from North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) yesterday shows a test of weapons at an undisclosed location in North Korea. —AFP

Korea would be willing to give up in return, and a high-profile meeting between Trump and Kim failed to break the logjam. —AFP

## Too much information? Privacy questions over S Korea virus details

SEOUL: Allegations of affairs, revelations of membership of religious sects: South Korea's openness about infected patients has been key in its fight against the coronavirus but raised uncomfortable questions over privacy and stigmatization.

South Korea has confirmed more than 7,500 infections, one of the largest totals outside China, where the virus first emerged, although new case numbers have been declining for several days. Officials say that has been made possible by widespread testing of potential contacts - the South has carried out more than 210,000. Across the country, local authorities have been issuing emergency alerts by mobile phone to those living or working in districts where new cases have been confirmed.

The text message arrives with a shrieking warning, announcing nearby locations visited by patients before they were diagnosed with the virus and their links to other cases. More information is available on municipal websites, sometimes with breakdowns of individuals' daily schedules, even down to the minute, and details of their residence and employer - often making them

## N Korea seeks attention with weapons test

SEOUL: In a black fur hat and clutching binoculars, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un oversaw his latest firing drill, a move Seoul said yesterday aimed at drawing the attention of the US and South Korea. Kim "guided another fire-power strike drill of long-range artillery", the North's KCNA news agency reported, a day after Japan said Pyongyang had fired what appeared to be ballistic missiles.

The North has been continuing to refine its weapons capabilities, analysts say, more than a year after a Hanoi summit between Kim and US President Donald Trump broke down. Images carried by official Rodong Sinmun newspaper showed rockets blasting out of mul-

## US begins military pullout from two Afghan bases

KABUL: American forces have started pulling out of two bases in Afghanistan, a US official said yesterday, the day peace talks between Kabul and the Taliban were due to start despite widespread violence and a political crisis. The United States is keen to end its longest-ever conflict, and under the terms of a deal signed in Doha last month has said all foreign forces will quit Afghanistan within 14 months - provided the Taliban stick to their security commitments. Under the accord, the US is initially supposed to cut its troop presence from about 12,000 current-

ly to 8,600 by mid-July, and close five of its roughly 20 bases across the country.

Troops have started leaving one base in Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand province in the south, and another base in Herat in the east, a US official told AFP on the condition of anonymity. Even with the drawdown, US forces retain "all the military means and authorities to accomplish our objectives", Colonel Sonny Leggett, spokesman for US Forces-Afghanistan, said Monday, referring to American counterterrorism operations and support for Afghan forces.

Helmand, which along with neighboring Kandahar province is considered a Taliban stronghold, is where US and British forces fought some of the bloodiest campaigns of the 18-year war. Omar Zwak, spokesman for Helmand's governor, told AFP that "20 to 30" foreigners had left Lashkar Gah since the weekend. —AFP



KABUL: Officials gather at an entrance ahead of the start of Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani's swearing-in inauguration ceremony, at the Presidential Palace in Kabul. —AFP

Ghani had retained power by winning the Sept. 28 election. But Abdullah proclaimed himself winner. "No one should have underestimated our commitment to genuine democracy," Abdullah tweeted on Monday. "Invalidation of all fraudulent votes is the way out." Ghani and Abdullah both held roles in the previous government under a US-brokered, power-sharing agreement that followed the 2014 election.

Publicly, many embassies and international players including Canada and the United Nations congratulated Ghani. But there was frustration too. Aisha Khurram, a student at Kabul University and Afghanistan's youth representative to the United Nations last year, tweeted: "Game of thrones: Our country is literally on the brink of division. Shame on our authorities for ... jeopardizing the nascent peace process. You failed this generation!" —Reuters



DAEGU: Hospital workers track responses to the COVID-19 novel coronavirus at a situation room at a hospital in Daegu yesterday. —AFP

having a very hard time, we are basically getting no customers after an emergency alert went out which included our address," a restaurant owner in Seoul said. "I understand these alerts are necessary, but at the same time, my business has been virtually destroyed."

South Korea has an advanced medical system, a free press and a strong culture of public accountability, and Seoul's foreign minister says the government has stressed transparency when tackling the public health crisis. But even a health ministry civil servant could not avoid online bullying after contracting the virus. —AFP

## EU tells Turkey to pull migrants back from Greek border

BRUSSELS: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan sought more European support yesterday over the war in Syria and for hosting millions of refugees, but was told he must first stop encouraging migrants to cross into Greece. Erdogan flew to Brussels for talks with the European Union and NATO after tension rose over the fate of tens of thousands of migrants trying to enter EU-member Greece since Ankara said last month it would no longer try to keep them on Turkish soil.

Turkey hosts about 3.6 million refugees from Syria and has kept a lid on migration to Europe under a deal it agreed with the bloc in 2016 in return for billions of euros in aid. But it has become frustrated with what it regards as too little European support over the war in Syria, where its troops are facing off against Russian-backed government forces and have suffered growing casualties.

"The crisis stemming from Syria, with its security and humanitarian aspects, is threatening our region and even all of Europe," Erdogan said after arriving for talks with the EU and NATO. "No European country has the luxury to remain indifferent." "We expect concrete support from all our allies in the fight that Turkey has been carrying out alone... NATO is in a critical period during which it needs to clearly show support."

The EU has little to offer in terms of military support in Syria, where it has condemned Turkey's engagement. The 27-nation bloc, in which most members are also Ankara's NATO allies, has dangled the promise of further aid - but in time and under conditions. "The events at the Greek-Turkish border clearly point to politically motivated pressure on the EU's external border," the head of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said before talks with Erdogan. "Finding a solution to this situation will require relieving the pressure that is put on the border."

## Precondition

At the same time, the EU is trying to support Greece, where it says some 42,000 refugees and migrants are stuck on the islands, including about 5,500 unaccompanied children. France, Portugal, Finland, Germany and Luxembourg offered to take some in, with Berlin saying up to 1,500 minors could move in total. EU migration ministers are due to discuss the matter in Brussels on Friday.

The EU is determined to avoid any repeat of 2015 and 2016, when more than a million people, mostly from the Middle East, reached its shores via Turkey and Greece. That was all but halted by the 2016 Turkey deal, which the EU hopes to salvage. The EU says it has so far paid about half of a promised 6 billion euros to help Turkey finance housing, schools and medical centers for the refugees stranded on its territory.

"A precondition for any additional EU help should be to stop all support to illegal border crossings and move people away from the border," a German conservative member of the European Parliament, Manfred Weber, said. The 2016 pact had also envisaged the EU taking in thousands of Syrian refugees directly from camps in Turkey, rewarding Turks with visa-free travel to the bloc, faster progress in EU membership talks and upgrading their customs union. —Reuters



In this file photo, US soldiers gather near a destroyed vehicle and protect their faces from rotor wash, as their wounded comrades are airlifted. American forces have started pulling out of two bases in Afghanistan, a US official said yesterday. —AFP



## Analysis

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## In Malaysia's Silicon Valley, fortunes flip as virus wrecks gains

Tech firms at Malaysia's one-time Silicon Valley of the East, swimming in orders from customers fleeing trade war-hit China, have seen fortunes turn again in the space of just a year as the coronavirus outbreak cuts them off from Chinese suppliers. Semiconductor test equipment manufacturer Pentamaster Corp Bhd saw its shares more than double last year as sales surged by about a fifth - the steepest in its 29-year existence - as the firm became a refuge from Sino-US import tariffs.

But then China sent workers home to slow the virus, stifling supplies of parts and material further upstream. Pentamaster called alternative sources in Japan, South Korea, Germany and Italy, only to find the action had left them in the lurch too. The firm has since lowered its 2020 revenue growth outlook to flat from double digits, while its stock has fallen more than 10 percent since China in late January locked down the virus epicentre, Wuhan. "Even if you source from another country, the other country also depends on China," said Pentamaster Executive Chairman Chuah Choon Bin.

Pentamaster's predicament is echoed across Malaysia's coastal state of Penang, one of the world's biggest electronics and electrical hubs, which had been losing business to China for the past decade until the trade war sparked a revival. Home to factories owned by Intel Corp and Broadcom Inc alongside numerous other firms that supply tech majors including Apple Inc, the state accounts for about 8 percent of global back-end semiconductor output. Inbound investment reached a historic high last year. This year, however, the goal is just a third of that, at about \$1.2 billion - though that is due to the life cycles of investments rather than the virus, the state government said.

### Roller coaster

The roller-coaster ride illustrates how quickly and broadly the virus is changing fortunes around the world. While Penang firms saw record sales last year from customers seeking to curb reliance on China and escape US tariffs, they themselves relied on China for as much as 60 percent of components and materials with the rest coming from Europe or elsewhere in Asia. Analysts and local firms said the virus' sales impact would be acute in the April-June period when stockpiles run out. While many firms have warned of delays, some have seen orders surge as customers continue to seek suppliers outside of China.

"Good news: Product transfers from China are leading to more quotation requests and order overflow," said Goh Guek Eng, managing director at semiconductor products assembler Hotayi Electronic. "Bad news: Materials are not coming in from China." Hotayi sources 60 percent of components such as printed circuit boards and multi-layer ceramic capacitors from China, for customers including Samsung Electronics Co Ltd, LG Electronics Inc and Sharp Corp.

Its sales soared 40 percent last year. Goh said its 20 percent target this year could be at risk due to the supply issues, which could turn critical in one to two months' time and badly hit production. Pentamaster buys most of its components such as motors and sensors from Japan, Europe and China - the latter making up 20 percent to 30 percent. In the past few weeks, it has changed the design of some equipment to accommodate parts from outside China, Chuah said. "We're able to get supplies but the lead time is long - two to three months from Europe," he said, compared with two to three weeks from anywhere under normal circumstances.

Analysts said other firms likely affected by the supply disruption include electronics manufacturing services companies VS Industry Bhd and ATA IMS Bhd as they rely on China for up to 30 percent of components and material. Neither responded to Reuters' requests for comment. Semiconductor company Inari Amertron Bhd, whose radio frequency components are used in smartphones including Apple's iPhones, might have a weak second half after the US firm flagged slowing production and demand in China, Malaysia's AmlInvestment Bank said.

Inari told Reuters the virus had indeed had an impact on its supply chain but "probably less than the market feared" as the situation in China was improving. "We expect our performance to be in line with the overall growth, resilience or lack thereof, in the global semiconductor market," said Vice Chairman Tan Seng Chuan. Globetronics Technology Bhd, a contract manufacturer of semiconductor-based products, told Reuters it did not directly source from China but that there was a small risk to its indirect supply chain.

"We had previously forecast the year over year growth for all semiconductors to be 5.5 percent in 2020," said Kevin Anderson, senior analyst for power semiconductors at consultancy Omdia. With the virus, "now we think the range could be from -20 percent (worst case) up to 2.5 percent (best case), with a most likely of -3 percent". "All this depends very much on impact on the demand side as the virus spreads around the world and how quickly the electronics supply and logistics chains recover." —Reuters

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(Clockwise from top left) General view of the Favela Nova Esperanca - a 'green favela' which reuses everything and is subject to the ethics of permaculture - on the outskirts of Sao Paulo, Brazil, on Feb 14, 2020; Community leader Lia de Souza and two residents build a house with clay in the favela; De Souza shows the theater of the Favela Nova Esperanca; A resident works in the vegetable garden of the favela. —AFP photos

## 'Green favela' fights to live sustainably in Brazil

At first glance, it looks like any other shantytown in Brazil: a precarious jumble of tin-roof shacks and shoddy streets. But look closer, and the community garden, rainwater harvesting system and environmental education program are visible too: this "favela" is remarkably green. On the outskirts of Sao Paulo, a concrete jungle of 12 million people, the impoverished community of Vila Nova Esperanca (Village of New Hope) is fighting to be a model of sustainable living.

The driving force behind the "green favela" is its leader Lia de Souza, elected a decade ago. An irrepressible woman of 57, she moved here in 2003 to escape an abusive husband. She soon set about turning the favela into the kind of place she wanted to call home: one where people respect the environment and each other, live sustainably and take care of their community together. She has fought hard to make that a reality, sometimes against abusive police and authorities.

### Ray of hope

Creating that home has been an ongoing struggle. But it has earned her the nickname "Lia Esperanca" - "Lia of Hope", evoking her favela's optimistic name. "We have to come together to make this not-so-great place a really great place to live," she said, giving a tour of the organic garden she helped create. She proudly pointed out the wealth of plants in the spice section: Thyme, basil, turmeric, lavender, three kinds of mint.

Nearby, papaya trees and banana plants sprouted from the red soil, along with vibrant purple bougainvilleas and pink hydrangeas. "We have all kinds of medicinal plants, too," said Souza, showing AFP journalists a greenhouse full of seedlings and the compost used for fertilizer, which has the added benefit of reducing waste.

## Nigeria sweats after coronavirus sparks oil fall

Nigeria has reported only two confirmed coronavirus cases, but there are fears the fallout from the global outbreak could debilitate Africa's biggest economy. The finance minister in the continent's largest oil producer said on Monday the government would scale back its budget after crude prices plunged far below the level it had envisioned. "It is very clear that we will have to revisit crude oil benchmark price that we have of \$57," Zainab Ahmed said after a hastily convened meeting with President Muhammadu Buhari. "There will be reduced revenue in the budget and it will mean cutting the size of the budget."

Where the savings will come from in the record \$34.6 billion spending plan agreed for this year remains to be seen. A committee including Ahmed is set to report back to Buhari with a way forward in the coming days - but room for maneuver may be limited. Before the latest collapse in oil prices, Nigeria was already struggling to boost growth after emerging in 2017 from its worst recession in decades caused by the

## Buzz off: Malawi scares away loggers with beehives

Bonster Kabaghe was fresh out of secondary school when he witnessed how a denuded piece of land turned green after beehives were introduced on cotton farms near where he was living with his uncle in Malawi's tobacco-growing district of Ntchisi. Back then, in his teens, Kabaghe did not grasp the connection between people's fear of bee stings and rejuvenation of the area's trees. But he has since adopted the approach in his native village of Mwenekabwe, in the northern district of Karonga, on a quest to save its fast-depleting forest and help locals make money.

"When I came here, I noticed most trees had been cut down and the land was bare," said Kabaghe, now a 36-year-old community health worker. "Yet the trees are also everything to the people, including their use for firewood and medicine." Many of the trees that covered this mountainous region have been cut down illegally for fuel, as in other parts of Malawi. Little more than a tenth of its 17 million people are connected to the national electricity grid.

Even among those who have grid power, few can afford to use it for cooking, leaving them reliant on firewood and charcoal and adding to the strain on local forests. Globally, deforestation is recognized as a major driver of biodiversity loss, climate change

Vila Nova Esperanca sits an hour from the Sao Paulo city center, carved out from the lush forest known as the Mata Atlantica.

The plants and flowers don't stop it from looking a lot like the rest of the mega-city's 1,650 favelas: half-finished shacks line the dirt streets, tattered furniture sits outdoors, stray plastic bags drift in the air. But the community of 3,000 people has won multiple awards for its environmental programs.

“Nature teaches us how to live. You don't need to go to university”

### Learning from nature

With her bare hands, Souza picked up fist-fulls of mud and slapped them onto the wall of a "brinquedoteca", a children's center with educational games and toys that she and the community are building. The mix of clay and cement they are using "is less expensive than bricks, and it's sustainable," she said, her face smeared with mud. "When I arrived here, there was nothing," she said - not even electricity. "Today, we have an amphitheater, a library, a communal kitchen, a pond where the

last major crude slump. Pledges by the authorities in Africa's most populous nation - which relies on oil for some 90 percent of its foreign exchange - to diversify the economy have failed to break the reliance on crude quickly enough. Last month saw the International Monetary Fund lower its 2020 growth forecast for Nigeria to 2 percent on the back of lower oil prices. "Nigeria has not learnt some lessons from its past in terms of diversifying its revenue base," said Ayodeji Ebo, managing director at Afrinvest Securities in Lagos. Afrinvest on Monday estimated that the fall in the oil price would cause a revenue shortfall of over 55 percent.

### Another recession?

Nigeria is watching nervously in the hope that leading oil producers Saudi Arabia and Russia quickly make up and return to the negotiating table to agree a deal to prop up prices. Oil minister Timipre Sylva said the country believed they will sit down together again "when all of us would have begun to see effect of the reduction of prices". For now most agree it is too early to tell how painful the impact could be.

But Ebo warned that if the standoff spells a prolonged drop for crude and coronavirus continues to batter the global economy then Nigeria could be heading for major problems. "If we don't come up with policies to salvage this situation then there is the possibility for Nigeria to slip back into recession," he said. While the outlook looks bleak there appear some crucial differ-

ences that could help Nigeria avoid some of the pain from the 2014 oil crash. Last time around when the prices tumbled Nigeria's oil-rich Delta region was hit by a wave of militancy - meaning daily output dropped to some 1.4 million barrels per day. Now, the country is producing around 2 million barrels daily and insists it will boost that figure to make up some of the losses.

and damage to the natural services provided by ecosystems, such as hydrological cycles that are essential for rainfall and water supplies. Malawi is losing an estimated 33,000 hectares of forest per year, a problem caused mainly by agricultural expansion and the use of wood as fuel to cure tobacco and burn bricks, according to researchers at Japan's Hokkaido University.

Kabaghe said he was initially afraid to set up the green-painted, wooden coffin-like beehives in the forest and along rivers, unsure of how people would react. Eventually he partnered with a friend who knew the local community, and they started with four hives. "At first people were laughing at us, saying where could we find bees to fill the hives? They thought we were out of our minds but after three days, a swarm of bees came in," he said.

### Honey means money

The duo managed to harvest honey worth about \$100 in 2017, their first year. They have since added more hives, which cost roughly \$15 each, and now have about 20, earning \$300 last year. But they have come up against challenges, such as resistance from those who used to cut down local trees, said Kabaghe. "Some people were threatening us after they couldn't access the areas where there were beehives," he said. "But we noticed this is a plus to us as it means our mission to save the environment is bearing fruit," he added.

Areas without beehives have hundreds of tree stumps - a sign of deforestation - whereas rivers and other places where the hives are situated are green with trees and vegetation. Today, even chiefs and traditional leaders have started to appreciate the initiative. To gain local trust, Kabaghe and his colleague shared their honey with community members, especially those living close to the hives, and have invited some to join their group. As

children can swim, and the garden, which just keeps growing."

One of her acolytes, a civil engineer named Rodrigo Calisto, showed off the stone basin where he recently finished building a fish farm with the help of other volunteers. The tilapia will both provide food and eat mosquitoes, a vector for diseases such as dengue fever, he explained. The community has also erected sandbag walls to protect itself from landslides. Deadly landslides "are a widespread problem in Brazil, because most favelas are built on hillsides," said Calisto. He has also developed a system to collect and reuse rainwater. "Nature teaches us how to live. You don't need to go to university," said Souza.

### Fighting spirit

Souza's grit has sometimes put her on a collision course with authorities. Several years after moving to the favela, she learned officials were working to evict its residents, accusing them of building on protected land. Swallowing her fear, she stood fast with her community the day police arrived, kicking and pepper-spraying residents in a failed attempt to evict them. She says the city's Housing and Urban Development Company (CDHU) has offered her money to leave.

But Souza is determined to stay. Her latest challenge is the end of a municipal grant of 1,050 reais (about \$225) per month to pay residents to work on community projects. The grant has been a godsend for the favela, where one worker in five is unemployed. But it is about to end. "People who live on the periphery have nothing. It's going to be hard if the grant ends," she said. "But we're not going to stop working." —AFP

### Devaluation coming?

Still, the spiralling economic headache will ratchet up pressure on the naira national currency as talk has been building of a potential devaluation. So far the central bank has stuck firm on supporting the currency despite diminishing dollar reserves as it looks to stave off letting the naira go free again for the second time since 2016. But the plunge in the oil price might just push the authorities to let the naira slide.

"The central bank governor has indicated to the market that there are two variables that will determine the next move for the currency: oil prices and the level of the reserves," said Omolola Abimbola, an analyst at Chapel Hill Denham investment bank. Crude prices are now well below the level Nigerian officials were hoping for and the reserves have slipped towards the key \$30 billion threshold set by central bank chief Godwin Emefiele. "The threshold hasn't yet been reached as reserves are at \$36 billion," said Abimbola. "But this is a shock and I expected the central bank wouldn't let reserve drop below that level before taking action." —AFP



Audney Nkhata and his colleagues check on a beehive in a forest near Nkhata Bay, Malawi, on Feb 6, 2020. —Reuters

the area's forest has started growing back, their lives have changed for the better, said Kabaghe. He has now bought some livestock and can help his family more with money, sustainably harvested wood and natural medicines.

Chifundo Dalireni, Lilongwe branch manager for the Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi, urged other parts of the country to adopt a similar approach to protecting forests. In communities where beekeeping is practiced, little or no deforestation is taking place, he said - but they are still getting very limited support. "The issue of deforestation is very serious in the country due to high population which increases demand for forest products, weak forest laws, poor coordination ... and high poverty levels," he said. —Reuters



## Business

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2020

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MOSCOW: Women walk past a currency exchange office in Moscow yesterday. Russia's RTS stock index dived more than 10 percent on opening yesterday after a public holiday, following a crash in oil prices that saw the ruble and global markets post massive losses. —AFP

## Oil jumps after rout on stimulus hopes

Russia signals OPEC talks; Saudi to boost April supply to 12.3m bpd

LONDON: Oil prices jumped by around 8 percent yesterday a day after the biggest rout in nearly 30 years as investors eyed the possibility of economic stimulus and Russia signalled that talks with OPEC remained possible. US President Donald Trump on Monday said he will be taking "major" steps to gird the US economy against the impact of the spreading coronavirus outbreak, while Japan's government plans to spend more than \$4 billion in a second package of steps to cope with the virus.

Brent crude futures were up \$2.80, around 8 percent, to \$37.16 a barrel by 1354 GMT, after hitting a session high of \$38.22 a barrel. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude gained \$2.42, or around 8 percent, to \$33.55 a barrel, after hitting a high of \$34.60.

Kuwait oil prices plummeted by \$15.56 per barrel on Monday to \$34.26 pb compared to last Friday's \$49.82 pb closing, according to Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday.

Trading volumes in the front-month for both contracts hit record highs in the previous session after three years of cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Russia and other major oil producers to limit supply fell apart on Friday, triggering a price war for market share.

Saudi, the world's biggest oil exporter, escalated tensions with plans to supply 12.3 million barrels per day (bpd) in April, well above current production levels of 9.7 million bpd, Saudi Aramco CEO Amin Nasser said yesterday. April's crude supply will be "300,000 barrels per day over the company's maximum sustained capacity of 12 million bpd," Nasser said in a statement received by Reuters.

**Aramco to boost supply**

Saudi Aramco said yesterday it will boost crude oil supplies to 12.3 million barrels per day in April, flooding markets

as it escalates a price war with Russia. Riyadh had already slashed its price for April delivery after Russia refused its proposal that producer alliance OPEC+ orchestrate a co-ordinated cut of 1.5 million barrels per day.

The production cut had been mooted to shore up global oil prices, which have gone into meltdown as the deadly new coronavirus casts a pall over the world economy, but now price cuts and rising output indicate an unraveling of OPEC+ co-operation. "Saudi Aramco announces that it will provide its customers with 12.3 million barrels per day of crude oil in April," the company said in a statement to the Saudi stock exchange. Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest crude exporter has been pumping some 9.8 million bpd so its announcement yesterday means it will be adding at least 2.5 million bpd from April.

"The Company has agreed with its customers to provide them with such volumes starting 1 April 2020. The Company expects that this will have a positive, long-term financial effect," the statement said.

Saudi Arabia says it has an output capacity of 12 million bpd but it is not known for how long it can sustain such levels. The kingdom also has millions of barrels of crude stored in strategic reserves to be used when needed and is expected to use it to provide the extra supply to the global market. "Production above 12 million bpd shows the Saudis have something to prove," director of Britain-based RS Energy Bill Farren-Price said.

"This is a grab for market share. The taps are open and the prices have been cut sharply," Farren-Price said. In a quick

response, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said Moscow could boost production in the short term "by 200,000-300,000 bpd, with a potential of 500,000 bpd in the near future". But he stressed that Moscow was in favor of extending a December agreement that had seen OPEC and Russia agree to cut production by 500,000 barrels per day in 2020, lowering output from October 2018 levels by 1.7 million barrels per day. The events of recent days have signalled a disintegration of collaboration between OPEC and Russia.

**OPEC+ meeting unlikely**

But in response, Saudi Arabia's energy minister told Reuters he did not see a need to hold an OPEC+ meeting in May-June if there was no agreement on what measures should be taken to deal with the impact of the coronavirus on oil demand and prices. "I fail to see the wisdom for holding meetings in May-June that would only demonstrate our failure in attending to what we should have done in a crisis like this and taking the necessary measures,"

Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said.

"Price wars and pandemics are nothing new to the commodity markets, but both occurring simultaneously is something we have yet to witness in our careers," RBC analysts said in a note.

"Such action will test the market's self-balancing mechanism absent the backdrop of OPEC, a mechanism that has not been tested since the US shale boom was in its infancy," they added. Sentiment was also lifted after Chinese



President Xi Jinping visited Wuhan, the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak, for the first time since the epidemic began, and as the spread of the virus in mainland China slows sharply. China, the world's second-largest oil consumer, is trying to get people in hard-hit Hubei province back to work by using a mobile phone-based monitoring system that will allow people to travel within the province.

Crude was also supported by hopes for a settlement to the price war and potential US output cuts, although analysts warned gains may be temporary as oil demand continues to be hit by the virus outbreak, which has spread beyond China and prompted Italy to implement a nationwide lockdown.

US shale producers rushed to deepen spending cuts and could reduce production after OPEC's decision to pump full bore into a global market hit by shrinking demand. "When you look at the leverage the industry is in, at prices of around \$30, it's not profitable," said Jonathan Barratt, chief investment officer Probis Group. —Agencies

## Saudi bourse leads Gulf rally, Kuwait up 6.6%

DUBAI: Stock markets in the energy-rich Gulf states made a strong rebound in opening trade yesterday, led by the Saudi bourse which jumped 5.6 percent, as oil prices bounced after heavy losses.

Energy giant Aramco, which dominates the Saudi Tadawul market, gained 5.5 percent after a series of sessions in the red where it tumbled below the price where it listed last December. Dubai Financial Market surged 5.5 percent while its sister Abu Dhabi market rose 4.2 percent, partly reversing steep declines.

Boursa Kuwait, where trading on its premier index was suspended for two days due to huge losses, rallied 6.6 percent and the Qatar stock market rose 3.0

percent. The small bourses of Bahrain and Oman rose 1.2 percent and 0.2 percent respectively.

All the Gulf stock markets sustained heavy losses in the past two days, dropping to multi-year lows after oil producers failed to reach an agreement on output cuts in an impasse that sent oil prices crashing. After Russia rejected calls from oil-exporting cartel OPEC, which includes Saudi Arabia, for deeper output cuts to combat a coronavirus-fuelled slump in demand, Riyadh drove through massive price cuts in a bid to win market share. As the confrontation flared, oil prices—the mainstay of public revenues in the Gulf states—posted the single biggest one-day loss in three decades on Monday with Brent crude sliding to \$33 a barrel. But as Brent gained more than 7.0 percent to around \$37 a barrel yesterday, energy and global stocks also rebounded in Asian trade, a day after global equities suffered their biggest losses in more than a decade. —AFP

## Market rout costs Ambani's crown as Asia's richest

NEW DELHI: India's Mukesh Ambani has lost his crown as Asia's richest person after the latest rout across global markets wiped almost \$6 billion off his fortune, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. All told, the world's 500 richest people lost \$238.5 billion on Monday, according to Bloomberg, the biggest daily plunge since the index began tracking them in October 2016.

Equity and oil markets went into meltdown on what has been dubbed Black Monday as growing fears about the economic impact of COVID-19 were compounded by Saudi Arabia's decision to slash crude prices following a row with

Russia over production cuts. Crude prices tanked by a third in their worst drop since the 1991 Gulf War.

The sell-off erased \$5.8 billion from 62-year-old Ambani's net worth to leave him with a net worth of about \$41.8 billion. He was overtaken by Chinese tycoon Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba whose fortune had fallen about \$1.1 billion to \$44.5 billion. Ma, 55, had ceded the number-one ranking in mid-2018.

The slump in oil prices raises questions about plans by Ambani's Reliance conglomerate to cut debt as they hinge on selling a stake in its oil and petrochemicals unit to Saudi Aramco, Bloomberg reported.

Ambani, whose fortune ballooned on the back of India's telecoms boom, lives with his family in a 27-storey luxury Mumbai skyscraper reputed to have cost more than \$1 billion to build. The carnage on global markets on Monday also lost Amazon founder and world's richest man



Mukesh Ambani

Jeff Bezos \$5.6 billion and Berkshire Hathaway's Warren Buffett \$5.3 billion, Bloomberg said. However, they still have fortunes of \$111.8 billion and \$76.4 billion respectively.

Frenchman Bernard Arnault, chairman of luxury-goods giant LVMH, was Europe's biggest decliner with a \$4.4-billion drop in his net worth to \$81.4 billion. —AFP



NBK Economic Report

# A turbulent February sees virus hit financial markets plummet

## Fed cuts rates, ECB poised to loosen policy

KUWAIT: A turbulent February saw financial markets hit hard towards the end of the month by the spread of the coronavirus and its likely economic impact. US equities were down up to 10 percent m/m amid huge volatility, eventually prompting the Federal Reserve to announce an emergency 50 bps interest rate cut on March 3. Other markets were also affected, with US 10-year treasury yields plunging to a record low of 0.5 percent in early March as pessimism over global growth increased, while Brent oil prices collapsed to \$32/bbl, 46 percent below mid-February levels. The IMF said it now expects global growth to be weaker this year than the 2.9 percent recorded in 2019, implying at least a 0.5 percent downward revision to its previous forecast of 3.3 percent, and pledged \$50 billion in funding to help poorer countries fight the epidemic.

### Fed delivers emergency rate cut

Economic data in the US has been largely positive - although there is expectation that indicators will weaken as coronavirus fallout filters through over coming weeks. The ISM manufacturing activity index edged back to 50.1 in February after jumping to 50.9 in January but remained in positive territory despite reports of supply chain disruptions. More impressively, the non-manufacturing equivalent leapt to a one-year high of 57.3 from 55.5 in January, raising some questions over whether fears about the virus's economic impact may be overblown. Employment growth also came in at a very robust 273,000 in February, unchanged from January, and the unemployment rate ticked down to 3.5 percent - though this strength is unlikely to be sustained given recent events.

Given the uncertainties, it is still too soon to properly judge the impact on US economic growth. Nowcast estimates peg growth running at an above-2 percent pace so far in 1Q20 - similar to 4Q19, but mostly reflecting pre-virus effect indicators. The OECD revised down its 2020 US growth forecast by 0.1 percent to 1.9 percent in early March, but said growth could slow by more if the virus spread intensifies. Meanwhile, there is talk that the US could suspend tariffs on Chinese imports to help cushion the growth impact of a worst-case virus-spread scenario, with implementation of the 'phase one' trade deal and bilateral talks on 'phase 2' already likely to be delayed.

Citing "evolving risks to economic activity", the Federal Reserve took the emergency step of slashing interest rates by 50 bps two-weeks before its scheduled March meeting, leaving the policy rate at 1.00-1.25 percent. It also promised to "act as appropriate to support the economy" and futures markets expect a further, smaller reduction later in the month. While the Fed admitted that the cut cannot directly address virus-induced problems such as supply chain disruptions or travel

restrictions (and therefore could be of limited effectiveness), it should help to loosen financial conditions. The yield on 10-year government bonds for example fell to a record low of 0.5 percent in the days after the cut, which will feed through into lower mortgage rates and support the housing market. And expectations of lower rates have pushed down the trade-weighted dollar 4 percent since mid-February, though the dollar remains at an historically strong level.

### ECB ready to loosen policy

In the Eurozone, the focus of the virus impact has mostly been on Italy where cases have been most numerous and resulting in the lockdown of the entire northern Lombardy region and concerns in particular about the important travel & tourism sector, worth around 13 percent of GDP. While the composite Italian PMI for February held up well at 50.7 (January 50.4), the impact on 1Q20 GDP is expected to be large with a recession this year now looking likely after modest growth of just 0.3 percent in 2019. The government announced €7.5 billion (0.4 percent of GDP) of fiscal stimulus (including

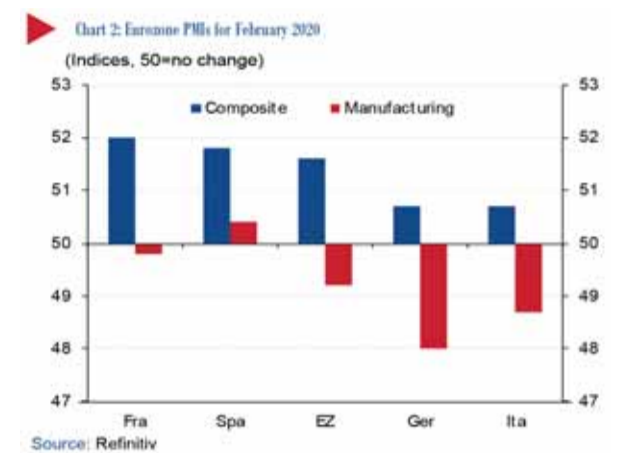
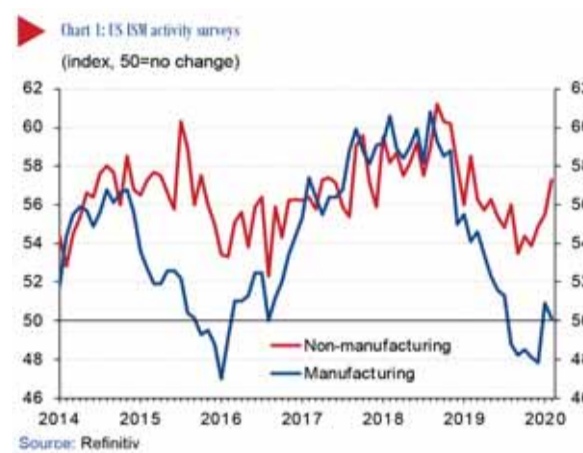


## Chinese economy paralyzed amid COVID-19 chaos

tax credits and extra health spending) to fight the virus and the EU has agreed to disregard the impact on the budget deficit, which is now likely to breach the previously-approved threshold of 2.2 percent of GDP.

The Governing Council of the European Central Bank (ECB) will meet on March 12 and unlike the Fed the bank looks set to wait until then before announcing any change in policy. However ECB president Christine Lagarde said in a statement before the Fed's move that the bank "stands ready to take appropriate and targeted measures" to address the virus fallout.

Although with its policy deposit rate already negative at -0.5 percent the bank's room for maneuver on rates is limited, pressure to act will be considerable given already weak growth and now upward pressure on the euro which could hurt exports. It could look to other support mechanisms such as extending its program of cheap loans ('TLTROs') to encourage bank lending, or facilitating loans to small firms facing liquidity shortages. Meanwhile



the Bank of England could deliver an emergency rate cut before its scheduled meeting on 26 March.

There may also be some new fiscal stimulus measures announced by recently-appointed Chancellor Rishi Sunak at what was already expected to be an expansionary Budget today, including extra spending on health services and on northern regions that were central to the governing Conservative party's decisive December election win.

### Japanese economy contracts

Japan's economy witnessed its weakest growth rate in over five years in 4Q19, contracting by an annualized 7.1 percent, sharply lower than the 0.1 percent expansion in the previous quarter, as the weakness in the external sector was compounded by the effects of the sales tax hike in October. Indeed, both exports and imports continued to fall in January, with exports down 2.6 percent y/y (the 13th consecutive month of decline) and imports slipping 3.5 percent. The coronavirus outbreak which has led to widespread supply-chain disruptions is likely to weigh on trade and ultimately economic growth going forward. That said, the finance minister vowed to implement fiscal stimulus measures if need be, to mitigate the effects of the outbreak. Furthermore, the governor of the Bank of Japan announced that the bank will strive to ensure that there is ample liquidity in financial markets by adopting "appropriate market operations and asset purchases".

### Chinese economy paralyzed

The death toll in China from the coronavirus outbreak topped 3,000 by early March with more than 80,600 confirmed cases. Though the number of new cases in China has reportedly slowed, the outbreak has continued to weigh heavily on economic activity, both due to supply-side disruptions (as firms were forced to shut or cut

back on production) and demand-side disruptions (amid extended quarantine periods and restricted travel). The official PMI for February showed manufacturing activity plunging to a record low of 35.7 from 50 in January. The private (Caixin/Markit) manufacturing PMI also fell to a record low of 40.3. Meanwhile, both the official and private services PMIs also collapsed, to 29.6 and 26.5 respectively. The IMF cut its 2020 growth forecast for China by 0.4 percent to 5.6 percent and the OECD lowered its forecast from 5.7 percent to 4.9 percent.

A slew of stimulus measures over the past month are aimed at supporting economic activity. The ministry of finance announced cuts in social security and corporate taxes and fees, and the central bank reduced its one-year medium-term lending facility by 10 bps to 3.15 percent in a bid to lower long-term borrowing costs. This was followed by a 10 bps cut in the benchmark one-year loan prime rate to 4.05 percent. Additionally, the government has so far allocated RMB90 billion to combatting the virus, on top of liquidity measures by the central bank. Meanwhile, the yuan depreciated by 1.7 percent to push past RMB7/\$1 by the end of February, though subsequently recovered to RMB6.93/\$1 in early March helped by dollar weakness.

### Indian GDP growth improves

India's economy grew by 4.7 percent y/y in 4Q19 (Q3 of fiscal year 2019/20), a modest rise from a six-year low of 4.5 percent in the previous quarter but in line with expectations. The pick-up was driven in part by a marginal improvement in private consumption, coupled with a sharp contraction in imports (likely due to recently imposed tariffs). Other components of GDP continued to be weak, especially investment which fell at its sharpest pace (-5.7 percent) since the financial crisis. Tight credit conditions and bad debt have impeded lending, and may continue to weigh on growth going forward.

## Japan unveils fresh economic package to offset virus hit

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe yesterday announced a second emergency package to tackle economic woes stemming from the coronavirus outbreak, including \$15 billion in loan programs to support small businesses. The package came as the government ramps up its response to the virus, which has infected more than 500 people across the country and been linked to nine deaths.

It included plans to expand the government's low interest loan programs to 1.6 trillion yen (\$15 billion) from its original 500 billion yen announced last month in the first package. "We shall issue a powerful capital assistance worth 1.6 trillion yen that will include offering loans effectively with no interest so that small businesses across Japan that are going through very difficult time can continue their operations," Abe told the government's special outbreak taskforce.

The latest assistance will be designed to ensure steady cashflow for small businesses feeling pressure from the virus's global spread. The package will also include fiscal spending



TOKYO: Mask-clad pedestrians walk past a quotation board displaying the share price index of the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo yesterday. Tokyo's key Nikkei index dropped three percent in early trade yesterday following a blistering sell-off on Wall Street sparked by a crash in oil prices and fears over the coronavirus. — AFP

worth 430 billion yen for a variety of programs, including boosting production of masks and helping nurseries and elderly care facilities to prevent outbreaks. The spending program will also cover financial help for working parents who had to miss work and stay home to care for their children after schools across the nation closed. — AFP

## Lebanon's private creditors face big losses: Moody's

BEIRUT: Moody's Investors Service warned yesterday that private creditors faced significant losses as a result of the government's decision to defer payment of the March 2020 Eurobond.

Lebanon announced on Saturday it could not meet upcoming debt payments, saying critically low foreign currency reserves were needed to cover essential imports and calling for "fair" restructuring talks. "A sovereign default would have a significant negative impact on banks' financial health, and further undermine the economy and the sustainability of the peg," said Elisa Parisi-Capone, a Moody's vice president - senior analyst and the report's author.

Lebanon's announcement involved the halting of a payment of \$1.2 billion on a Eurobond maturing on March 9. Fitch Ratings on Monday

downgraded Lebanon's long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating to 'C' from 'CC'. Fitch said a failure by Lebanon to make the principal payment during the seven day grace period will put the sovereign into 'restricted default' and the bond into 'default'.

Lebanon's balance of payments has worsened in recent years as the war in Syria has closed trade routes and led to an influx of refugees. Also, lower oil prices have dented foreign investment and remittances - particularly from the Gulf area, which hosts about a third of Lebanese expatriates.

The challenges came to a head with the outbreak of public protests against the ruling elite in October last year that led to a change in the government earlier this year. Usable foreign exchange reserves have dwindled to between \$5 billion and \$10 billion, Moody's estimated. That compared with foreign currency debt service requirements of \$4.7 billion in 2020 and \$4 billion in 2021, it added.

The very low level of foreign exchange reserves meant the pressure on the Lebanese pound is acute, Moody's said, adding that it pointed to a possible abrupt and very large change in the exchange rate. — Reuters

## EXCHANGE RATES

### AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.924
Indian Rupees	4.143
Pakistani Rupees	1.951
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.680
Nepali Rupees	2.579
Singapore Dollar	222.120
Hongkong Dollar	39.424
Bangladesh Taka	3.600
Philippine Peso	6.083
Thai Bhat	9.781
Malaysian Ringgit	78.338

GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	81.574
Qatari Riyal	84.183
UAE Dirham	796.101
Bahraini Dinar	813.870
UAE Dirham	83.449

ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	20.650
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	19.568
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.230
Tunisian Dinar	114.720
Jordanian Dinar	432.540
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.204
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	33.293

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	306.300
Euro	349.950
Sterling Pound	401.560
Canadian dollar	225.970
Turkish lira	50.630
Swiss Franc	329.890
US Dollar Buying	298.850

### DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	305.950
Canadian Dollar	225.080
Sterling Pound	400.865
Euro	349.070
Swiss Franc	289.085
Bahraini Dinar	813.635
UAE Dirhams	83.700
Qatari Riyals	84.945
Saudi Riyals	82.480
Jordanian Dinar	432.815
Egyptian Pound	19.594
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.678
Indian Rupees	4.131
Pakistani Rupees	1.951
Bangladesh Taka	3.605
Philippines Peso	6.056
Cyprus pound	18.195
Japanese Yen	3.915
Syrian Pound	1.595
Nepalese Rupees	2.639
Malaysian Ringgit	73.405
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.595

Thai Bhat	10.725
Turkish Lira	50.265
Singapore dollars	219.820

### BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.392400	0.406300
Czech Korune	0.005592	0.014892
Danish Krone	0.042483	0.047483
Euro	0.340070	0.353770
Georgian Lari	0.108948	0.108948
Hungarian	0.000943	0.001133
Norwegian Krone	0.027993	0.033193
Romanian Leu	0.055097	0.071947
Russian Ruble	0.004183	0.004183
Slovakia	0.009188	0.019188
Slovenian Euro	0.028266	0.033266
Swiss Franc	0.320705	0.331705
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.192382	0.204382
New Zealand Dollar	0.186452	0.195952
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.219343	0.228343
US Dollars	0.302200	0.306750
US Dollars Mint	0.302700	0.306750
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.002878	0.003679

Chinese Yuan	0.042535	0.046035
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037324	0.040074
Indian Rupee	0.003610	0.004382
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002839	0.003019
Korean Won	0.000246	0.000261
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069639	0.075639
Nepalese Rupee	0.002612	0.002952
Pakistan Rupee	0.001338	0.002108
Philippine Peso	0.005866	0.006166
Singapore Dollar	0.215491	0.225491
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001324	0.001904
Taiwan	0.010107	0.010287
Thai Bhat	0.009410	0.009960
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.806300	0.814388
Egyptian Pound	0.019374	0.022114
Iranian Riyal	0.000085	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000201	0.000261
Jordanian Dinar	0.427118	0.436118
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000102	0.000252
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021217	0.045217
Omani Riyal	0.790443	0.798372
Qatar Riyal	0.083475	0.084333
Saudi Riyal	0.080593	0.081893
Syrian Pound	0.001299	0.001519
Tunisian Dinar	0.105524	0.113524
Turkish Lira	0.043596	0.053441
UAE Dirhams	0.082760	0.083590
Yemeni Riyal	0.000996	0.001076



Business

# Ooredoo Group achieved great success in digital transformation strategy: Humaidi

Annual General Assembly meeting sees an attendance of 92.8% of company's shareholders



KUWAIT: Bader Nasser Al-Humaidi presides over the meeting as Fadi Kavar, Yousuf Al-Sumait and Fahad Al-Saeed look on.

KUWAIT: National Mobile Telecommunications Company K.S.C.P "Ooredoo" presented its achievements and financial results for 2019 during its annual general meeting, which was held at the company's headquarters in Kuwait City yesterday. The meeting was headed by Bader Nasser Al-Humaidi: Board Member representing the Chairman of the Board of Directors. The meeting was attended by Fadi Kavar, Acting Chief Executive at Ooredoo Kuwait, and board members Yousuf Al-Sumait and Fahad Al-Saeed. The Annual General Assembly saw an attendance of 92.8 percent of the shareholders. The company declared that the Board agreed to distribute cash dividends to the company shareholders valued at 50 percent of the nominal value of share, which is equivalent to 50 fils per share on March 31, 2020.

Ooredoo's customer base in Kuwait increased to 2.6 million in 2019, up by 12 percent compared to 2018. Revenues for 2019 were KD 231.3 million, a decrease of 4 percent compared to KD 240.9 million in 2018. EBITDA was strong, increasing 32 percent to KD 72.4 million in 2019, compared to KD 55.0 million in 2018. The increase of 32 percent reflected good operational efficiencies across the business as well as a positive impact of the new IFRS 16 accounting standard.

Board Member Bader Nasser Al-Humaidi: commented: "In 2019, we leveraged our strong digital capabilities to deliver unparalleled user experiences to our customers as we deployed the infrastructure for the next generation of connectivity. Ooredoo

Kuwait (NMTC) reported a steady set of results with net profit for the year increasing by 1 percent to KD 30 million and EBITDA increasing 7 percent to KD 233 million. Our financial performance is testament to our continued investment into the implementation of our digital transformation strategy.

Strong revenue performances in the Maldives and Tunisia, in local currency terms, were offset by intense price competition in Kuwait and challenging macroeconomic environments in Algeria and Tunisia, where the local currency depreciated 2 percent and 10 percent respectively, against the Kuwaiti dinar. Consequently, NMTC reported revenues of KD 634 million in 2019 compared to KD 665 million in the previous year.

Our consolidated customer base at the end of 2019 was a healthy 26 million, as we focused on serving the needs of an increasingly sophisticated and digitally savvy user base with the launch of a number of new services that simplified our user experience while providing a greater degree of flexibility and control. In Kuwait, the implementation of our digital transformation agenda, harnessing the latest technologies to drive efficiency as well as the positive impact from the implementation of IFRS 16 contributed to a 32 percent

increase in EBITDA. In Tunisia, revenues increased 7 percent in local currency terms, as the company intensified its focus on increasing smartphone penetration and driving data usage.

Our performance in Algeria continue to be impacted by challenging economic conditions, intense price competition and currency depreciation.

In Palestine we continued to grow our user base, which was up 3 percent to 1.3 million and focus on cost optimization, resulting in a 13 percent increase in EBITDA to KD 9.0 million.

In the Maldives we reported strong results across the board, with EBITDA increasing 12 percent to KD 22 million, supported by a 5 percent increase in revenues to KD 40 million.



**Ooredoo's customer base in Kuwait jumped to 2.6 million in 2019**

**Ooredoo's operations in 2019**

**Ooredoo - Tunisia**  
Ooredoo's customer base in Tunisia increased by 1 percent to reach 9.2 million customers in 2019, compared to the previous year. The Tunisian dinar depreciated by 10 percent year on year, leading to a decrease in revenues from KD 126.6 million in 2018 to KD 123.1 million in 2019. In local currency terms, revenues were up by 6.8 percent. EBITDA was KD 56.9 million in 2019 compared to KD 49.3 million in 2018.

**Ooredoo - Algeria**

Business in Algeria was negatively impacted by the devaluation of the Algerian dinar, intense price competition and a weak economic environment. Customer base declined by 9 percent to 12.6 million in 2019, compared to 2018. Revenues also decreased to KD 208.7 million in 2019, compared to KD 228.9 million in the previous year. EBITDA was KD 72.4 million in 2019, down from KD 85.3 million in 2018. Algerian dinar depreciated by 2 percent year on year.

**Ooredoo - Palestine**

Ooredoo Palestine customer numbers increased by 3 percent to 1.3 million comparing to previous year. Revenue slightly decreased to KD 30.2 million, compared to KD 30.3 million in 2018. EBITDA was strong, increasing 13 percent to KD 9.0 million in 2019 compared to KD 8.0 million in 2018, driven by operational efficiencies across the business and the implementation of IFRS 16.

**Ooredoo - Maldives**

Ooredoo Maldives reported a 5 percent increase in revenues to KD 40.2 million in 2019, compared to KD 38.2 million in 2018. EBITDA was increased to KD 22.1 million in 2019, an increase of 12 percent compared to KD 19.7 million in 2018. Ooredoo Maldives now serves a total of 405k customers. Post period Ooredoo Maldives was issued a 15 year telecommunications license, encompassing mobile, fixed and internet services, starting as of Feb 1, 2020.



From left Abdulaziz Al-Babtain, Mijbil Al-Ayoub, Yousuf Al-Sumait, Fahad Al-Saeed and Bader Nasser Al-Humaidi



Mohammed Mirza, Mijbil Al-Ayoub and Nazem Al-Ghabra

## Saudis try shock tactics to bring oil war to swift end

LONDON: Saudi Arabia has escalated its oil market conflict with Russia in an attempt to force Russia back to negotiations or compel the United States to intervene and help broker a new agreement.

Saudi Aramco has said it will lift the volume of oil supplied to the market to 12.3 million barrels per day (bpd) next month, which is more than 2.0 million bpd above its current output and 0.3 million bpd above its sustainable capacity. Increasing supply rapidly by withdrawing oil from inventories and announcing it publicly is intended to maximize downward pressure on prices and the pain felt by all oil producers.

It suggests Saudi Arabia is anxious to bring the conflict to a swift resolution and avoid a prolonged volume war that could cripple the country's economy and jeopardize its economic modernization program. The aim is to force Russia back to the negotiating table or compel the United States to intervene and push for negotiations to restart so it can protect vulnerable US shale producers.

Rather than a full-scale nuclear exchange, the idea was that the detonation of one or two warheads aimed at carefully selected targets could relieve tensions,

enable both sides to demonstrate resolve, and shock them into restarting diplomacy. Saudi Arabia's decision to go for rapid escalation suggests the kingdom wants a quick resolution and a return to higher prices rather than a prolonged volume war with a long period of low prices.

**Volume war**

The kingdom is unlikely to want the kind of drawn-out production battle it fought from mid-2014 to the end of 2016, which burned through the kingdom's cash reserves and pushed its economy into recession.

But Riyadh's bid to focus minds in Moscow and Washington also runs the risk that any of the three major players could misjudge the resolve of the others or their willingness to absorb short-term pain to pursue long-term objectives. Saudi Arabia's previous volume wars, such as those launched by oil ministers Zaki Yamani in 1985/86 and Ali Naimi from 2014 to 2016, have often lasted longer and proved more painful than expected. Neither of those two standoffs brought a lasting peace with rival producers. Both ended with the scapegoating and dismissal of the sitting Saudi ministers.

Critically, it is not clear what a new truce and market management agreement between Saudi Arabia and Russia, and implicitly also with US shale producers, would look like. There is no agreement on how to apportion market share between the world's three largest oil producers or on the implied target for oil prices. US producers are, by law, precluded from participating in any such pact.

The contradiction presented by the doubling of US oil production since 2011, while Saudi Arabia's and Russia's output has stagnated remains unresolved.

For at least the last five years, US shale producers have been the market's marginal suppliers, providing a medium term anchor. When prices are buoyant, US shale production climbs rapidly until the market is oversupplied, pushing down prices and driving down output. This leads to slower US production until prices start to recover and the cycle starts again. Efforts by Saudi Arabia and Russia to lift prices have allowed US shale to fill the gap and expand market share. In most years since 2012, shale producers have captured all or almost all the increment in global oil consumption.

This was the case in 2012-2014 and 2018-2019, when Brent crude averaged \$71 per barrel or more. Only when Brent averaged less than \$56 per barrel in 2015-2017 did shale capture less than half of the incremental increase. Brent prices at much below \$55 are clearly unsustainable for shale producers, while Russia, Saudi Arabia and other members of OPEC+ cannot maintain prices much above \$70 before shale production sends them lower. Prices plunged to almost \$31 on Monday.

The \$55 to \$70 range is the long-term consensus expectation for prices over the next five years. In other words, the market expects the economics of US shale to act as a long-term anchor for prices, with the business cycle and OPEC+ production policy providing short-term volatility around this level.



Pump jacks draw crude oil from the Long Beach Oil Field near homes in Signal Hill, California, on March 9, 2020. — AFP

**Price target?**

Top policymakers from Saudi Arabia and other members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) usually insist they are not targeting oil prices. They prefer to talk about stabilizing inventories, balancing supply and demand, or eliminating harmful and unnecessary price fluctuations. But every target for inventories, balancing supply and demand, or reducing harmful volatility also contains

an implicit target for an acceptable price, and by extension an implicit target for an acceptable market share.

Fundamental disagreements over prices and market share caused the three-year pact between Saudi Arabia and Russia to break down last week. Russia was willing to accept a lower price to protect market share. Saudi Arabia wanted a higher price and was ready to cede more market share to obtain it. — Reuters



# IMF calls for 'substantial' stimulus, coordination against coronavirus

## Fund suggests direct payments to workers and businesses

WASHINGTON: The International Monetary Fund called on governments worldwide Monday to join forces and roll out aggressive financial supports for the coronavirus-infected global economy, including direct payments to workers and businesses.

But while several countries have taken steps to cushion the blow to their economies and boost confidence, including the United States, there has been little visible coordination among policymakers like there was at the height of the 2008 global financial crisis.

The rising concern about the global economy has been reflected in the continued collapse of global stock markets, with trillions in value wiped out in recent weeks, a rout that continued Monday. Oil prices have also collapsed. Given the "acute shocks" caused to economies, consumers and businesses, IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath said "policymakers will need to implement substantial targeted fiscal, monetary and financial market measures to help affected households and businesses."

That includes "cash transfers, wage subsidies and tax relief" as well as interest rate cuts and financial market support by central banks. Given the ties between global economies, "the argument for a coordinated, international response is clear," she said in a blog post. The IMF already warned that the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak will slow growth in the world economy to below the 2.9 percent posted last year.

IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said last week the epidemic "is no longer a regional issue, it is a global problem calling for global response."

The virus has shuttered factories, disrupted travel, delayed conferences and sporting events and infected more than 110,000 people worldwide. More than 3,800 people have died.

Gopinath said the impact is seen in production cuts hitting companies across the globe that depend on parts from China, where the outbreak originated, but

also will hit consumption, since people are reluctant to go out and spend money.

### International coordination

Some countries already have taken steps, Gopinath noted. Italy, the country hardest hit in Europe, "has extended tax deadlines," and Korea has introduced wage subsidies.

Rome on Monday announced it would lock down the entire country to contain the epidemic as the death toll reached 463. Italy is preparing a 7.5 billion euro (\$8.6 billion) package aimed at helping out the devastated



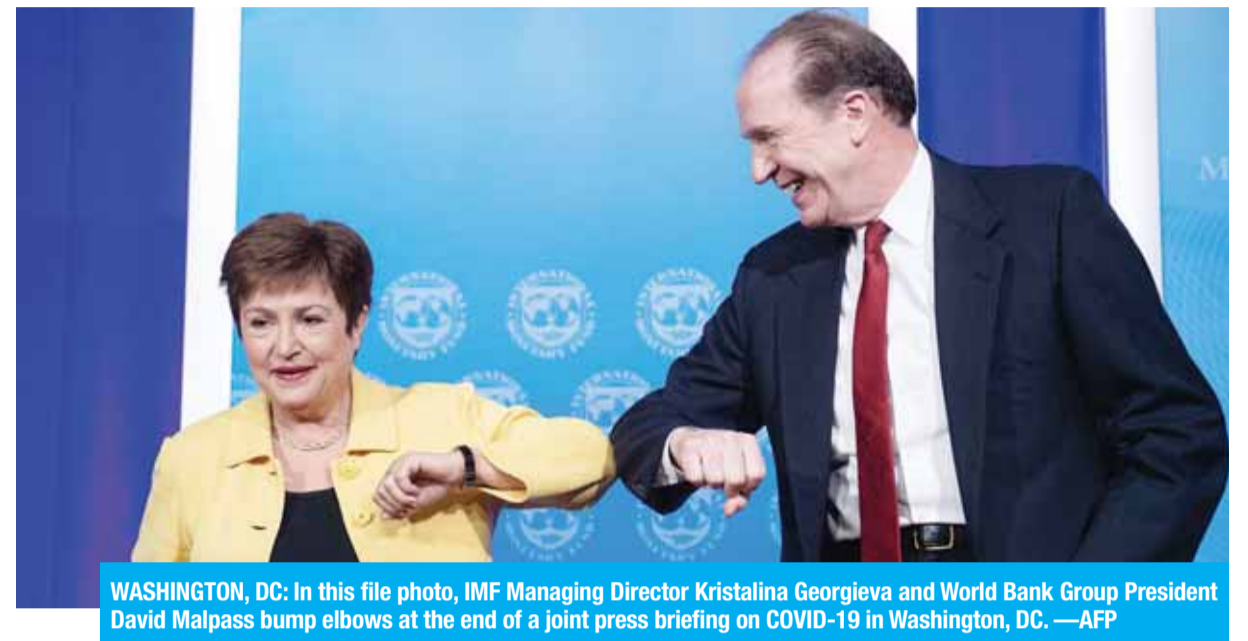
### Fed pumps cash into markets

tourism industry and other sectors especially hard-hit by disruptions in global supply chains.

The US Federal Reserve last week announced an emergency interest rate cut, and on Monday significantly increased its cash injections into money markets with \$150 billion a day in short-term loans to ensure ample liquidity amid the virus uncertainty.

That was just what Gopinath called for, saying such moves "can lift confidence and support financial markets." And she noted that "actions by large central banks (are) also generating favorable spillovers for vulnerable countries."

But government spending measures to support eco-



WASHINGTON, DC: In this file photo, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva and World Bank Group President David Malpass bump elbows at the end of a joint press briefing on COVID-19 in Washington, DC. —AFP

nomie activity have been slow in coming and economists are warning that rapid action is crucial to have the biggest impact. Germany announced an investment package worth 3 billion euros a year but it does not kick in until 2021 and is spread over three years. US President Donald Trump signed a bill with \$8 billion in emergency funding, but that largely goes to medical equipment, medication and testing supplies for state and local governments.

According to media reports, White House advisers are preparing a menu of options for Trump that include paid sick leave and emergency help for small businesses. French President Emmanuel Macron called for European Union leaders to hold a videoconference

Tuesday aimed at coordinating their response to the coronavirus outbreak on the continent.

### Financial hit exposes weak spots

The IMF's Gopinath said governments can help workers who are laid off by business closures by extending and increasing unemployment insurance, as well as helping those that do not have paid sick leave. She also warned that the economic concerns can ripple into financial markets, causing borrowing costs to rise. And that in turn will "expose financial vulnerabilities that have accumulated during years of low interest rates, leading to a heightened risk that debt cannot be rolled over." — AFP

## Sao Paulo exchange plummets more than 12%

SAO PAULO: Brazil's Sao Paulo exchange plummeted more than 12 percent Monday as global markets recoiled from the coronavirus epidemic and a deep plunge in oil prices.

The Ibovespa index, which had fallen by 4 percent on Friday, dropped more than 10 percent in early trading, forcing a temporary suspension. Trading was suspended for 30 minutes after the sudden plunge triggered automatic circuit breakers, and stocks stabilized briefly following the resumption before slipping again to close at over 12 percent down.

Shares of state-controlled oil giant Petrobras lost about 30 percent after global oil prices crashed in the biggest drop since the 1991 Gulf War. Domestic airlines Gol and Azul dropped 17 percent.

The Brazilian real continued to lose ground against the dollar, closing at 4.73, a two percent decrease compared to Friday. Meanwhile, Chile's peso closed at an all-time low of 842 against the dollar. The Santiago stock exchange also fell 4.58 percent to 4,035.54 points by the end of trading.

Chile's losses were exacerbated by a drop in the price of copper-of which the country is the world's biggest producer-to \$2.48 per pound on the London Metal Exchange, its lowest in two years.

Continuing the global trend, the Buenos Aires stock exchange opened down by more than 9.0 percent, before closing the day down by 13.75 percent. Argentina on Saturday recorded the first death from the coronavirus in Latin America. It was a similar story in



SAO PAULO: Brazil's Sao Paulo exchange plummeted more than 12 per cent on Monday as global markets recoiled from the coronavirus epidemic and a deep plunge in oil prices. — AFP

Mexico, where the stock exchange suffered its worst single day crash since 2008 and the peso dropped to a three-year low against the dollar at close.

The stock exchange plunged 6.42 percent to close at 38,730.56 points.

The peso depreciated by 4.83 percent at close compared to Friday, dropping to 21.17 according to the central bank. Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro on Monday minimized the risk of the coronavirus, which has killed nearly 4,000 people in more than 60 countries.

"In my opinion, that virus's destructive power is overstated. Maybe it is even potentially being exaggerated for political reasons," he said to a crowd of Brazilian supporters in Miami, where he is visiting in an effort to drum up foreign investment.

Official figures released last week showed the Brazilian economy slowed in President Jair Bolsonaro's first year in office. "The scenario will remain volatile. Every day it's more difficult to foresee market behavior, with risks everywhere. The coronavirus is advancing in the West, we already have bad news on the Brazilian economy and we are beginning to see the impact on Western economies," said analyst Henrique Esteter of Guide investment consultants.

Brazil's economy grew 1.1 percent in 2019, down from 1.3 percent in each of the previous two years, the national statistics institute, IBGE, reported. Growth for the fourth quarter came in at 0.5 percent. When Bolsonaro took office, analysts forecast economic growth of around 2.5 percent for the year. — AFP

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani declined to comment on how US sanctions have impacted the nation's oil industry.

The White House declined to comment and referred questions to the US State Department, which did not respond to a request.

### Shutting off the tap

At least 40 of about 160 oil rigs in Iran remain idle or under repair, according to a Reuters review of information from two industry sources, drilling companies' websites and quarterly financial results.

Just under half of Iranian rigs are operated by the National Iranian Drilling Company, a subsidiary of state energy giant the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC). NIOC has 73 onshore and offshore oil rigs - but 17 of them generate "zero income" and six rigs are only partially active, a source familiar with the company's operations said. That compared to five inactive rigs in 2017, and four in 2016.

Neither NIOC nor NIOC replied to Reuters' requests for comment. The second-largest Iranian driller, private firm North Drilling Company (NDC), owns 12 rigs. Three of them are inactive. NDC did not respond to a request for comment.

The remaining 75 rigs are owned by small drilling operations firms. Reuters was unable to verify the status of all the privately-owned rigs, but two industry sources said that 20 of those rigs had been idled. — Reuters

## Gulf Bank winner claims cash prize up to 12 times his salary

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced the winner of its second monthly Salary Account draw of the year. This month's lucky winner, Rashed Tawfeeq Saleh Al-Saleh, will take home a cash prize of up to 12 times his salary. The Salary Account draw took place at Gulf Bank's Head Office in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce.

With the 2020 Kuwaiti Salary Offer, new customers who transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank are automatically enrolled in the monthly draws, giving them the chance to win cash prizes of up to 12 times their salary. Customers are also enrolled in a yearly draw of Kuwait's

largest salary prize, a cash prize of up to 100 times the winner's salary.

Gulf Bank's Salary Account also gives new customers the opportunity to receive either a KD 100 cash gift upon transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank, or an interest-free loan of up to KD 15,000. Customers must have a minimum salary of KD 500 and are eligible for the offer following their first salary transfer to Gulf Bank. Customers can also enjoy additional benefits like a Visa or MasterCard credit card free of charge for a year. They can also apply for a loan of up to KD 70,000 with a repayment period of 15 years, or a consumer loan of up to KD 25,000.



## Musk dismisses astronomy fears over Starlink

WASHINGTON: SpaceX founder Elon Musk on Monday dismissed scientists' concerns that his company's Starlink constellation of internet satellites would obscure the view of the night sky, predicting the network "will not cause any impact whatsoever in astronomical discoveries."

Musk is trying to seize control of the future internet space market and has already sent about 300 Starlink satellites into orbit-with plans to grow that number, potentially up to 42,000.

Scientists raised objections after the initial batch appeared as a train of bright lights shortly after they launched last year, arguing they were a death knell for both optical and radio astronomy.

Speaking at a satellite internet conference in the capital Washington, Musk said his company had already taken measures to reduce their reflectivity. "I am confident that we will not cause any impact whatsoever in astronomical discoveries, zero," he said. "That's my prediction, we will take corrective action if it's above zero."

He said the issue only occurred as the satellites were "tumbling" as they raised their orbit, and that once they achieved

their final flight path, the issue went away.

"I've not met someone who can tell me where all of them are," said Musk. "So it can't be that big of a deal." But he added SpaceX was working with the science community to reduce the potential for reflection, including painting the antennas black instead of white, and placing a sunshade on the satellites.

The system is due to go live in the northern United States and Canada later this year and expand to global coverage by 2021. Musk wouldn't be drawn on the cost to users, nor on precise speed, but said it would be enough to stream high definition movies and to play high-end video games without noticeable lag time.

He added that the user terminal would look like a "UFO on a stick" and would not require a specialist to install, unlike other home satellite dishes.

"The box will have just two instructions and they can be done in either order: point at sky, plug in," he said. The dish would then automatically align itself to a target satellite. Musk said the network was primarily targeted at a niche market of three to four percent of users who live in remote areas, and was therefore not a threat to traditional telecommunications companies. He also dismissed the potential impact of next-generation 5G networks on his business model, saying that technology was excellent for high density cities but didn't have the range to do well in rural settings. By contrast, space internet only works well in sparsely populated environments, he said. — AFP

## US sanctions have idled a quarter of Iranian oil rigs

LONDON: At least a quarter of Iran's oil rigs are out of action as US sanctions strangle the Islamic Republic's vital oil industry, according to a Reuters review of financial documents and industry sources, dealing a potentially long-term blow to its oil industry. The lack of rig activity could damage the OPEC member's capacity to produce oil from older fields, which require continuous pumping to maintain pressure and output. That would make it difficult for Iran to raise production back to pre-sanction levels if tensions ease with the United States.

The U.S. sanctions aim to curtail Tehran's nuclear ambitions and regional influence. They have forced Iran to slash its oil output by half since early 2018 to less than 2 million barrels per day (bpd) because refineries worldwide have stopped buying its oil.

Plummeting production and exports have deepened a recession in the country and choked the government of its main source of income. Reduced activity has forced mass layoffs in Iran's oil sector.

The sharp fall in oil prices so far in 2020 -

due to the impact of the coronavirus epidemic on global demand - will exacerbate the pain for Iran's economy, which is also dealing with one of the biggest outbreaks of the disease outside China. Some of Iran's oil rigs are out of action because they can't be repaired. Sanctions have also made it more difficult and expensive for Iran to buy and import spare parts.

Iran relies entirely on imported parts for its rigs, said Mohsen Mihandoust, a director at Iran's Society of Petroleum Engineers. In a decade of work in oil and gas drilling in Iran, Mihandoust has never seen a spare part that was not imported, he said, and most came from the United States or Europe.

"We are still dependent on other countries," Mihandoust said in an interview. "It is like learning to work with a TV remote control, but still having no clue how a television is made."

Sanctions had driven up the costs of spare parts as much as five-fold, making it not feasible to repair the rigs, he added. Iran bought dozens of new and second-hand Chinese rigs in the last decade, but the core parts of those were still American, two industry sources said.

Chinese oil rigs suited Iranian needs for the years it was under sanctions, but they "lacked the long-lasting quality of US and European rigs," said Reza Banimahd, a businessman in Tehran who works on energy projects. A spokesperson for the office of



## Health

# China turns to therapy, counseling hotlines amid virus lockdown

## Patients worried about slow results after medical treatment

BEIJING: Therapists, counseling hotlines and online wellness groups in China are struggling to cope with surging demand for emotional help as the coronavirus outbreak upends normal life. A shortage of mental health providers is exacerbating the problem in the country where unprecedented measures to contain the deadly outbreak have left tens of millions in lockdown and many more fearful to go outside.

"Every day we have about 20 callers. Some have watched their relatives perish without access to medicine in the early days of the virus, when there weren't enough hospital beds," said a psychologist surnamed Xu, who works at a hospital in Wuhan, the epicenter of the epidemic. "Most calls are from coronavirus patients worried about slow results after medical treatment or those anxious about being infected." As the crisis drags on and quarantine orders remain in place, many are struggling with the uncertainty over how long they will be kept in isolation.

That is fuelling boredom, loneliness, and anger, said Chee Ng, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Melbourne.

"The longer the quarantine, the worse the mental health outcomes," Ng said. While frontline workers have borne the brunt of the mental stress caused by the virus, which has infected more than 80,000 people in China, many others are feeling the strain. Students stuck at home taking online courses, pregnant women and couples grappling with a lack of childcare are all reaching out for help to vent their fears and frustration.

China's National Health Commission said more than 300 hotlines have been set up by universities, local gov-

ernments and mental health organizations. But China has just 2.2 psychiatrists for every 100,000 people, according to the World Health Organization. Amid a severe shortage of trained professionals, the government has only been able to muster a team of 415 counselors to go to Hubei to serve an army of health workers and tens of thousands of patients.

Volunteers at several hotlines in Beijing and Shanghai told AFP that they were not given crisis intervention training, making them vulnerable to secondary trauma. "Some volunteers cry after their session is over," said Ming Yue, a trainee psychiatrist who volunteers with a nationwide hotline run by Beijing Normal University. "They feel sad and overwhelmed." Xu the psychologist told AFP she does half an hour of meditation every day before starting work at the hospital. "That's how I cope," she said. "Otherwise, the emotional burden is too heavy."



### Shortage of mental health providers

#### 'Tired and irritable'

Doctors and nurses treating virus patients are particularly vulnerable to mental stress—especially if they have to take care of sick colleagues. "During the SARS outbreak, nearly 89 percent of health workers reported some form of psychological impact," Ng said, referring to another coronavirus in China in 2002-2003. More than 3,400 health workers in China had been infected with COVID-19, according to officials. And state media propaganda—which portrays health workers as heroes and martyrs—could actually prevent them from getting the help they need, Ng warned.

"When you are supposed to live a certain expectation of someone who is strong, committed and dedicated as a



WUHAN: Medical staff speak with a patient infected by the COVID-19 coronavirus at Red Cross Hospital in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province yesterday. — AFP

health profession—it is hard to really reveal the vulnerabilities that they experience," he said. Du Mingjun, secretary general of Hubei Psychological Consultant Association, said he has only received a handful of calls from frontline doctors and nurses. "Many who call say they feel tired and irritable," Du said. "But many are too busy or too shy to seek help."

The shortage of trained professionals has led to online groups with hundreds taking part. Therapists share

recorded meditations, stories and soothing music. "It feels like someone has hit the pause button on life, and it's unclear when they'll hit play again," said one of the participants from Wenzhou, an eastern city also under lockdown. Even after the outbreak is over, however, the mental scars from the ordeal could linger for a long time, Ng warned. "Studies have shown that even at three months or one year (after the epidemic) the psychological impact persists," he said.— AFP

## 'Worse than the virus': Anxiety over coronavirus grips US

NEW YORK: As Michael Rance watched his childhood neighborhood of Kirkland in Washington State become the focal point for coronavirus in the United States, he stocked up on four weeks of food and bought seeds to grow on his balcony. After the number of deaths in a Kirkland nursing home rose to 14 and an uptick of cases in New York, Rance became more worried and is planning to buy another month's worth of supplies in case the city is placed on a lockdown. "It's scary," said Rance, 26, who works for a financial literacy non-profit and moved to New York last month. "This is a natural disaster that humans don't really have control over."

Health professionals and psychologists have noted an increase in the levels of fear as coronavirus, or COVID-19, spreads globally, dominating conversations among friends and family. A light cough or sneeze in public now turns heads. Major European stock markets dived more than 7% on Monday, and US and Japanese indexes over 5% after Saudi Arabia launched an oil price war with Russia that sent investors spooked by the coronavirus outbreak running for the exits.

"You know what's worse than the virus - the anxiety," New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said at a news conference on Saturday, where he declared a state of emergency for New York. Physicians are receiving patients concerned they have the virus when instead they have a mild illness like a cold. The Anxiety and Depression Association of America has set up a resource page on coronavirus anxiety to offer tips and strategies from mental health professionals.

#### Stay rational

"Just this week, I've probably had three to four people without any prompting from me say: 'Hey should I be worrying about this?'" said Robert McLean, an internal medicine physician and rheumatologist at Northeast Medical Group of Yale New Haven Health and president of the American College of Physicians. "We want people to stay as calm and rational as they can be," McLean told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The coronavirus is stoking anxiety because there so many unknowns and currently no approved vaccines or treatments, said Maggie Mulqueen, a psychologist in private practice in Brookline, Massachusetts.

She said the virus has come up in "every single session" in the past two weeks. The number of confirmed US cases of coronavirus reached nearly 550 on Sunday, including 22 deaths. Worldwide, more than 100,000 cases have been, causing over 3,600 deaths. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advised Americans to prepare for a domestic acceleration of the virus while President Donald Trump has repeatedly assured Americans that the risk in the United States was "very low."

"One of the ways to reduce anxiety is to ask what is the worst thing that could happen?" Mulqueen told the Foundation. "Usually it's not life or death. But this time, I can't give that reassurance." Rance said after watching the coronavirus in Wuhan, China, preparing for the worst has helped him cope with his fear. "It's something I'm trying to deal with as reasonably as I can but not let it affect my thoughts at every single moment," Rance said. So, how often does he in fact think about the virus? "About a dozen times a day," he said.— Reuters

## Coronavirus can be mild, say patients

COPENHAGEN: Coronavirus did not compare with 45-year-old Dane Jakob Tage Ramlyng's worst bouts of flu. It was mild. His greatest concern was not passing it on. The journalist, who was isolated in Copenhagen away from his family until he was declared virus free by doctors, was the first person in Denmark to test positive for coronavirus after returning home from a holiday in northern Italy.

"I had very few symptoms, and it was only headache, stomach illness and cough and pain in the throat. It took like five or six days to get rid of all the symptoms," he said. "I was never hospitalised. I didn't receive any medicine, because I was fine, it was not like it was very bad for me, as it is for many other people."

Coronavirus has been most dangerous for the elderly and those with underlying health conditions. Knowing it can be fatal for some made Ramlyng particularly anxious about passing it on.

"I don't want to be the one that makes other people sick. So that was my greatest concern and I think that is the greatest concern for everybody, that we don't want this thing to spread more than possible."

"I prefer to stay home, a week or two more, or even longer, if I can prevent anyone from getting this disease." Nil Monro, 22, a Spaniard who defines himself as young and healthy, tested positive for coronavirus after returning to Barcelona from Milan Fashion Week.



MILAN: A man wearing a respiratory mask as part of precautionary measures against the spread of the new COVID-19 coronavirus, travels in the underground metro in Milan yesterday after Italy imposed unprecedented national restrictions to control the deadly coronavirus. — AFP

## Sicily funeral goes in trouble

ROME: Almost 50 people in Sicily faced stiff fines yesterday for disobeying Italian rules and holding a funeral in the middle of the novel coronavirus outbreak, media reports said.

The sombre procession was moving through the streets of Porto Empedocle on the island's southwestern coast

when the carabinieri police were alerted by a passerby, the AGI news agency said.

The 48 mourners will face prosecution in Agrigento, a small city near by, where each one can be fined 206 euros (\$234) and even jailed for up to three months. Italy yesterday unveiled unprecedented social containment measures aimed at halting the spread of a disease that has killed 463 people and infected more than 9,000 in just over three weeks.

These include a ban on public gathering. The funeral ban falls under rules that also cover weddings. Sicily has so far registered only 54 infections and no deaths.— AFP

## Coronavirus: Latest developments worldwide

PARIS: Here are the latest developments in the coronavirus crisis:

#### More than 4,000 deaths

Since the novel coronavirus first emerged in late December 2019, more than 115,124 cases have been recorded in 105 countries and territories, killing 4,067 people, according to an AFP tally compiled at around 1200 GMT on Tuesday based on official sources. More than 15,000 cases have been counted in Europe. The worst affected countries are mainland China, (80,754 cases, of which 3,136 deaths), Italy (9,172 cases, 463 deaths), South Korea (7,513 cases, 54 deaths), Iran (8,042 cases, 291 deaths) and France (1,412 cases, 25 deaths).

Mongolia and northern Cyprus announce their first cases. In China, more than 70 percent of those who have been infected have been cured since the epidemic broke out.

#### Italians 'stay at home'

Italy tells its 60 million people to "stay at home" from Tuesday in a government decree which allows travel only for the most urgent work or health reasons. Riots in at least 10 Italian jails over measures aimed at preventing the virus entering the prison system leave several inmates dead. The Vatican announces the closure of Saint Peter's Square and the basilica until April 3. The football league is suspended until April 3. Austria bans entry for people from Italy, unless they have a doctor's certificate.

#### Restrictions eased in China

The central Chinese province of Hubei, the epicenter of the coronavirus, eases travel restrictions on its inhabitants. China's leader Xi Jinping, on a visit to the provincial capital Wuhan, says the epidemic has been "basically curbed" there. Year-on-year car sales in China plunge by 78.4 percent in February.

#### Grand Princess docks

The first passengers disembark on Monday afternoon from the cruise ship Grand Princess after it docks at California's port of Oakland in the San Francisco Bay after days stranded at sea after infections were detected aboard.

#### Politicians infected

Five members of the US Congress, including at least two Republicans who have mixed with President Donald Trump, are in voluntary confinement after being exposed to the coronavirus. Trump himself has not been tested. In France, where five parliamentarians have been infected, Culture Minister Franck Riester contracts the coronavirus and is staying at home.

#### Cancellations, postponements

In Ireland, St Patrick's Day parades scheduled on March 17 across the country are cancelled, as is the parade in the US city of Boston. All matches in the world judo championships are cancelled until April 30. Romania and Slovenia respectively ban gatherings of more than 1,000 and 100 people. Barcelona's Champions League round of 16 return match against Napoli on March 18 will be played behind closed doors.

#### Israel gets tougher

Israel imposes a two-week quarantine on all arrivals. The measure, already in force for several European countries, has so far spared countries such as the United States.— AFP



# An app a day: China embraces tele-medicine to keep the doctor away

SHANGHAI: As the coronavirus crisis rages, a Chinese woman working in Paris takes to a computer to consult a doctor thousands of kilometers away in Shanghai about a worrisome cough and headache. The physician says she probably has the common cold and prescribes rest, in a cyber-consultation that embodies the huge push the coronavirus epidemic has given tele-medicine.

As millions of Chinese heed official calls to reduce person-to-person encounters, are fearful of entering hospitals, or simply can't reach clinics due to virus-related transport restrictions, tele-medicine is booming. Online platforms for consulting doctors - offered by tech leaders Tencent, Alibaba and a range of other providers - have reported a surge in demand since the virus emerged in January. The popular health app of Ping An Insurance Group, one of the world's biggest insurers, has been visited 11 billion times since the outbreak erupted, the company said.

New users of the platform have multiplied ten-fold and it now counts at least 315 million customers who make 729,000 inquiries per day at clinics nationwide. Wedoctor, an app backed by Tencent,

launched a special coronavirus platform on January 23. It said that by the end of February thousands of doctors had provided nearly 1.5 million consultations through the program. Ali Health meanwhile, a healthcare app provided by Alibaba, said even as early as January 31 that the platform had more than 1,000 doctors participating and over 3,000 patients per hour seeking consultations.

### 'Long-term change'

Shanghai's Xuhui Central Hospital allowed journalists to sit in on online doctor visits Monday. The facility began experimenting with tele-medicine in 2015 and last month received a government licence to operate what it calls a "cloud hospital". Internet consultations have grown from virtually nil on February 25 to 5,293 as of Sunday. "This will be a long-term change in medicine," said Zhou Jian, a top official with the hospital. "This changes the model."

Users download an app, then join a queue of patients. After a brief consultation, doctors give medical advice which may include merely rest, consulting a specialist - which also can be done online - or prescription medication. To curb the coronavirus's

spread, China's government has been promoting stay-at-home options like tele-commuting and online education, and late last month began allowing the use of national medical insurance to cover prescriptions issued via the web.

At the Shanghai hospital, medications are paid for online using one of China's ubiquitous e-payment platforms, then delivered to patients free of charge, sometimes the same day, officials said. "It doesn't matter where you are, as long as you have a mobile phone and a signal, you can have a face-to-face medical consultation with our doctors," said Zhou.

Most e-consultations at the hospital have nothing to do with coronavirus symptoms. Dozens of doctors across a range of disciplines, from pediatrics to cardiology to dermatology, are available, taking turns at a cluster of cubicles equipped with computers and the necessary software. Hospital officials said the benefits are many, including easing the burden on hospital staff, streamlining processes and allowing the elderly or infirm to avoid an unnecessary trek outside.

But many elderly Chinese unaccustomed to using apps often have trouble, said car-



SHANGHAI: A medical worker wearing protective clothing as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 coronavirus, stands at Xuhui District Hospital in Shanghai. — AFP

diologist Wang Dewen, 75, after completing a series of online chats with patients. "Older people are not as proficient with operating a mobile phone. That's probably the biggest difficulty," he said. However, if tele-medicine is to grab a foothold any-

where, China is a good bet. From messaging to buying groceries and meals, paying bills, making investments and seeking out romantic partners, the country has embraced the use of mobile technologies like no other nation. — AFP

CLINIC

PAGE







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**Scope of clinical Practice.**

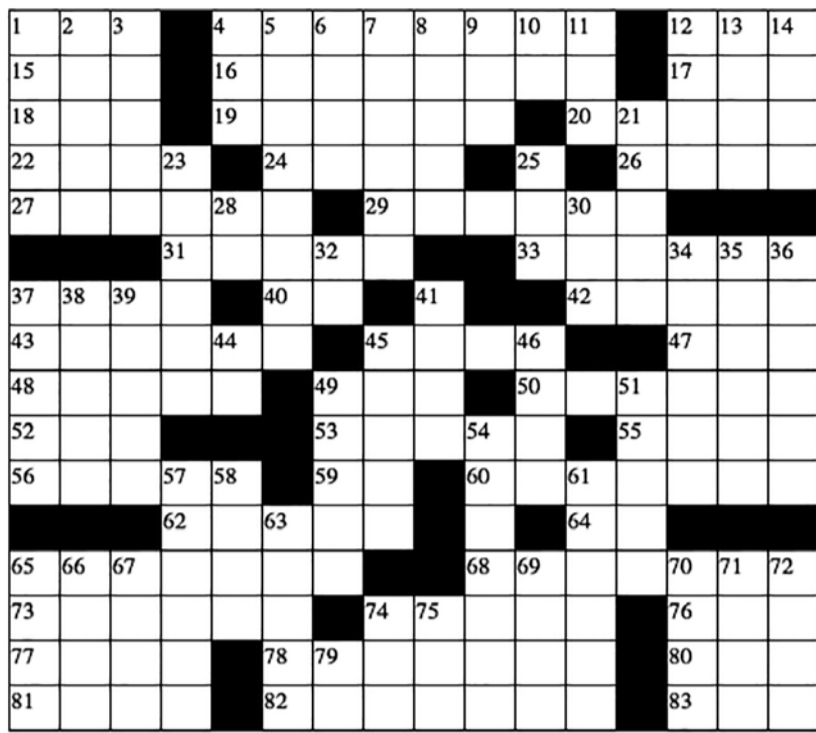
- ◆ Bariatric surgeries.
- ◆ Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- ◆ Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- ◆ G.I. surgeries.
- ◆ Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- ◆ Anal surgeries.

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Stars

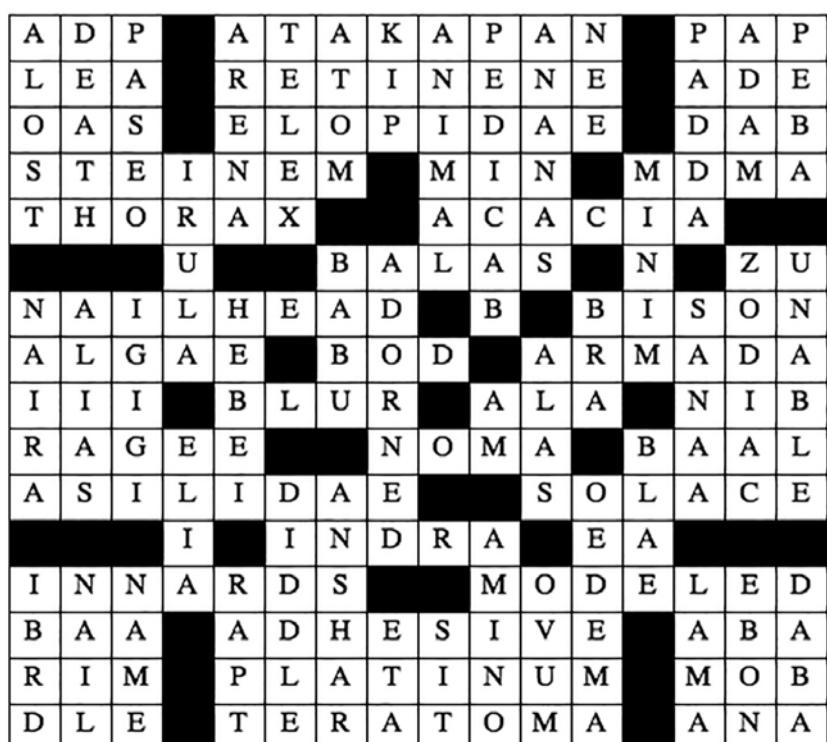
CROSSWORD 2455



- ACROSS**
- A doctor's degree in dental surgery.
  - Of or relating to or involved in the practice of aiding the memory.
  - A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
  - A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
  - (Italian cookery) Squid prepared as food.
  - A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
  - (prefix) Reverse of or absence of.
  - United States writer (born in Lebanon) (1883-1931).
  - State in northeastern India.
  - (Old Testament) The eldest son of Isaac who would have inherited the Covenant that God made with Abraham and that Abraham passed on to Isaac.
  - Lacking excess flesh.
  - A Lolosh language.
  - A bachelor's degree in architecture.
  - Stout-bodied insect with large membranous wings.
  - English monk and scholar (672-735).
  - An Anatolian language.
  - The capital and chief port of Qatar.
  - The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
  - A morn whose fertile portion resembles a bell and is attached to the stipe only at the top.
  - (of linens or clothes) Smoothed with a hot iron.
  - Come into the possession of something concrete or abstract.
  - A row of unravelled stitches.
  - Mar or spoil the appearance of.
  - (informal) Of the highest quality.
  - Strong lightweight wood of the balsa tree used especially for floats.
  - A feeling of strong eagerness (usually in favor of a person or cause).
  - Green algae common in freshwater lakes of limestone districts.
  - A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
  - North American republic containing 50 states - 48 conterminous states in North America plus Alaska in northwest North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean.
  - An impure form of quartz consisting of banded chalcidony.
  - The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
  - Chinese fruit having a thin brittle shell enclosing a sweet jellylike pulp and a single seed.
  - Marked by extreme anger.
  - The cardinal number that is the sum of eight and one.
  - Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
  - Used of milk and milk products from which the cream has been removed.
  - The final stages of an extended process of negotiation.
  - One of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
  - Located on a side.
  - Orange liqueur with lemon juice and brandy.
  - Of southern Europe.

- DOWN**
- The brightest star in Cygnus.
  - Worthless material that should be removed.
  - The capital and largest city of Yemen.
  - One millionth of a gram.
  - Something resembling the head of a nail that is used as an ornamental device.
  - A river in central Europe that arises in northwestern Czechoslovakia and flows northward through Germany to empty into the North Sea.
  - A percussion instrument consisting of a pair of hollow pieces of wood or bone (usually held between the thumb and fingers) that are made to click together (as by Spanish dancers) in rhythm with the dance.
  - Of or relating to Oman or its people.
  - (British) Your grandmother.
  - A heavy brittle metallic element of the platinum group.
  - An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
  - A covering to disguise or conceal the face.
  - Pompous or pretentious talk or writing.
  - Fallow deer.
  - A river that rises in central Germany and flows north to join the Elbe River.
  - Showing a high degree of refinement and the assurance that comes from wide social experience.
  - A conspicuous disparity or difference as between two figures.
  - A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
  - A room equipped with toilet facilities.
  - A logarithmic unit of sound intensity.
  - Wild sheep of semidesert regions in central Asia.
  - A medicinal drug used to evoke vomiting (especially in cases of drug overdose or poisoning).
  - A chain of connected ideas or passages or objects so arranged that each member is closely related to the preceding and following members (especially a series of patristic comments elucidating Christian dogma).
  - Any of various herbaceous plants of the genus *Atriplex* that thrive in deserts and salt marshes.
  - Any of several attractive evergreen shrubs of Australia grown for their glossy deep green foliage and flowers in rich blues and intense violets.
  - Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
  - Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).
  - Lower in esteem.
  - Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls.
  - Make less active or intense.
  - A weekday on which no feast is celebrated.
  - Bourbon with bitters and Pernod and sugar served with lemon peel.
  - Usually elongate cluster of flowers along the main stem in which the flowers at the base open first.
  - Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
  - Someone who earn wages in return for their labor.
  - Yellow-fever mosquitos.
  - (Sumerian) Water god and god of wisdom.
  - A town in north central Oklahoma.
  - Acute ulceration of the mucous membranes of the mouth or genitals.
  - (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
  - Oval reproductive body of a fowl (especially a hen) used as food.
  - Slightly wet.
  - A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
  - How long something has existed.
  - A hard malleable ductile silvery metallic element that is resistant to corrosion.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Make sure that you're living consciously at this time, Aries. It could be that you're going through a period of denial and simply refusing to see the truth of the situation. Open up your eyes to the world around you so you can invite in joy and compassion. Don't be satisfied with superficial interactions that don't really satisfy you emotionally and intellectually.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

In some ways, today could seem like a day of reckoning for you, Taurus. You might look in the mirror and see things that you really aren't very happy with. Perhaps you harbor a sense of shame based on past events that still linger in your mind. Don't let this shadow of insecurity continue to dwell in your life. Work through these feelings and identify the root of the problem.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Let today serve as a reminder of the importance of love, Gemini. Don't just think of it as a commodity you fight for and conquer with conniving tricks and strategic dating tactics. Realize that love is evident in how you see the world: it's a seed in you. The more you see love in the people around you, even in the heart of a stranger, the more you'll be blessed with its radiant light.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You may be feeling a strong sense of guilt now because of something you did in an effort to feed your ego, Cancer. Be aware of how your actions have affected others and apologize. Guilt is basically a useless emotion that you should get rid of as quickly as possible. Don't let this feeling keep you from opening up your heart to restore it to its original innocence.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Pure wisdom is an important quality for you to aspire to on this day, Leo. Know that the wisdom you seek should come from a point of calm knowing and strength as opposed to a frantic, loud, and outlandish display for attention. You'll be recognized accordingly. Be aware that the more knowledge you spread to others, the more it will grow for everyone to profit by and share.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Why keep fighting a fight that you know you can't win, Virgo? Why keep trying to fool yourself and others into thinking that you have all the answers when you're only aware of the tip of the iceberg? The mass of knowledge lies well beneath the surface. Instead of fighting, offer to surrender. At this point, others will be much more willing to quench your thirst for truth. The key for you is to listen.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Anger is apt to stir inside you today, Libra, so beware of any actions that might manifest as a result of this powerful feeling. Do what you can to find the deep source of this anger. If it's an obvious injustice, see the situation as an opportunity for change, and work to reform the policy that led to this breach of fairness and equality.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Show some gratitude to the people around you today, Scorpio. The seat of your personality is very strong at this time, and you're confident to your core. Mix this feeling with the service-oriented sensitivity of the day that asks us to do things for others. Keep in mind that a gesture as simple as a smile and word of appreciation can be healing for another person - and you.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 18)

Think of today as a restorative time for yourself in which you can come to a point of greater ease and comfort, Sagittarius. Trust yourself and the people around you. Open your eyes to the reality of the situation at hand. If you're currently working through some major life changes, have faith that whatever happens will work out to your benefit.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You may find yourself gravitating toward solid, grounded things, Capricorn, in hopes that these will provide you with the stability that you lack. A key word for you today is patience. Learn how to wait without becoming restless or grumpy. What you will discover after a while is that the stability you seek is actually sitting right there inside of you, and has been all along.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Try to come to a place of serenity today in which you free yourself from desire and jealousy, Aquarius. It's important that you take time to recognize the incredible growth that can spring from this position of calm and pure satisfaction. Rid yourself of the excess baggage that you cling to as some sort of support or means of comfort. The less you carry, the more you free up your arms to create.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

The key word for you today is boundaries, Pisces, so think for a minute about what this means to you. It's time to have a serious talk with yourself. Set some limits and be honest about drawing the line. Your health, your state of mind, and your relationships with others all depend on your taking the initiative to know when to say no in certain situations.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Oliver Twist

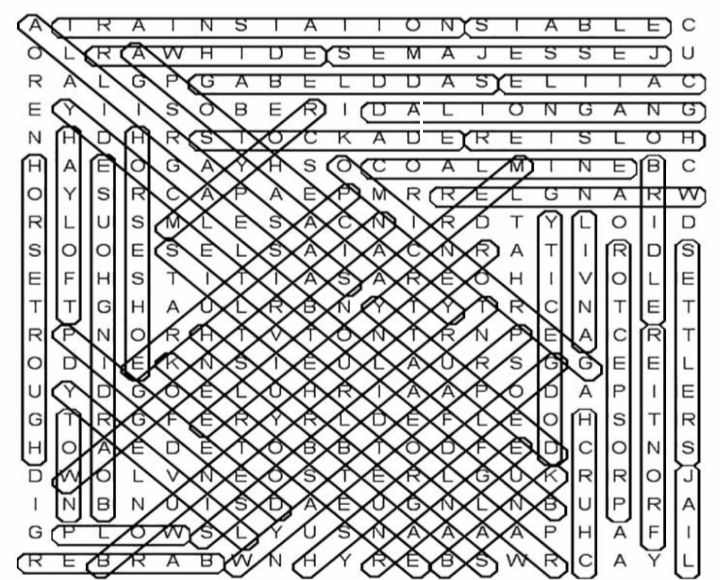
Find and circle all of the words and names from *Oliver Twist*. The remaining letters spell the title of the first chapter of *Oliver Twist*.



- |               |              |              |              |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| AGNES FLEMING | DODGER       | LIMBKINS     | ORPHAN       |
| BARNEY        | DUFF         | LOCKET       | PICKPOCKET   |
| BEADLE        | FAGIN        | LONDON       | PISTOL       |
| BATHERS       | GALLOWES     | LOSBERNE     | ROSE MAYLIE  |
| BOLTER        | GAMFIELD     | MAGISTRATE   | SIKES        |
| BRITLES       | GILES        | MONKS        | SOWERBERRY   |
| BROWNLOW      | GRIMWIG      | MR. FANG     | SURGEON      |
| BULL'S-EYE    | GRUEL        | MRS. BEDWIN  | TOBY CRACKIT |
| BUMBLE        | HANDKERCHIEF | MRS. CORNEY  | TOM CHITLING |
| CHARLEY BATES | HARRY MAYLIE | MRS. MANN    | TRAPS        |
| CHARLOTTE     | HOUSEBREAKER | NANCY        | UNDERTAKER   |
| COACH         | INHERITANCE  | NOAH         | WAISTCOAT    |
| COURT         | JAIL         | OLD SALLY    | WILL         |
| DICKENS       | LEEFORD      | OLIVER TWIST | WORKHOUSE    |
| DOCTOR        |              |              |              |

Yesterday's Solution

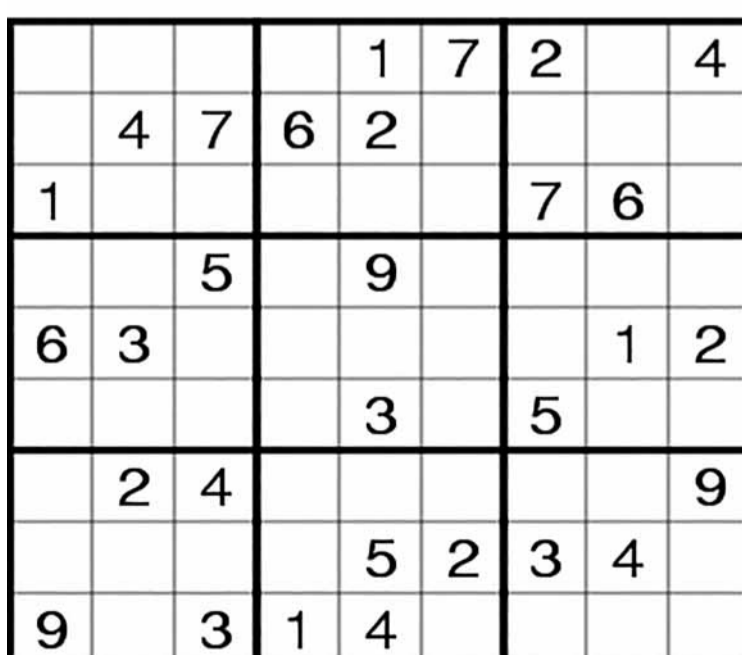
Old West 3



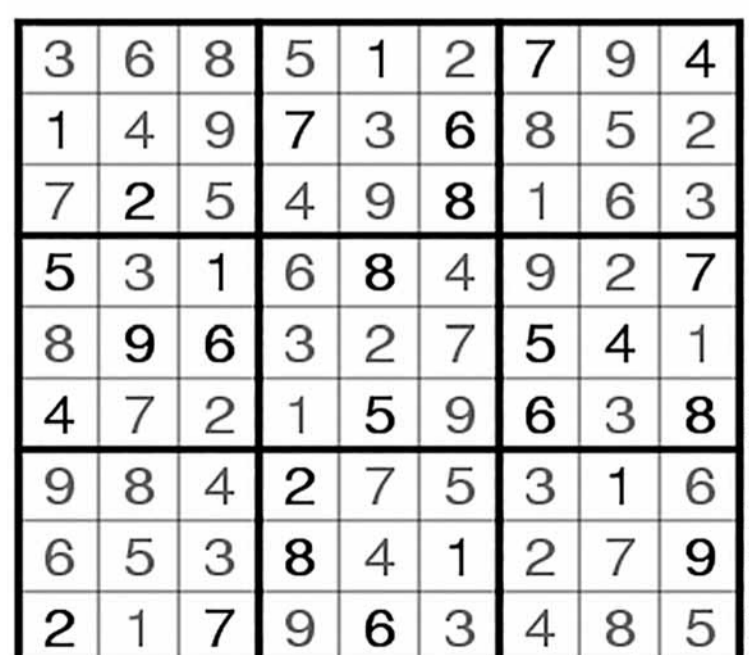
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|-------------------|--------------|------------|---------------|
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| APOTHECARY        | DODGE CITY   | MAYOR      | SILVER DOLLAR |
| BANK              | FRONTIER     | MERCANTILE | STABLE        |
| BARBER            | GERONIMO     | PASTURE    | STOCKADE      |
| BOARDING HOUSE    | GOLD RUSH    | PIG FEED   | TOWN          |
| BOUNTY HUNTER     | HAYLOFT      | PLOW       | TRAIN BOSS    |
| BRIDLE            | HOLSTER      | PROSPECTOR | TRAIN STATION |
| BUFFALO BILL CODY | HORSE TROUGH | RANGE      | WAGON TRAIN   |
| CATTLE            | HORSESHOE    | RAWHIDE    | WRANGLER      |
| CHURCH            | JAIL         | SADDLEBAG  | WYATT EARP    |
| COAL MINE         | JESSE JAMES  | SAGEBRUSH  |               |
| DALTON GANG       | KEROSENE     | SASPARILLA |               |

The hidden message is: COURAGE IS BEING SCARED TO DEATH AND SADDLING UP ANYWAY

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution





# Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2020



Revelers dance as they celebrate Holi, the spring festival of colors in Allahabad yesterday. — AFP

## Egypt's fragile tourism sector braces for virus impact



A handout picture released by the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities shows tourists visiting the Temple of Karnak complex in Egypt's southern city of Luxor. — AFP photos

Just when Egypt's crucial tourism sector was recovering from years of political tumult and jihadist attacks, the industry finds itself bracing for a potential buffeting by the new coronavirus. The guesthouse where Bassam Hamimi works in archaeologically rich southern Egypt usually hosts numerous tourists from China, but since the outbreak of the deadly virus, far fewer have arrived. "There were heaps more Chinese before. But since the coronavirus appeared in China, their absence has been felt here," Hamimi told AFP recently in a Nubian village near Aswan, 900 kilometers (560 miles) south of Cairo, a popular destination for tourists.

Many flights that would have carried visitors to Egypt have been cancelled amid efforts to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus. The virus had infected over 110,000 people worldwide and killed more than 3,800 as of Monday, disrupting travel and delivering a blow to the global economy far beyond its Chinese epicentre. Hamimi said he was concerned that a dip in tourists visiting Pharaonic temples would hit his income, a worry shared by many in the country.

Egypt has not been spared the virus' spread, reporting on Sunday the country's and Africa's first fatality from the illness, a 60-year-old German tourist who died in the Red Sea resort town of Hurghada. At the end of February, several countries, including France and Canada, announced infections among people who had visited Egypt. The north African nation had reported 55 infections by Monday, a number that includes 45 from the cruise ship "A-Sara", docked near the southern city of Luxor, the beating heart



Tourists, some wearing protective face masks, walk outside Luxor Temple as they visit the archaeological site in Egypt's southern city of Luxor.

of Pharaonic tourism.

"Preventative measures that countries have taken with regards to travel because of the virus will for sure affect the tourism sector" in Egypt, Adela Ragab, a former deputy tourism minister, told AFP. But, she added, "it's hard to predict what will happen. We can really (start to) assess the situation if Easter bookings are affected in April."

### Brave face

Egypt's tourism industry—key to the country's economy—has shown signs of recovery in recent years, after the 2011 revolution, a 2013 coup and the 2015 downing of a Russian airliner by the Islamic State group hit visitor arrivals. Though still far off the 14.7 million recorded in 2010, Egypt welcomed 11.3 million arrivals in 2018, compared with just 5.3 million in 2016.

Revenues from the sector grew to \$12.6 billion between 2018 and 2019, compared to \$10 billion the previous year, according to the central bank. Egyptian authorities have taken measures to forestall the spread of the virus. State television has broadcast numerous images of the disinfection of Cairo's metro and trains. The government is remaining upbeat for now. "Tourist activities are proceeding normally in Luxor... as thousands of visitors have flocked onto its different archaeological sites," the tourism ministry said Monday. Speaking to reporters in Luxor on Sunday alongside Health Minister Hala Zayed, Tourism Minister Khaled El-Enany said tourists were still arriving in droves. "You have seen the numbers yourselves, the buses, the queues: tourism is still very stable in Luxor... everything is going well so far," he said.

### Cruise ship quarantine

Former president of the Federation of Chambers of Tourism, Ilhami Al-Zayyat, told AFP there had been "a slight uptick in cancellations so far from countries" including China and Italy, another country heavily affected by the virus. "But we still have Americans, British, Australians and South Americans coming," he said.

He added, however, that he expected fewer tourists from Arab countries, "especially those coming from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia", which have placed restrictions on travellers from Egypt due to the virus. Egyptian authorities had on Saturday reported moving 45 suspected cases — 33 passengers and 12 crew—from the stricken "A-Sara" cruise ship into isolation on land, without specifying what happened to the others aboard.

Matt Swider, an American cruise passenger who tested positive for the virus, documented on Twitter his transfer to a north coast hospital aboard a military jet, saying the staff had been "extremely friendly". The scores of foreign tourists on the ship, including American, French and Indian nationals, as well as Egyptian crew, had been quarantined aboard the ship, passengers on board told AFP. Health Minister Zayed said passengers who tested negative were free to leave after 24 hours, though two travellers AFP spoke to on Monday said they were still in quarantine. On Monday, 340 tourists coming from Greece aboard a Maltese ship were tested for the virus.—AFP



A view of Nile cruise ships and feluccas moored off the river bank of Egypt's southern city of Luxor.



Departing tourists walk with their luggage before boarding an airport shuttle bus in Egypt's southern city of Luxor.



Tourists arrive to visit Luxor Temple in Egypt's southern city of Luxor.



## Lifestyle | Gossip

**Billie Eilish** delivers body shaming message at Miami concert

**B**illie Eilish delivered a strong message about body shaming as she kicked off her world tour. The 18-year-old pop star - who has previously admitted she wears baggy clothes to avoid being sexualized - started her tour in Miami, where she addressed the issue of body shaming in a video message. The award-winning star said: "If what I wear is comfortable, I am not a woman. If I shed the layers, I am a slut." Billie then asked: "Though you've never seen my body, you still judge me for it. Why?" The powerful video mes-

sage was played towards the end of her set at the American Airlines Arena, and the chart-topping star was seen removing numerous layers of clothing until she was only wearing a bra. Then, she sunk under a black liquid and disappeared from view. Last year, meanwhile, Billie admitted she prefers to wear baggy clothes because she hates being judged by her appearance. She explained: "That's why I wear baggy clothes ... Nobody can have an opinion because they haven't seen what's underneath. Nobody can be like, 'she's slim-thick,' 'she's not slim-thick,' 'she's

got a flat ass,' 'she's got a fat ass.' No one can say any of that because they don't know." Billie also suggested that female stars are victims of a double standard. She said: "If I was a guy and I was wearing these baggy clothes, nobody would bat an eye. 'There's people out there saying, 'Dress like a girl for once! Wear tight clothes you'd be much prettier and your career would be so much better!' No it wouldn't. It literally would not."

**Led Zeppelin** win copyright dispute over Stairway To Heaven

**L**ed Zeppelin have won a long-running copyright dispute over the opening riff in 'Stairway To Heaven'. The iconic rock band were accused in 2014 of stealing the song's opening riff off a song called 'Taurus' by a band called 'Spirit' - but a US appeals court has now ruled that was not the case. The 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco has upheld a 2016 trial verdict, which concluded that the band did not steal the riff. The court ruling represents a significant triumph for Led Zeppelin stars Robert Plant and Jimmy Page - who wrote the song - as they would have been required to pay millions of dollars in damages if they'd lost in the courts. The case was re-opened in 2018, when the US Circuit Court of Appeals determined that the trial judge had made a series of errors in the original trial, which led to a new

hearing being ordered. Last year, meanwhile, Jimmy Page confirmed talks had been staged about a Led Zeppelin movie. The 76-year-old guitarist revealed there are "always" discussions regarding a potential big screen project focused on the 'Whole Lotta Love' rockers. Speaking in September, he shared: "It's been discussed. There are always people trying to make money out of Led Zeppelin. In Siberia and LA, there's probably a meeting going on right now." However, the music icon insisted he isn't all that enthusiastic about the potential feature film, saying the band's music tells fans everything they need to know about their story. He added: "What would I want to do a film for? Listen to the albums - it's all on there."

**Miley Cyrus** cancels performance at bushfire benefit concert

**M**iley Cyrus has cancelled her appearance at an Australian bushfire benefit concert due to coronavirus. The 27-year-old pop singer was poised to perform at the star-studded event at the Lakeside Stadium in Melbourne on March 13 - but Miley has withdrawn from the event, prompting the organizers to cancel the concert altogether. Miley wrote on Twitter: "Australia: Due to the recommendations of local, state, federal and international government authorities, including the Center for Disease Control, to reduce potential health risks in response to the current global health crisis, we are no longer traveling to Aus for the show. 'I am so disappointed to not be there, but I have to do what is right to protect the health and safety of my band and crew. I will still be making a donation to help the victims of the Australian bush fire. I'm sorry to miss everyone in Australia, but I will be back soon.' (sic)" In response to Miley's announcement, TEG Dainty - the concert organizer - confirmed the whole gig had now been cancelled, with ticket holders set to receive refunds. The company said: "We are very sad that Miley Cyrus has announced that she will not be travelling to Melbourne and that as a result the World Tour Bushfire Relief concert at Lakeside Stadium on Friday 13 March can no longer go ahead. All fans will receive a full refund and will be contacted by Ticketek shortly. 'World Tour's Saturday night show with Robbie Williams will still be going ahead, and we look forward to bringing Melbourne a fantastic night of entertainment. Robbie is already on his way to Australia."

**Duran Duran** set to headline BST Hyde Park

**D**uran Duran are set to headline BST Hyde Park 2020. The iconic band will close this year's BST Hyde Park in London, and Simon Le Bon is already looking forward to performing at "one of the world's greatest inner city locations" on July 12. He said: "I look at film of The Rolling Stones at Hyde Park back in '69 and think of all the great acts who've performed there since. 'It really is an honor to add the name Duran Duran to that roster, and to play our music at one of the world's greatest inner city locations at BST Hyde Park.'" John Taylor is also excited about the prospect of performing in London later this year. He shared: "It will be a special day for us, and, hopefully for our audience, who have followed us faithfully for so many years now. Please, come celebrate our long

and ragged journey!" Another of the big-name stars set to appear at BST Hyde Park is Gwen Stefani. And John is excited to be performing at the same event as the Grammy-winning star and his long-time showbiz pal Nile Rodgers. He said: "On July 16, 1980, Duran Duran debuted its latest line-up at the Rum Runner club in Birmingham." He added: "It's almost unbelievable to us that forty years later we are celebrating this anniversary with a show at BST Hyde Park. Making it all the more special is the presence of our old friend and collaborator Nile Rodgers, and Gwen Stefani, a favorite gal pal of ours since No Doubt." Tickets for American Express presents BST Hyde Park are set to go on general sale on March 13.

**Pussycat Dolls** praise Lopez for fighting ageism

**T**he Pussycat Dolls have praised Jennifer Lopez for helping to fight ageism in the music business. The chart-topping girl group - which features Carmit Bachar, Ashley Roberts, Nicole Scherzinger, Jessica Sutta and Kimberly Wyatt - have recently faced criticism over their flirty stage outfits, but the group believes Jennifer has helped to make their skimpy costumes and steamy routines more acceptable. Jessica told Australia's Daily Telegraph newspaper: "There's more acceptance now. 'You've got J-Lo at 50 who's looking at fabulous as ever, and Lizzo who is all about self-love and owning it. It's a new era, and there's no rules anymore.'" Nicole, 41, thinks it's important that female performers feel empowered when they're on stage. She said: "I mean,

if there is a time to be more provocative, it's when you're grown up, when you're comfortable in your skin and you fully accept yourself, right?" Meanwhile, Kimberly recently fired back at critics of the group, insisting there is nothing wrong with their choice of stage clothes. The pop star said she's more than happy for her daughters Willow, five, and Maple, two, to watch her sing. Kimberly explained: "They love it, they love seeing it and I love bringing them. '[I love] teaching them what it means to be a Pussycat Doll and own your space as a female. 'I think it's a really positive and important message for my girls to see and understand what that means.'"

**Peter Rabbit 2** release delayed due to coronavirus

**T**he release of 'Peter Rabbit 2: The Runaway' has been delayed by five months due to the coronavirus outbreak. According to The Hollywood Reporter, Sony Pictures has taken the decision to move the global release of the children's film to August 7 instead of the planned European release date of March 27 and April 3 in the US. It is the second major release to be impacted by the pandemic, as the release of the latest James Bond film 'No Time To Die' was pushed back from April until November last week. Sony made the decision because 'Peter Rabbit 2' is an internationally-driven title and also to avoid competition from 'Trolls World Tour', which was moved forward by Dreamworks to plug the gap left by 007. 'Peter Rabbit 2' - which is based on Beatrix Potter's literary character - features the voices

of James Corden, Elizabeth Debicki and Margot Robbie and also stars Domhnall Gleeson, Rose Byrne and David Oyelowo. The postponement comes amid major cinematic disruption as the virus spreads across



Europe. Italy has closed all its cinemas as part of a national quarantine, with others shutting in France and Slovakia. It was confirmed last week by Universal that the 25th Bond film - Daniel Craig's final appearance as the iconic spy - had been pushed back by seven months due to the coronavirus. A statement read: "MGM, Universal and Bond producers, Michael G. Wilson and Barbara Broccoli, announced yesterday that after careful consideration and thorough evaluation of the global theatrical marketplace, the release of NO TIME TO DIE will be postponed until November 2020. 'The film will be released in the UK on November 12, 2020 with worldwide release dates to follow, including the US launch on November 25, 2020. (sic)"

**John Boyega** teams up with Netflix for African film project

**J**ohn Boyega has teamed up with Netflix to develop non-English language films centered on West and East Africa. The 'Star Wars' actor's UpperRoom Productions will collaborate with the streaming giant to "develop film projects based on stories, cast, characters, crew, literary properties, mythology, screenplays and/or other elements in or around African countries." David Kosse, Vice President of International Film at Netflix, said: "Africa has a rich history in storytelling, and for Netflix, this partnership with John and UpperRoom presents an opportunity to further our investment in the continent while bringing unique African stories to our members both in Africa and around the world." Boyega has played the role of Finn in the 'Star Wars' sequel trilogy and has appeared in other flicks such as

'Attack the Block' and 'Pacific Rim: Uprising'. He will also serve as an executive producer on the South African thriller 'God Is Good' and is overseeing the project's soundtrack through his UpperRoom Records label. The 27-year-old said: "I am



thrilled to partner with Netflix to develop a slate of non-English language feature films focused on African stories, and my team and I are excited to develop original material. We are proud to grow this arm of our business with a company that shares our vision." It is the latest sign that Netflix is upping its African content, with two other African originals, South African teen drama 'Blood & Water' and animated series 'Mama K's Team 4', set to premiere later this year. Boyega has previously spoke about his hopes to create a franchise as big as 'Star Wars'. He said: "I've just been trying to gather up stories that I know that would be significant of solid interest. But also support directors who are developing original stories. What is the next Star Wars? What is the next franchise?" - Bang Showbiz



Lifestyle | Features

# In Senegal, an all-female car race defies expectations

Women in Senegal's seaside capital Dakar on Sunday competed in an all-female car race, a rarity in the conservative West African country. After a 13-year hiatus, 21 women took turns to race two Peugeot 206s on the asphalt of the capital's Senghor stadium, in the Mousso Trophy, previously run from 2002 to 2007. Celia Cisse, who works in communications, organized the event on Sunday, after growing up watching her mother race cars. "Some sponsors didn't believe in this project, but we succeeded," Cisse said, smiling. "Sport is a way to awaken women's leadership," she added. On Sunday, the women—some of them veterans of the old competition—circled the cars around a makeshift circuit marked by plastic cones. "It's a feminist race," said Awa Dionne, one of the veterans, and a vice president of Senegal's motorcycle federation. "In Dakar, if a driver is overtaken by a woman, he will do everything he can to get ahead of her again, sometimes risking his life," she added.

Khadija Ndiaye Sarr, another driver, said that taking part in the race was a way of proving that women can do what men do. "It means that we have the same abilities as them, she said. Despite the oddity of such an event in the country, few turned out to watch the dented Peugeots plastered with stickers do their laps.



But the thin crowd was curious and enthusiastic. "The fact that this is a women's race is a bit of a change of pace," said mechanic Babacar Ba. Ibrahima, a 10-year-old boy sporting a tattered football jersey, was watching the race wide-eyed. "I'm not used to it, men are the ones who usually drive," he said. — AFP

**Aby Fall, one of the oldest competitors, leaves her car after competing in the 7th edition of the Mousso Trophy women's car race marking the International Women's Day in Dakar at the Leopold Sedar Senghore stadium. — AFP**

## 'Onward' tops N America box office amid unsure virus impact

As the film industry warily watched for any impact from the coronavirus, a new Pixar animation "Onward" topped the North American box office this weekend, but with one of the lowest starts of any Pixar/Disney film. The family-oriented movie took in an estimated \$40 mil-



lion for the Friday-to-Sunday period, somewhat below projections, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported. Its international take of \$28 million was also well under expectations. But as Variety noted, the virus has had a sharp impact around the globe, with many theaters closed in such major markets as China and South Korea.

Media analyst Paul Dergarabedian said that while overall US viewership was down

for the weekend, the virus seemed to have had "zero impact" there. "Onward" has received positive reviews, with an 86-point score on the Rotten Tomatoes website. It tells the story of two teenage elves (voiced by Tom Holland and Chris Pratt) who go on a quest to find the magic that might help bring back their late father. In second place, down one spot from last week, was Universal's thriller "The Invisible Man," at \$15.2 million. Elisabeth Moss plays the ex-girlfriend of a man (Oliver Jackson-Cohen) who seems to return to haunt her after supposedly committing suicide.

Warner Bros.' new sports drama "The Way Back" opened in third place, taking in \$8.5 million. Ben Affleck, who has spoken frankly about his own struggles with drinking, has drawn critical praise for his portrayal of an alcoholic construction worker who is called on to coach the basketball team at his former high school. Fourth place went to Paramount's adventure comedy "Sonic the Hedgehog," at \$8 million. Jim Carrey stars (though not as the title character) in the video game-based film. And in fifth spot was 20th Century's "The Call of the Wild," with Harrison Ford, at \$7 million. The story is loosely based on the Jack London classic of survival in the far North. Rounding out the top 10 were:

- "Emma" (\$5 million)
- "Bad Boys for Life" (\$3.1 million)
- "Birds of Prey" (\$2.2 million)
- "Impractical Jokers: The Movie" (\$1.8 million)
- "My Hero Academia: Heroes Rising" (\$1.5 million). — AFP



File photo shows people dressed as Smurfs, a Belgian comic franchise centered on a fictional colony of small, blue, human-like creatures who live in mushroom-shaped houses in the forest, attend a world record gathering of Smurfs on March 7, 2020, in Landerneau, western France. — AFP

## French mayor defends Smurf rally after outcry over virus

The mayor of a small French town yesterday defended hosting a record-breaking gathering of 3,500 people dressed as Smurfs at the weekend, after accusations that the event increased the risks of spreading the coronavirus. "We must not stop living... it was the chance to say that we are alive," mayor Patrick Leclerc of Landerneau in western France told AFP. The gathering came a day before France banned all gatherings of more than 1,000 in a bid to contain the spread of the virus, which has infected 1,412 people and killed 25 in the country. The Smurf rally drew criticism particularly from the media in Italy, which is battling Europe's most intense outbreak, where La Repubblica newspaper described the rally as "potentially a very dangerous viral bomb".

Fans of the hit Belgian cartoon about a

colony of blue human-like creatures living in houses shaped like mushrooms descended on Saturday on the Breton town to break the world record for a gathering of Smurfs. Leclerc insisted that the revellers, who painted their hands and faces blue and sported white pointy hats, had violated no ban and were a necessary antidote to an "ambient gloom". "We've been preparing for a month," one of the Smurfs, who gave her name as Isabelle, told AFP at Saturday's event. "We got our costumes from all the shops in the area and we figured that a bit of fun would do us all good at the moment." Italian media disagreed, with Il Secolo XIX newspaper calling it an "irresponsible move" that could significantly increase the risk of contagion. — AFP

### Bizarre News

#### Mum wants to change son's birthday

A mum wants to change her son's birthday to a more convenient date. The woman - who has another older son - insisted her baby being born on Boxing Day (December 26) means making it a special day can be tough with all the festivities and time with both sets of grandparents. Writing on Mumsnet, she said: "Would I be unreasonable to change DS' birthday to a couple of days later, say the 28th of December? "We would be at home and all the Christmas presents would be unpacked/put away, everything would be open again so we could go to softplay/lunch/museum/whatever HE wants to do, and we would have control over the day with it being in our house so could make it special, no pressure on him."

Chinese Academy of Sciences conservation biologist Yibo Hu and colleague Fuwen Wei. Yibo Hu said: "To conserve the genetic uniqueness of the two species, we should avoid their interbreeding in captivity. "Interbreeding between species may harm the genetic adaptations already established for their local habitat environment."



#### 8-foot beehive found in living room ceiling

A huge eight-foot beehive had to be removed from an apartment's living room ceiling. A property owner in Richmond, Virginia had to call out a wildlife control company after reporting bees buzzing through the ducts. Virginia Wildlife Management and Control owner Rich Perry told the Charlotte Observer: "They called me up a few days ago and said: 'There are bees still coming out through the duct work. "We used saws to cut a 6-foot opening the ceiling, and we kept having to make the hole bigger. The hive just kept going and going." Fortunately, the apartment was unoccupied but Perry revealed the hive - while also "not fully occupied" - was big enough for around 150,000 bees. He added: "This thing was humongous and it was inside the building, which is extremely unusual. "We've dealt with hives before on the outsides of homes, in outside walls, but never inside the ceiling."



#### Snake swallows whole beach towel

A snake swallowed an entire beach towel. The greedy pet carpet python - which is named Monty Python - was brought into an Australian animal hospital when they realized she had swallowed the whole towel. The Small Animal Specialist Hospital said on Instagram: "A flexible endoscope was placed down Monty's gastrointestinal tract, which allowed us to visualize the end of the towel sitting in her stomach. "With assistance from our internal medicine team, very long forceps were placed through the endoscope and used to grasp the towel." The post added: "It was smiles all round and we are happy to report that both Monty and the beach towel have lived to see another day."



#### Lottery ticket almost ended up in storage

A couple almost locked their winning lottery ticket in storage. British Columbia couple Robert Walters and Lois Gueret were in the middle of a big move, and very nearly put their unscratched Celebrate 2020 ticket - which won them over \$375,000 - in a box set for their storage unit. Gueret told lottery officials: "Robert found the unscratched ticket and handed it to me, and it easily could've ended up in storage and gone expired. "It's a moving day miracle that it didn't." Walters added: "We'll be paying off some debt, but definitely we'll be considering a move again, this time somewhere with land."



#### Red pandas aren't just one species

Red pandas are actually two distinct species. The bushy-tailed endangered animals - which are found in Asian high forests and feed on bamboo - are not a single species, according to a comprehensive genetic study. Scientists have spotted substantial divergences between two species - Himalayan red pandas and Chinese red pandas - in three genetic markers after an analysis of DNA from 65 of the mammals. The study - which was published in the Science Advances journal - was led by



#### Deer crashes through bank window

A deer crashed into a local bank while dashing through a Vermont town. A group of deer were spotted running through downtown Randolph, before one of the animals jumped through a window of the Bar Harbor Bank and caused a scene in an office. Employee Lisa Allard told New England Cable News: "It was unbelievable. "The deer just thrashed around, jumped all over the desk and furniture, and jumped back out the window." Lisa revealed her colleague wasn't in his office at the time of the accidental break-in, and she suggested the deer might have been confused by the reflection of snow and trees in the window.



#### Mum forgets kids on the school run

A mum did the school run - but forgot to take her children. The woman - who shared the hilarious moment on social media - realized her mistake en route to school, and had to turn back to pick up her kids. She laughed: "I'm driving to school without my kids. I'm taking the kids to school and I don't even have them in the car. "I have to go back and pick them up. I can't believe I left my kids. "I got in the car and left. Oh my god I'm such an idiot. I was half asleep this morning. Where are my kids?" The video was reshared on Twitter, and followers couldn't get enough of the mum's oversight. One viewer wrote: "When you be on autopilot...it's ridiculous the s\*\*\* you miss lmaoo. (sic) Another joked: "She said hmh you guys are pretty quiet this morning." — Bang Showbiz

## Shipwreck diving to help boost Greek tourism

Greece aims to exploit untapped tourism revenue by allowing diving for post-19th century shipwrecks in the near future. Tourism Minister Harry Theocharis said yesterday as his country is already enjoying growth in the key sector. In an interview with AFP, Theocharis said tourists would over the next few years be allowed to explore wrecks that were off limits before.

The minister announced the plans as the government forecast an increase of 10 percent in visitor revenues this year. Shipwreck tourism is not part of the 2020 revenue estimate. "We will liberalize the creation of diving parks. We will allow diving in shipwrecks over 50 years old, which are currently not allowed," Harry Theocharis told AFP in an interview.

A bill would be introduced "within a month" to open shipwrecks "after 1860" and until 1970 to divers, he said. No details were given yesterday, but the Greek seabed holds a large number of shipwrecks from World War I and World War II, including the Britannic, fleet mate of the Titanic, a British hospital ship sunk in 1916 near the island of Kea. As Greece slowly emerges from a decade-long financial crisis it relies heavily on tourism to boost economic growth and accelerate job creation.

The sector accounts for about a quarter of the country's gross domestic product and employs around 20 percent of the total workforce. The ministry earlier said tourism revenues in 2019 grew by 12 percent at 18.1 billion euros (\$20 billion) from about 16 billion in 2018. It expects arrivals will increase by five percent in 2020 from last year when they were 31 million, up 3.6 percent from the previous year.

#### 'Untapped potential'

Greece currently draws over three times more tourists than its 10.8 million residents, but Athens still has "a lot of untapped potential," the minister said yesterday. Shortly after the government took power in July the sector suffered a blow with the collapse of British travel giant Thomas Cook, which left thousands of tourists stranded on the Greek islands. Theocharis said there was an immediate impact of over 120 million euros in unpaid invoices to Greek operators, and another 500 million euros in lost contracts. Over 3,000 employees in Greece were also affected, losing seasonal jobs a month early, the minister said.

"Given the issues that arose during the year, it's obvious that we are relieved" by the 2019 results, he said, adding that negotiations with airlines and other operators had "effectively covered all 1.6 million airline seats" lost. Theocharis acknowledges "strain in the infrastructure" of some successful island destinations, but insists Greece is "nowhere near the kind of (congestion) issues other destinations are currently facing."

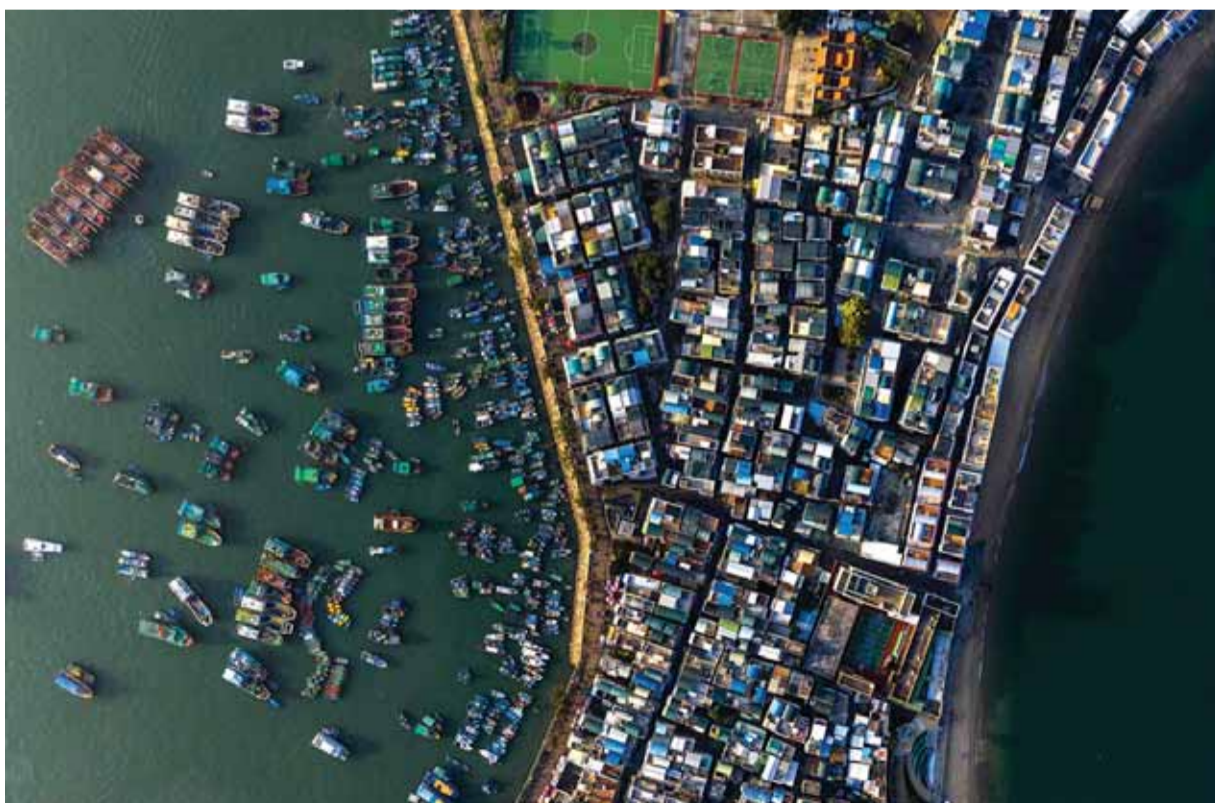
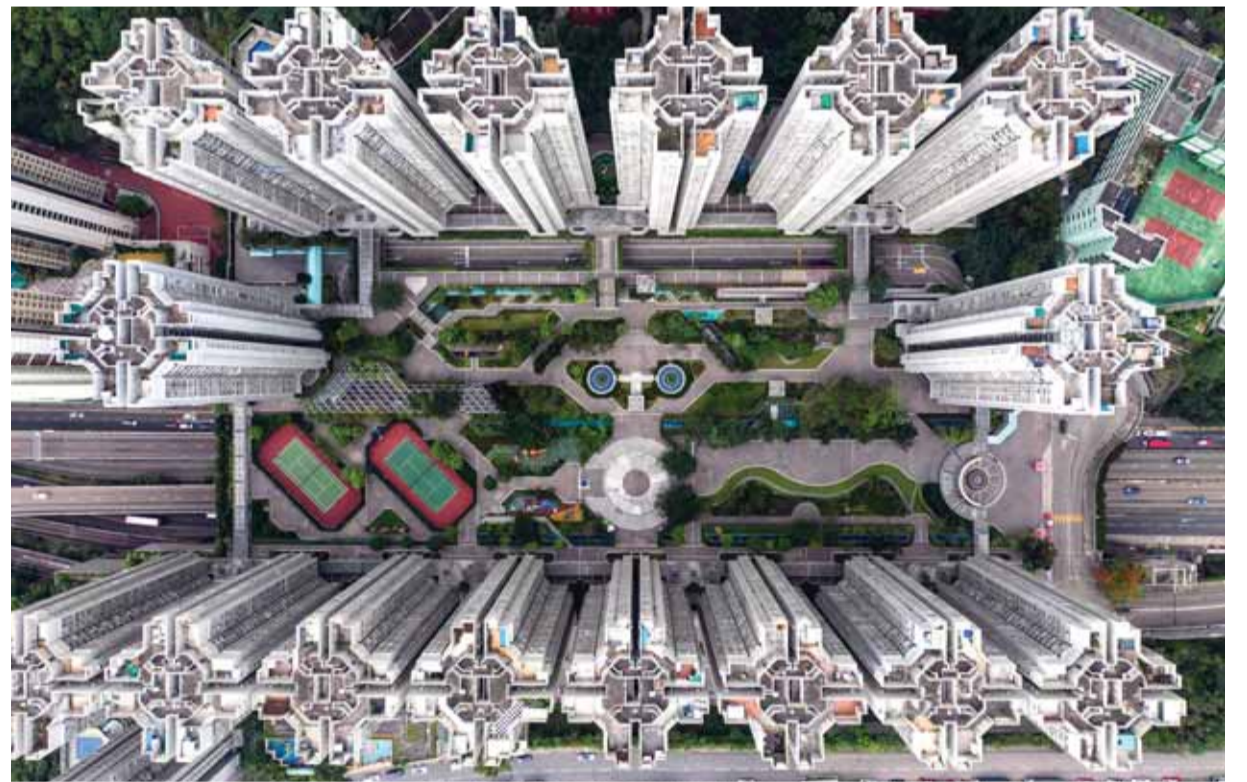
For top island destinations such as Santorini, he says officials are "working to establish a berth allocation system which is more granular... to create incentives or disincentives to spread out (cruise ship) flows," he says. Theocharis and other ministers travel to Paris on Tuesday in a business delegation headed by Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis to attract investment to Greece.

#### 'Play it safer'

The eight-billion-euro project involving residences, hotels, shopping centers and cultural venues, has been delayed for years, but the government is hopeful construction will begin this year. Greece's gaming regulator last week selected US operator Mohegan Gaming and Entertainment for a new casino that is part of the complex, one of the steps needed to get the project moving.

"Some investors want to play it safer. For those, a big proportion of the investing community, they need to see it happening before they take the risk," Theocharis said. "When we see the first bulldozers (at Hellinikon), it will be a significant milestone (showing) that we're open for business." — AFP







# Classifieds

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

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## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY NIGHT:** Rather cold with light to moderate south easterly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

**BY DAY:** Relatively hot with light variable wind to light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 06 - 28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.	SFC. CHART 10/03/2020 1200 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	28 °C	18 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	30 °C	11 °C			
ABDALY	32 °C	12 °C			
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C			
JAHRA	30 °C	15 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	27 °C	14 °C			
SALMIYAH	25 °C	21 °C			
AHMADI	24 °C	19 °C			
NUWAISIB	28 °C	15 °C			
WAFRA	30 °C	12 °C			
SALMY	29 °C	15 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	03/11	Relatively hot and some scattered clouds will appear	30 °C	11 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 28 km/h
Thursday	03/12	Relatively hot and Partly cloudy	31 °C	12 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 26 km/h
Friday	03/13	Relatively hot and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain later on	31 °C	13 °C	SE	12 - 45 km/h
Saturday	03/14	Relatively hot and Cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	30 °C	12 °C	SE	20 - 50 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:44
Sunrise	06:03
Zuhr	11:58
Asr	15:21
Sunset	17:54
Isha	19:10

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	29 °C
MIN. Temp.	15 °C
MAX. RH	64 %
MIN. RH	17 %
MAX. Wind	N 43 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

### CHANGE OF NAME

**I, Rhys Fernandes**, holder of Indian Passport No. P6273566, having permanent address at Janata Colony, Room No. 58, Worli Village, Mumbai 400 030, Maharashtra, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth by name will be read as under Given name: Rhys Surname: Fernandes. (C 5706)

**I, Rick Fernandes**, holder of Indian Passport No. S9736849, having permanent address at Janata Colony, Room No. 58, Worli Village, Mumbai 400 030, Maharashtra, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth by name will be read as under Given name: Rick Surname: Fernandes Name of Father: Joseph Lawrence Fernandes (PP no. U0464436) Name of Mother: Angelina Regina Fernandes (PP no. Z2110343). (C 5706)

**Juan Jeevan** holder of Indian Passport No. S4699802 resident at Salmiya block 12, building No: 33, need to split my name, Surname - Jeevan, Given name - Juan. (C 5707)

**Juana Jeevan** holder of Indian Passport No. S4699793 resident at Salmiya, Block 12, Building No: 33 need to split my name, Surname - Jeevan, Given name - Juana. (C 5707) 11-3-2020

**I, HUSSAINI DAMORAWALA**

holder of Indian Passport No. Z5185481 & Civil ID No. 271050701299 has changed my name from HUSSAINI DAMORAWALA to HUSSAINI (Given Name) and BAMBORA (Surname) hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of HUSSAINI BAMBORA. (C 5704)

**I, Jumana Kaizar Shaker** holder of Indian Passport No. Z1886250 residing at 2401 Montreal Shastrri Nagar Off JP Road Andheri (W) Mumbai 400053 hereby declare that for re-issue of passport and for all future purposes, my name shall read as follows-Surname: Shaker Given Name: Jumana Kaizar. (C 5705) 10-3-2020

**I, SAIFUDDIN** with Indian Passport No. Z2814221 issued at Kuwait Dt: 17.04.2014. Hereby declare that my name change to Given name: SAIFUDDIN Surname: AMJAWALA. Permanent address 42, Laheri Building, 3rd Floor, No. 30, S.V.P. Rd Null Bazar, Mumbai-400003, India. (C 5703)

**I, KHERUNNISAH** with Indian Passport No. Z2814395 issued at Kuwait Dt: 28.04.2014. Hereby declare that my name change to Given name: KHERUNNISAH SAIFUDDIN Surname: AMJAWALA. Permanent address 42, Laheri Building, 3rd Floor, No. 30, S.V.P. Rd Null Bazar, Mumbai-400003, India. (C 5703) 9-3-2020

**Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988**

**EMERGENCY ☎ 112**



Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page ([www.kuwait-airport.com.kw](http://www.kuwait-airport.com.kw))

**DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION**

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 11/3/2020				Departure Flights on Wednesday 11/3/2020			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
ETH	3620	Addis Ababa	00:01	AZG	566	Baku	00:01
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	FDB	072	Dubai	00:40
KAC	102	London	00:55	ETH	3621	Addis Ababa	01:00
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:30
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	QTR	1087	Doha	04:00
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:05	KAC	672	Dubai	04:25
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	QTR	1077	Doha	05:30
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	OHY	351	Istanbul	05:30
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:30	THY	771	Istanbul	06:25
JZR	540	KTM	04:45	JZR	121	Dubai	06:35
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	FDB	070	Dubai	07:05
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	KAC	171	Frankfurt	08:00
JZR	502	Lahore	05:35	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35
BAW	157	London	07:05	KAC	1103	Cairo	08:50
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:10	BAW	156	London	09:10
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	QTR	1085	Doha	09:30
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	KAC	101	London	09:45
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KAC	671	Dubai	09:45
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55				
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05				
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40				
QTR	1070	Doha	09:45				
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40				
JZR	122	Dubai	11:15				
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35				
AHY	119	Baku	12:05				
GFA	209	Bahrain	12:05				
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35				
FDB	059	Dubai	14:15				
KAC	672	Dubai	14:25				
KAC	618	Doha	15:00				
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15				
OMA	645	Muscat	15:35				
UAE	857	Dubai	15:45				
ABY	127	Sharjah	15:55				
KAC	1104	Cairo	16:05				
QTR	1072	Doha	16:35				
JZR	116	Doha	16:40				
JZR	612	Tbilisi	16:40				
FDB	051	Dubai	16:45				
CLX	8703	Luxembourg	16:55				
SVA	510	Riyadh	17:25				
GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30				

Airlines	
Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Turkish Airlines	1884918
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1

Hospitals	
Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics	
Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401





A plane passes in front of the full moon as seen from Curitiba, Brazil on Monday. The supermoon is visible as the full moon coincides with the satellite in its closest approach to Earth, which makes it appear brighter and larger than other full moons. — AFP

## Coronavirus poses new threat to Egypt economy

**CAIRO:** The coronavirus outbreak is posing an increasing threat to Egypt's economy, with pressure on tourism, trade and gas exports coming on top of a longstanding failure to drum up private investment. Analysts have hailed Egypt for reforms tied to a \$12 billion loan program with the International Monetary Fund agreed in 2016, which included devaluing the currency by about half, cutting energy subsidies and introducing a value-added tax.

Those changes mean many of Egypt's nearly 100 million people find it hard to make ends meet as the country has struggled to boost the private sector and attract significant investment outside the gas industry. Analysts say the spread of the virus makes Egypt, with its large tourism industry, vulnerable. A global trade downturn could also hurt Suez canal revenues, \$5.7 billion in 2019.

Egypt has reported 59 corona cases in all, 45 of which were on a Nile cruise ship in Luxor, whose Pharaonic temples are a major tourist draw. One German tourist died. Economists said that in a worst-case scenario the coronavirus's effect on the economy could be disastrous. "We're in the middle of something. It's still evolving," said Angus Blair, chairman of business and economic forecasting think-tank Signet.

Lower oil prices will be likely be neutral, since Egypt's bill for hydrocarbon imports, at \$15.5 billion, is virtually equal to what it earns from exports, mainly natural gas. But worker remittances worth \$25 billion annually could fall if Gulf countries, the biggest employer of expatriate Egyptians, scale back projects, Blair said. Some Gulf countries have cut flights to Egypt and demand corona-free certificates. Hundreds could be seen queuing at a Cairo health office on Sunday trying to get the paper.

The government in January had been estimating

growth of around 5.9 percent for the financial year that ends in June and 6 percent in 2020/21, figures in line with those of economists. Egypt had been counting on high growth to absorb 700,000 new workers who will enter the labor force every year for the coming five years, according to IMF estimates. Some economists say annual growth needs to be around 7.5 percent to create enough jobs.

"It looks like the downside risks are pretty significant. It looks more than likely that we're going to go into our downside scenario," said Farouk Soussa, a senior economist at Goldman Sachs. "If you calculate a 50 percent drop-off in tourism for March, April, May, June, then the hit to GDP growth is likely to be in the area of more like 2 percent," for the 2019/20 financial year, Soussa said. "So you would end up with something like three and a half percent," he said, adding that the downside risks for the economy were pretty significant.

### Tourism

The first sector to experience signs of a downturn is tourism, which had rebounded after being devastated by the 2011 uprising that ousted Hosni Mubarak. Karim ElMinabawy, president of Emeco Travel Egypt, a long-established company in central Cairo, said there have been few cancellations from travellers abroad through the end of June, but autumn and winter would potentially be hit badly. "We are receiving 10 percent of what we had been expecting for the first quarter of next year," he said. Bookings are normally made 6-8 months in advance.

Tourism revenue rose to a record high of \$12.57 billion in the financial year that ended in July. It continued to gain in the July-Sept quarter, the latest figure published by the central bank, to \$4.19 billion, its best quarter ever. "The failure by Egyptian officials to promote



LUXOR, Egypt: This picture taken yesterday shows the A-Sara Nile cruise ship docked in this southern city, where 45 suspected COVID-19 coronavirus disease cases were detected and evacuated two days earlier. — AFP

the growth of a strong private sector, which has shrunk nearly every month since the IMF bailout, adds to the fragility of Egypt's economy and the risk to the economy's health in this coming period," said Timothy Kaldas, non-resident fellow at the Tahrir Institute.

"Consumption is weak and was a hindrance on the private sector's recovery before this. A loss of jobs tied to declining tourism will add to this. A drop in remittances means less purchasing power for many Egyptian households too," he said. Among the biggest questions markets will be whether investors will continue to flock

to Egypt, which has enjoyed the status as an emerging markets darling since the IMF plan, if its main sources of income get hit.

"It was a well-loved credit by the market and tourism was a big dollar generator so the virus will mean a big hit," said Richard House, CIO emerging market debt, Allianz Global Investors. "But you have to put your money somewhere and Egypt is a decent story still. I would be concerned about putting money into local currency bonds as these frontier markets are not very liquid." — Reuters

## Govt says no decision to end...

Continued from Page 1

the coronavirus outbreak cannot enter the country. However, citizens of other countries who can enter Kuwait with visas on arrival will be issued a visa for only one week, which cannot be extended. Foreign diplomats are excluded from the decision.

The Cabinet also ordered the closure of cinemas, theatres and cultural centers to prevent gatherings. All sports events have also been postponed. The health ministry announced yesterday four new cases of COVID-19, raising the total number to 69, but the health minister also announced that a second case was cured and will be allowed to leave quarantine.

Of the four new cases, two are Kuwaiti citizens who returned from Egypt, the third is a Kuwaiti woman who came back from Iran, while the fourth is an Egyptian who came in contact with another Egyptian who had returned from a visit to Azerbaijan via Dubai. During the meeting, MPs criticized the government for allowing the entry of thousands of Egyptians last week after scrapping a decision requiring expatriates from 10 countries to undergo coronavirus tests before returning to Kuwait.

### Iran reports 54 deaths

Iran yesterday reported 54 new deaths from the novel coronavirus in the past 24 hours, the highest single-day toll since the start of the country's outbreak. The latest deaths bring the number of those killed by the virus in the Islamic republic to 291, the health ministry's spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said in a televised conference. He added that 881 new cases had been confirmed, bringing the total number of people infected to an official 8,042.

But "2,731 people, which is about 10 times the number of dear countrymen we've lost, have recovered and been discharged from hospitals," Jahanpour said. The outbreak of the virus in Iran is one of the deadliest outside China, where the disease originated. With 2,114 cases, the capital Tehran remains the worst-hit province. The northern province of Mazandaran climbed to second place with 253 new cases, bringing the total there to 886, followed by 751 in Qom, the Shiite pilgrimage city south of Tehran where the country's first cases were reported.

Mazandaran is a popular tourist spot bordering the Caspian Sea, and is particularly popular during holidays for the Iranian New Year, which this year starts on March 20. Iran is yet to officially impose quarantines but authorities have repeatedly called on people to refrain from travelling and have resorted to closing hotels and other accommodation to discourage travel. "As we said and expected in recent days, Mazandaran has almost reached the top of the chart" in terms of infections and is second only to Tehran, Jahanpour said.

Iran's fatalities include several politicians and government officials, as well as some hospital staff. Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei agreed yesterday to designate hospital staff who died after contracting the virus as "martyrs", following a suggestion by the health minister, according to the official IRNA news agency. In the Islamic republic, the families of those designated martyrs usually receive financial aid and other benefits from the state.

The supreme leader also cancelled his annual speech in Mashhad city to mark the Persian new year due to concerns about the virus outbreak and health authorities' calls "to avoid gatherings and travel". According to health ministry figures, 222 people have been infected by the virus in the Khorasan Razavi province, where Mashhad is located. Apart from direct fatalities, 44 people have died from methanol poisoning in Iran after rumors that drinking alcohol could help cure or protect from the disease.

## Xi visits Wuhan, says tide turning...

Continued from Page 1

But the measure did not appear to loosen restrictions on Wuhan nor indicate if people could leave the province of 56 million people. State media also reported that the last of Wuhan's 16 makeshift hospitals that were converted from public buildings during the worst of the outbreak had closed.

"The spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has been basically curbed in Hubei province and its capital city Wuhan," Xi said, according to the official Xinhua news agency. "Initial success has been made in stabilising the situation and turning the tide in Hubei and Wuhan," he said. China's progress against the outbreak stands in stark contrast with the growing global crisis, with cases now growing at a faster pace abroad, and Italy enacting its own nationwide travel restrictions.

State media images showed Xi, who arrived by plane in Hubei's capital, wearing a face mask as he spoke via video-link from a conference hall to frontline medical workers and patients who are at one of two field hospitals set up in the city. He then went to a residential community in Wuhan to speak with people quarantined, and community workers.

China's most powerful leader since Mao Zedong is usually a daily fixture in state media but he has stayed out of the spotlight for much of the crisis and assigned Premier Li Keqiang to oversee the response to the epidemic. But as the number of new cases has fallen in recent weeks, state media has played up Xi's role in the fight against the outbreak, releasing a speech last month in which he said he had been giving instructions since early January.

Hua Po, an independent Beijing-based political analyst, told AFP the trip's timing indicated an "interim victory" for China. "His visit is to signal that the outbreak has been effectively curbed, and is an attempt to quieten external criticism of him not going to the frontlines," said Hao. Authorities have faced rare and fierce criticism online over their handling of the virus, with local officials coming under particular scrutiny for punishing whistleblowers in an apparent attempt to cover up the outbreak in early January.

"During the worst of the outbreak, Xi avoided the epicenter because he did not want to be blamed, but when the situation gets better, he shows up in order to receive praise," said Bruce Lui, a senior lecturer in journalism at Hong Kong Baptist University. The death of doctor Li Wenliang, who died from the COVID-19 illness in February, sparked a wave of grief and anger online. He was among a group of people who had raised the alarm as early as December.

A visit by Vice Premier Sun Chunlan to a Wuhan residential community last week was met with angry public heckling as people reportedly complained that she was being shown a "fake" delivery of food—showing how easily state propaganda efforts could backfire. The virus is believed to have emerged in December at a market that sold wild animals in Wuhan before ballooning into a national and then a global epidemic. More than 4,000 people have died and over 110,000 have been infected worldwide, with the majority in China.

But China reported only 17 new cases in Wuhan yesterday, the lowest figure since it started publishing data on January 21, and two elsewhere that were imported from abroad. "Xi doesn't want to be associated with the disaster, but with the recovery," said Adam Ni, a researcher at the China Policy Centre in Canberra. "China has turned the corner now with COVID-19, and the party now wants to craft the most positive narrative despite early missteps." — AFP



## Sports

# Olympics or not, Japan wheelchair dancer has message: Diversity is cool

## Kambara aims to perform at Tokyo 2020 Paralympics

**TOKYO:** Whirling, spinning, reaching, grasping - Japanese wheelchair dancer Kenta Kambara's emotive performances are wordless testimony to artistic passion and possibility.

Born with spina bifida, a disorder that paralysed his lower body, Kambara aims to perform at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics opening or closing ceremonies, seeking to send a message to disabled and able-bodied people alike: it's OK to be different.

"If you can't walk with your legs, it's OK to walk with your hands. If there is something you want to do but cannot, it's OK to find another way," Kambara, 34, a computer systems engineer and father of a two-year-old daughter, told Reuters.

"These days, people use the keyword 'diversity' but not many people have experienced it themselves," he said. "I want people to understand by seeing me dance that it's precisely because my body is different that it is interesting. Then that will become a trigger to accept other people's differences." "I also want them to think, 'Wow, that's cool!'"

Kambara was in third grade at elementary school in Kobe, western Japan, when his mother told him he would never walk.

"It was a huge shock and I remember crying," he said. "But that was the trigger

to think about how to confront my disability and find different ways to achieve my goals."

Kambara, whose upper body is well-developed from propelling himself with his arms since childhood, began dancing five years ago and less than a year later, performed at the Rio Paralympics closing ceremony. The self-taught Kambara's repertoire includes handstands on his wheelchair, serpentine moves of his lean, muscular arms and slender fingers, and dizzying spins on a collapsed wheelchair, itself an integral part of his performances.

"I'd already come to terms with my disability before I began dancing so it's not as if dancing 'saved' me. But before I started dancing, I often felt my wheelchair was cumbersome in my daily life ... But when it

comes to dancing, I feel my use of a wheelchair makes it unique," he said.

"Disabilities have a negative image, but when it comes to dance, this is something only I can do."

Although he had long tended to hide his paralysed legs out of embarrassment, that feeling changes when he dances.

"What I had been hiding becomes something unique that moves people's hearts," he said.

Kambara also performs and lectures at schools, where youngsters are clearly impressed.

"I thought it was amazing that someone born with a disability could do such an intense, cool dance," said eight-year-old elementary school student Konatsu Matsuo.

"Before I thought being in a wheelchair was really tough," she said. "Now I think that life with a wheelchair can be fun."

Besides aiming for the Paralympics ceremonies, Kambara harbours a bigger dream - to dance at the Olympics closing ceremony as a way to boost interest in the Paralympic Games.

"There shouldn't be a division such that if you are disabled, you can only perform at the Paralympics," he said, but noted that in contrast to the Paralympics, there are no



Kenta Kambara's emotive performances are wordless testimony to artistic passion.

open auditions for the Olympics ceremonies. Results of the Paralympics auditions are expected by the end of March.

Speculation, denied by organisers, is swirling that the Games might be cancelled

due to the global spread of the novel coronavirus, but Kambara said he was not discouraged. "Even if the Games are cancelled, I will have another chance to stand on a world stage," he said. — Reuters

“Life with a wheelchair can be fun”

## Amputees shoot for a place in CAR society

**BANGUI:** The players swing into action, passing the ball, jockeying for position and using feints to distract foes, but with tyres hissing across hot asphalt, this is no regular basketball practice.

Around the ball, object of a veritable national sport in the Central African Republic (CAR), wheelchairs spin in a ballet propelled by the steely arms of the amputee players, twisting right round on the spot or twirling on one wheel.

Their coach Idriss Feissal, himself wheelchair-bound since the age of five, exhorts a player: "Come on! Throw it further!" In his 40s, Feissal has the biceps of a hefty weightlifter. "When you work on physical shape, your handicap changes," he says.

CAR, one of the world's poorest countries, has been ravaged by three civil wars and many thousands bear the scars of conflict. Living with a handicap is made harder by the lack of infrastructure in the former French colony.

The basketball players have to deal with several kilometres (miles) of potholed tarmac and dirt alleyways to get to the practice venue, under a scorching sun. "Sometimes, they end up by quitting," said Feissal, who has belonged to the national wheelchair basketball team since 2003. The team won second place in an African paraspports contest in 2001.

He has invented a model of pedal tricycle especially adapted for handicapped people, but very few people can afford such a vehicle.

### 'IT WAS OVER FOR ME'

Bangui boasts a unique clinic founded in 1997 where people struggling with motor disabilities can find help, the centre of the National Association of Rehabilitation and Apparatus of the Central African Republic (ANRAC).

Sitting on a wooden bench at the entrance to the small ANRAC building, 40-year-old Eddy Ngalikossi is happy to show off his prosthesis. A dealer in high-tech products, Ngalikossi was shot



Players swing into action, passing the ball, jockeying for position and using feints to distract foes, but with tyres hissing across hot asphalt, this is no regular basketball practice.

by rebels of the Seleka alliance, a mainly Muslim coalition that took power in 2013.

The badly injured man was taken to hospital and had to undergo a leg amputation, leaving him with no job and no means to feed his children. "When this happened, I knew it was over for me," he said. At the time, the country was deep in chaos and its basic health care facilities were overwhelmed.

But the ANRAC has benefitted since 2013 from the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross, which paid for equipment and staff training. At its facility, a dozen workers cut, sand and fit custom-made prostheses for patients.

### DANGEROUS ISOLATION

"Today I can walk with a cane," Ngalikossi says proudly. But the training is hard. The amputees must learn to walk on bumpy terrain, to find a seat in an always crowded minibus, and simply to climb stairs.

The 339 patients taken in by the centre last year are a drop in the ocean of the 30,000 people estimated by the World Health Organization to be handicapped or facing the mental stress of

conflict in the CAR.

ANRAC director Godefroy Bombaida believes that the WHO estimate falls short of the reality. "Since the crisis, the number of amputees has tripled," he said. Care for patients in rural areas is limited by the lack of basic infrastructure, while few people in Bangui have learned how to make prostheses and treat the injured.

Plans are afoot to build a new centre with a capacity for 1,700 people, starting in May. The facility would also offer psychological help for people who are often socially isolated. "Families are not easy. If you have the means, then okay. But if you don't have the resources, who is going to come near you?" Ngalikossi asked.

"When I lost my leg, I thought of committing suicide. And I know several handicapped people who did commit suicide, because of the lack of support." Idriss has endured similar loneliness. "In the neighbourhood, everyone neglected me. It's thanks to competitions that I met my wife and started a family. "Now, I travel. The people who neglected me are still back in the neighbourhood." — AFP

## US Olympic chiefs axe media summit over virus fears

**LOS ANGELES:** The United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee has shelved a planned summit for athletes and media due to be staged in Los Angeles next week due to concerns over the coronavirus outbreak, officials said Monday.

The USOPC said in a statement the four-day event in California, where dozens of Team USA Olympic athletes are made available to the media, had been called off until further notice. The USOPC media summit has been held before every Summer and Winter Olympic Games since 1998. However USOPC chief executive Sarah Hirshland said in a letter to athletes that a decision to scrap next week's summit was taken after consultation with health officials. "Like so many other organizations, teams and leagues, we are reckoning with the impact of the coronavirus," Hirshland said.

"(We) came to the joint conclusion that the potential of spread or infection, however remote or unlikely, could have a real impact on the athletes of Team USA," she added. The decision was taken out of "an abundance of caution", Hirshland noted, adding that the USOPC was bullish about the prospects of this year's Tokyo Olympics going ahead as planned in July.

"You should assume we are charging forward toward Tokyo 2020 as planned," she said. "We expect to be in Tokyo this summer, and we will take every precaution to keep Team USA athletes safe as we prepare."

The US has recorded at least 26 deaths from the coronavirus and 605 confirmed cases across 35 states, according to a Johns Hopkins tally. The outbreak has wreaked havoc across the sporting world, with dozens of games and events cancelled or rescheduled or played behind closed doors.

On Sunday, the ATP/WTA Indian Wells tennis tournament in southern California was called off after confirmation of a COVID-19 case in the same region. — AFP

## How coronavirus has hit global sport

### FOOTBALL

- In Italy, the hardest-hit European country with 366 deaths from COVID-19, Serie A descended into controversy when Italian sports minister Vincenzo Spadafora called for the league season to be put on hold. Italian Footballers' Association president Damiano Tommasi tweeted that "stopping football is the most useful thing for our country right now. The teams to cheer are playing in our hospitals, in emergency rooms." However, five Serie A games — cancelled the previous week — went ahead behind closed doors, including Juventus' top of the table clash with Inter Milan.

- Paris Saint-Germain's Champions League last-16 clash with Borussia Dortmund at the Parc des Princes today and Tuesday's Valencia v Atalanta match will be played behind closed doors, as will the Europa League tie featuring Inter Milan against Getafe tomorrow.

- The start of Japan's J-League was postponed till mid-March while China suspended all domestic football and shelved indefinitely the top-flight Super League season.

- Former Danish international Thomas Kahlenberg tested positive for the virus, with 13 members of his former club Brøndby's staff put into quarantine.

- Two women's international friendlies in France on Tuesday between France v Netherlands in Valenciennes and Canada v Brazil in Calais will go ahead behind closed doors.

- German league considering imposing Bundesliga spectator ban

### TENNIS

- The prestigious ATP and WTA Indian Wells tournament was cancelled as California health officials declared a public health emergency in the Indian Wells-Palm Springs area after there was a confirmed case of the coronavirus, the first major sports event in the US to be shelved because of the outbreak. Many players had already arrived with main draw matches having been scheduled to begin yesterday. The tournament, which draws more than 400,000 fans each year, had already offered refunds to anyone who bought tickets but did not want to attend.

### RUGBY UNION

- The Six Nations match between Italy and England in Rome on March 14 as well as the Ireland v Italy duel in Dublin on March 7 were postponed.

- Title challengers France's final game against Ireland, also scheduled for March 14,

was delayed on Monday.

- Scotland's women's Six Nations match against France on Saturday was postponed after a Scottish player tested positive for the coronavirus.

- Sevens World Series tournaments in Hong Kong on April 3-5 and Singapore the following weekend will now be played in October.

### MOTORSPORT

- Bahrain's Formula One Grand Prix on March 20-22 will be held without spectators.
- Formula One's Chinese Grand Prix, which was set for April 19 in Shanghai, has been postponed.

- In motorcycling, the season-opening Qatar MotoGP, which should have taken place over the weekend, was cancelled and the Thailand MotoGP on March 22 postponed until October 4.

- Formula E postponed indefinitely the Rome E-Prix, which was due to be held on April 4.

- The E-prix in Sanya, China, on March 21 has been cancelled.

### BASKETBALL

- LeBron James said he won't play if his Los Angeles Lakers have to hold games behind closed doors due to the outbreak. The NBA has reportedly told teams to look into strategies on how to play without fans in the arena amid concerns over the spreading virus. "Nah. It's impossible. If I show up to the arena

and there ain't no fans in the crowd, then I ain't playing. This ain't Europe."

### CYCLING

- The spring classic Milan-San Remo, scheduled for March 21, was postponed, having only previously been cancelled three times since the inaugural edition in 1907.

- The Strade Bianchi, the first big race of the Italian cycling season set for Saturday, was also cancelled along with the Tirreno-Adriatico.

- The UAE Tour's last two stages were abandoned with riders and teams subsequently quarantined in their Abu Dhabi hotels. The Gulf state announced eight coronavirus cases linked to the event — four Italians, two Russians, one German and a Colombian.

### TOKYO OLYMPICS

- International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach said last week that the nightmare scenario of either cancelling or postponing this year's Tokyo Olympics was not discussed at a key meeting. "Neither the word cancellation nor postponement was mentioned today during the Executive Board meeting," Bach told reporters in Lausanne. The Olympics take place from July 24-August 9.

### GOLF

- European Tour chiefs postponed the Maybank Championship in Malaysia and the

China Open in Shenzhen — both set for April.

- The US LPGA Tour cancelled all three of its lucrative early-season events in Asia with a combined prize purse of more than \$5 million.

### ATHLETICS

- The World Indoor Championships, scheduled for Nanjing from March 13-15, were postponed until next year.

- World half-marathon championships, due to be held on March 29 in the Polish city of Gdynia, shelved until October 17.

- The Paris Marathon, scheduled for April 5 with 60,000 registered runners, was postponed until October 18.

- The Barcelona Marathon, which was scheduled for March 15 with 17,000 runners, was postponed until October.

### ALPINE SKIING

- The World Cup finals, scheduled for Cortina d'Ampezzo in Italy between March 16-22, were cancelled.

### BASEBALL

- Japan's domestic baseball season, originally set to open on March 10, was postponed.

### ICE HOCKEY

- The Women's World Ice Hockey Championships, set for Halifax and Truro in Nova Scotia for March 31 to April 10, were cancelled. — AFP



## Sports

# Sabres win shootout over Capitals, end 6-game skid

## Kings take down Avalanche for sixth consecutive win

**BUGGALO:** Dominik Kahun scored in the seventh round of a shootout to give the Buffalo Sabres a 3-2 victory over the visiting Washington Capitals on Monday. Sabres goalie Linus Ullmark stopped 33 of 35 shots during open play and then made six more saves during the shootout. It was an impressive return for Ullmark, who was playing for the first time in 18 games after recovering from a lower-body injury. Victor Olofsson and Jack Eichel scored in regulation for Buffalo, which snapped an 0-6-0 streak. Alexander Ovechkin had two points, including his 48th goal of the season to tie Boston's David Pastrnak for the league scoring lead. Dmitry Orlov also scored for the Capitals.

### GOLDEN KNIGHTS 3, OILERS 2 (OT)

Defenseman Shea Theodore scored 2:13 into overtime to lift Vegas over host Edmonton in a matchup of the top two teams in the Pacific Division. Jonathan Marchessault forced a turnover in the offensive zone and alertly fed Theodore, who wired a shot from the high slot that beat Mikko Koskinen. Marchessault and Nicolas Roy each scored, and Marc-Andre Fleury finished with 22 saves for first-place Vegas. Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and Alex Chiasson scored, and Koskinen turned aside 45 shots for Edmonton, which now trails Vegas by three points in the Pacific Division.

### KINGS 3, AVALANCHE 1

Jonathan Quick made 21 saves, and host Los Angeles

extended its season-high winning streak to six games by defeating Colorado, which missed a chance to tie St. Louis for first place in the Central Division. Quick has allowed one goal or fewer in five of his past six starts, going 5-0-1 in that span. Mikey Anderson scored his first NHL goal in his fifth game, and Austin Wagner and Alex Iafallo also scored for the Kings, who hadn't won six in a row since an eight-game winning streak in 2017. Pierre-Edouard Bellemare scored, and Pavel Francouz made 32 saves for the Avalanche.

### PANTHERS 2, BLUES 1

Brett Connolly scored the go-ahead goal in the third period, and Florida prevailed at St. Louis, earning its second consecutive victory. Mike Hoffman also scored for the Panthers, and Chris Driedger made 26 saves. Driedger has stopped 85 of 89 shots in his past three starts while filling in for the injured Sergei Bobrovsky. Colton Parayko scored, and Jordan Binnington made 32 saves for the Blues, who lost for just the second time in their last 11 games.

### JETS 4, COYOTES 2

Winnipeg native Cody Eakin scored the go-ahead goal in the third period — his first goal for his hometown club — to lead the host Jets to a 4-2 comeback win over Arizona. The Jets' season-high sixth straight home victory bumped Winnipeg into the top wildcard spot in the Western Conference. Nikolaj Ehlers notched a goal and two assists, Tucker Poolman had



NEW YORK: File photo shows Ilya Kovalchuk #17 of the Washington Capitals celebrates his goal at 12:01 of the second period game. — AFP

a goal and an assist, and Mark Scheifele scored for the Jets. Connor Hellebuyck stopped 36 of 38 shots. Winnipeg's Paul Maurice coached his 1,599th game, breaking a tie with Ken Hitchcock for the fifth-most

NHL games behind the bench. The Coyotes' Nick Schmaltz scored two first-period goals, Phil Kessel contributed two assists, and Darcy Kuemper made 30 saves. — Reuters



## Fleury finish with 22 saves

## Rudisha back on track and chasing history

**LONDON:** David Rudisha says he is back on track after injuries, partying and a close shave with death in his bid to become the first man to win three successive 800 metres Olympic titles.

The 31-year-old Kenyan's world record run of 1min 40.91sec to win the 800m in London in 2012 was hailed as the greatest track performance of those Games by many, including global athletics chief Sebastian Coe.

Rudisha returned in Rio to defend his title but the four years since have been frustrating for him in terms of injuries interrupting his training and he has not run competitively since July 2017.

It has also been upsetting off the track with his father Daniel — a 4x400m relay silver medallist in the 1968 Olympics — passing away last year.

The two-time world outdoor champion at 800m also saw his weight balloon as he confessed to looking for "a bit of destruction to distract".

He was more reserved about how he found that difficult period when he spoke to the BBC.

"Well, I, you know, I have never really directly spoken about partying but, you know, just a social life that everybody has the right to enjoy," he said.

"Whenever we have a (athletics) meet, sometimes we go to socialise, to go out for instance. That is normal life. "I never meant anything extreme, because that is not what I do... Sometimes when you have friends, you go out and throw a party and so forth, and that is actually what I meant." Rudisha said returning to training had altered his mindset for the better. "I am happy," he said.

"I missed the track and I missed training for the past two years. "Whenever I am out there and training I feel like I am doing what I really truly love, and I am passionate about it. "If I make the team, go to Tokyo, qualify for the final and be in that final, yes I will say I will be standing there as a potential gold medallist, or



David Rudisha

medallist in that event.

"But before I get there I cannot start counting things that are not ready yet." Rudisha says he is fortunate to even be around to have a tilt at making history as his car had a head-on collision with a bus — which was on the wrong side of the road — last year.

His car was written off but he

emerged unscathed physically but the mental scars remain. "Actually I don't even have words to explain the accident," he said. "It was really horrific and scary. It was not easy and everybody, every time, kept asking me: 'How did you even survive? How did you get out of that car?' "To come out without a single scratch was just like a miracle." — AFP

## Jays take advantage of Snell's wildness

**TORONTO:** Danny Jansen smacked a grand slam and Riley Adams hit a three-run homer as a Toronto Blue Jays split squad rolled to an 8-3 victory over the visiting Tampa Bay Rays on Monday at Dunedin, Fla. Left-hander Blake Snell started for Tampa Bay, and the 2018 American League Cy Young Award winner retired just one batter and walked four to force in Toronto's first run. Right-hander Trevor Richards replaced Snell, and Jansen slugged the second pitch over the fence in left to give the Blue Jays a 5-0 first-inning lead. Left-hander Hyun-Jin Ryu struck out four and gave up three hits in 4 1/3 innings for Toronto. Adams' blast in the seventh inning gave the Blue Jays an eighth-run lead. Tampa Bay scored three runs in the ninth. Joey Roach and Dalton Kelly had run-scoring singles and Brett Sullivan notched an RBI double.

### PHILLIES 3, YANKEES 1

Christian Bethancourt hit a tiebreaking two-run homer in the eighth inning to lift the host Phillies over the Yankees at Clearwater, Fla. Erik Kratz had a run-scoring single for New York.

### ASTROS 2, TIGERS 1

Stephen Wrenn delivered the game-winning single with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning to give Houston the victory over Detroit at West Palm Beach, Fla. Willi Castro had an RBI double for the Tigers.

### CARDINALS 3, TWINS 0

Austin Dean went 2-for-4 with a homer to help St. Louis blank host Minnesota at Fort Myers, Fla. The Twins had six hits, all singles.

### BLUE JAYS (SS) 3, PIRATES 1

Joe Panik raised his spring average to .375 with two of Toronto's five hits as the visiting Blue Jays knocked off Pittsburgh at Bradenton, Fla. Oneil Cruz delivered a run-scoring double for the Pirates.

### METS 1, MARLINS 1

Right-hander Eliesser Hernandez struck out five and gave up two hits over four scoreless inning to help Miami tie visiting New York at Jupiter, Fla. Jake Marisnick tripled and scored the lone run for the Mets.

### RED SOX 2, BRAVES 1

Right-hander Ryan Weber pitched four scoreless innings with four strikeouts as Boston edged Atlanta in North Port, Fla. Braves right-hander Felix Hernandez, the former Cy Young Award winner who pitched 15 seasons for the Seattle Mariners, went five innings, allowing one run, six hits and two walks. He struck out six.

### INDIANS (SS) 11, ANGELS 10

Franmil Reyes hit two home runs, and Yu Chang and Miguel Jerez also homered as Cleveland clipped Los Angeles in Tempe, Ariz. Justin Upton homered among two hits and scored twice, and Jason Castro also had two hits and drove in two runs for the Angels.

### ROYALS 4, DIAMONDBACKS 4

Ryan O'Hearn hit his fourth home run of the spring as Kansas City and Arizona ended up tied in Scottsdale, Ariz. Each team scored single runs in the eighth and ninth innings, with a solo home run by the Diamondbacks' Trayce Thompson creating the tie in the bottom of the ninth. Arizona starter Madison Bumgarner pitched 3 2/3 scoreless innings, striking out four.

### DODGERS 14, PADRES 2

Chris Taylor drove in three runs in Los Angeles' win over San Diego in Peoria, Ariz. Taylor hit a two-run home run as the Dodgers scored four runs in the sixth inning, and they scored seven more runs in the seventh, including three on a double by Terrance Gore. Dodgers left-hander Alex Wood and Padres right-hander Garrett Richards each allowed one unearned run over 3 1/3 innings with four strikeouts.

### INDIANS (SS) 11, GIANTS 7

Tyler Krieger capped a six-run eighth inning with a grand slam as Cleveland outscored San Francisco in Goodyear, Ariz. Zach Green hit a three-run homer and Alex Dickerson added a solo shot for the Giants. San Francisco right-hander Trevor Oaks pitched three scoreless innings and struck out three.

### REDS 3, WHITE SOX 3

Yermin Mercedes' home run in the bottom of the ninth allowed Chicago to tie Cincinnati in Phoenix. Yasmani Grandal also hit a solo home run for Chicago. Nick Senzel opened the game with a homer for the Reds. Right-hander Anthony DeSclafani threw four innings for Cincinnati, allowing one run on three hits with two strikeouts. —Reuters

## O'Brien's last-ball 6 helps Ireland clinch super-over win

**GREATER NOIDA:** Kevin O'Brien hit a last-ball six as Ireland clinched a consolation super-over win against Afghanistan in the third Twenty20 international in India yesterday.

With three runs needed for victory off the final ball of the super over, O'Brien cleared the long-off fence to end his team's 12-match losing streak in T20s against the Afghans. O'Brien made 26 off 21 balls in Ireland's 142 for eight after electing to bat first.

Afghanistan, who won the series 2-1, replied with 142 for seven. "Luckily that last hit came off," a relieved O'Brien said after receiving the man of the match award. "We have learnt from game one to game three, about specific plans for each player. You have to adjust quickly and I think we did."

Afghanistan needed 16 to win off the final six deliveries of normal play, and paceman Craig Young claimed Asghar Afghan for 32 before Rashid hit a boundary off the last ball, taking the game into a deciding over.

Young then bowled a disciplined line and length to keep Afghanistan to just eight runs in six balls. Gareth Delany also played a key part in Ireland's win after top-scoring with 37 and then taking two wickets with his leg-spin.

Off-spinner Simi Singh hurt Afghanistan's middle-order with two wickets off successive balls to send back Mohammad Nabi, for four, and Najibullah Zadran, for nought. Wicketkeeper-batsman Rahmanullah Gurbaz top-scored with 42 and was named player of the series for amassing 105 runs in the three matches.

Bowlers Naveen-ul-Haq and Qais Ahmad took three wickets each in the Ireland innings. "I think the wicket was good but our batsmen played some poor shots," said Rashid. — AFP

## Flyers, seeking 10th straight win

**PHILADELPHIA:** The Philadelphia Flyers will be looking to capture their season-high 10th consecutive victory when they host the Boston Bruins today. Extending the streak to 10 will be quite a challenge against the Bruins (43-14-12), who lead the league with 98 points.

The Flyers (41-20-7, 89 points) boast the best home mark in the league at 25-5-4.

Philadelphia pushed its winning streak to nine with a 3-1 victory over the Buffalo Sabres on Saturday. Second-year goaltender Carter Hart made 38 saves and became the first goaltender in league history to compile two separate winning streaks of seven or more at age 21 or younger.

"Hartsy made some huge stops, and we got lucky that we won," Flyers winger Jakub Voracek told Inquirer.com about Hart. "In the end, you don't ask (how), but we won. So, like I said, it's a good two points, but we'll need to be way better Tuesday."

Claude Giroux scored two goals against the Sabres, and Voracek has been red hot with 10 assists over his past five games.

With James van Riemsdyk sidelined for at least four weeks due to a broken ring finger, 20-year-old rookie Joel Farabee stepped up and scored a goal to snap an eight-game drought.

"I didn't think it was ever going to come again, but obviously it felt good," Farabee said.

In the end, the Flyers have found a number of different ways to win during this spurt. The biggest constant has been the stellar play of Hart, who is 20-2-2 with a 1.61 goals-against average at home this season.

"Just playing the game and having fun," Hart said. "That's the biggest thing for us right now. We're enjoying coming to the rink."

The Bruins are coming off a rare loss, a 5-3 setback against the Tampa Bay Lightning on Saturday.

David Pastrnak did manage to score his league-high 48th goal of the season while Charlie McAvoy added one goal and one assist. However, Boston gave up two short-handed goals in what was a feisty contest with numerous penalties and skirmishes.

"That was a great game. A lot of physicality and good plays at both ends of the ice," goaltender Tuukka Rask said. "Obviously, it feels better when you come (out) as a winner, but I thought that was a great way to show our character — always stick up for each other and just fell short."

There were 26 penalties combined in the game, so it would be natural to expect the Bruins to arrive in Philadelphia looking to avenge that loss.

"I think some of the stuff that we talk about was sticking together, and I think as far as team chemistry goes, we're already a really tight group," McAvoy told reporters. "But you see guys answer the bell for each other regardless of their size or role or anything and everyone steps up to make sure we have each other's back. That's something where you look at it and you're proud of one another."

"You know that's the kind of hockey that you're going to run into down the road, so it's nice to know everyone has each other's back."

The Bruins had won four in a row before the Saturday loss yet still proved their mettle by coming back from an early three-goal deficit before falling short. — Reuters



Sports

# Barnes, Vardy doubles put Leicester back on track

## Defeat leaves Villa rooted in the relegation zone

**LEICESTER:** Brendan Rodgers hopes Leicester can kick on from a confidence-boosting 4-0 thrashing of Aston Villa, thanks to doubles from Harvey Barnes and Jamie Vardy, and secure a place in next season's Champions League.

The Foxes had won just one of their previous seven Premier League games, but remain in third and restored an eight-point advantage over fifth-placed Manchester United in the battle for a top-four finish.

"The last few games we haven't been at our level. In terms of attacking, we were much better this evening. After the first goal we went on and played very well," said Rodgers. "Early on you could see our confidence wasn't where it has been. The only way you regain that confidence is hard work and these players have been brilliant."

Defeat leaves Villa rooted in the relegation zone and there was little from the visitors to suggest they can save themselves in the final 10 games of the season. No side has conceded more goals in the Premier League this season than Villa and it was easy to see why as Leicester passed up a host of simple chances from poorly defended set-pieces early on. "We started the game quite well but then we didn't defend corners well enough and we had a big mistake for the (first) goal," said Villa boss Dean Smith.

"Individual mistakes are costing us. We need to get better." Pepe Reina was a spectator when Villa stunned

Leicester to reach the League Cup final in January and Dean Smith's decision to recall the Spaniard in place of Orjan Nyland backfired for the opening goal five minutes before half-time.

The former Liverpool goalkeeper raced well outside his box, but was beaten to the ball by the pace of Barnes, who kept his cool to fire into an unguarded net.

Theanacho then missed a great chance to double Leicester's lead early in the second half and the Nigerian may find himself back on the sidelines in the weeks to come as Vardy rebound his scoring touch.

The former England striker started on the bench as he returned from injury and had only been on the field four minutes when he grabbed his first goal in 10 games from the penalty spot after Tyrone Mings was adjudged to have handled Barnes's cross. Vardy was back in the groove and doubled his tally 11 minutes from time when he found space at Reina's near post to move two goals clear in the race for the Premier League golden boot.

"The injury over seven or eight weeks had curtailed him but his running and movement were back to what we are used to from him," added Rodgers on his top scorer. "He got his reward for his hard work." Barnes then also smashed home his second of the evening from Marc Albrighton's low cross. —AFP



**LEICESTER:** Aston Villa's English defender Tyrone Mings (C) heads the ball clear during the English Premier League football match between Leicester City and Aston Villa at King Power Stadium in Leicester. — AFP

“Individual mistakes are costing us”

## PSG under pressure against Dortmund

**PARIS:** Nothing ever seems to go to plan in the Champions League for Paris Saint-Germain, whose bid to avoid yet another exit in the first knockout round against Borussia Dortmund will be played out before an empty stadium today.

After Neymar, Kylian Mbappe and co. lost 2-1 to an Erling Haaland-inspired Dortmund before a crowd of 80,000 in Germany last month, PSG discovered on Monday the second leg of their last-16 tie must be played behind closed doors due to the coronavirus outbreak. Estimates put the financial hit to Qatar-owned PSG of playing the game without the presence of nearly 50,000 fans at the Parc des Princes in the region of six million euros (\$6.9 million), while the president of the club's Ultras fans group has called on supporters to gather outside the stadium instead.

However, it is still possible the strange atmosphere will work in the home team's favour, removing some of the immense pressure on them. Agitated supporters are restless at the thought of their team — despite all the Qatari investment — going out of the Champions League in the last 16 for the fourth year running.

Following the first-leg defeat, one banner targeted captain Thiago Silva and their two superstar forwards, asking: "Silva, Mbappe, Neymar, afraid of winning? Show some balls."

While PSG's record in France, where they are on course for a seventh Ligue 1 title in eight seasons, is excellent, it is also almost irrelevant. This is a club that

begs to be judged on its performance in Europe.

They are the fifth-richest club in the world in the most recent Deloitte Football Money League, with 636 million euros in revenue last season, behind only Barcelona, Real Madrid, Manchester United and Bayern Munich.

However, they have fallen at this hurdle in each of the last three seasons, often in farcical fashion. In 2017 there was the capitulation in Barcelona, a 6-1 defeat following a 4-0 first-leg win. They then spent over 400 million euros to make Neymar and Mbappe the two most expensive signings in the world, but the Brazilian missed the second leg of the 2018 defeat by Madrid due to injury and then sat out both legs of an improbable exit to Manchester United last year.

In eight years since the Qatari takeover, PSG have beaten just three teams in Champions League knockout ties: Valencia, Bayer Leverkusen and Chelsea (twice).

In a recent interview with Canal Plus, sporting director Leonardo tried to take pressure off Thomas Tuchel's team before the Dortmund tie. "It's not life or death. If we lose we will try again next year," he insisted. "We need to stop all the negativity. We have a fantastic team and fantastic players."

Nevertheless, it is worth pondering how what is essentially a vanity project can continue to be credible if PSG keep on losing the games that really matter.

The need to beat Dortmund is therefore critical, even in these mitigating circumstances, and the futures of both Neymar and Mbappe, forever linked to Real Madrid, could depend on it.

If they do reach a first quarter-final since 2016, the weight off their shoulders will be huge and might well be replaced by a realisation that winning the trophy for the first time is a real possibility.

Coach Tuchel is under contract until 2021 but, just like Unai Emery and Laurent Blanc before him, it is hard to see how he would survive another disappointing European showing. Tuchel is also under pressure after a decision to radically change his team's formation for the first leg backfired badly.

He needs a big performance from Neymar, who wanted to leave last summer rather than stick around for a third season in Paris but was poor in Dortmund. Tuchel also needs Mbappe, scorer of 30 goals this season, to deliver on the night.

"He struggled against Dortmund. His reaction since then has been astounding, in every training session. He is decisive and he is in great form," Tuchel said recently, and he will hope that form continues at an eerily empty stadium today. — AFP

## Imperfect Liverpool offer Atletico hope

**LONDON:** Liverpool's 2-1 victory over Bournemouth on Saturday was met with an unusual sense of relief around Anfield for a side that had just clinched a 22nd consecutive home league win and moved 25 points clear at the top of the Premier League.

Such has been the Reds' relentless run towards a first league title in 30 years that three defeats in three different competitions in four games was considered a slump in form.

A 3-0 reverse at Watford deprived Jurgen Klopp the men the chance to match Arsenal's "invincible" unbeaten league season and a FA Cup exit at the hands of Chelsea means they cannot replicate Manchester United's treble of 1998/99.

However, the most damaging of the trio of defeats could still prove to be the 1-0 deficit they must overturn when Atletico Madrid travel to Anfield for the second leg of their Champions League last 16 tie on Wednesday.

"It's a long season and you see how many games we've played. In any sport you play it's impossible to be at your highest level all year, year in and year out," said James Milner, who produced a stunning goal-line clearance to secure victory against Bournemouth.

"You try your best and it just doesn't happen, and that's when you need to find a way to win." When at their best, Liverpool have shown they are more than capable of second leg fightbacks at home. Most spectacularly when Barcelona were humbled 4-0 in last season's semi-final despite holding a 3-0 first leg lead. However, there are cracks in the English champions-elect's armoury that Atletico can expose. After keeping 10 clean sheets in 11 league games between early December and mid-February, Liverpool have conceded in each of their last five games.

The loss of goalkeeper Alisson Becker to a hip injury is a massive blow with his erratic understudy Adrian at fault for the opening goal against Chelsea last week. Jordan Henderson's presence in midfield has also been badly missed after he limped off with a hamstring injury in the first leg against Atletico and could be rushed back to face the Spaniards.

Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane again carried the goalscoring burden to turn the game around against Bournemouth, but the form of Roberto Firmino is also a worry for Klopp. The Brazilian's all-round game makes him the perfect foil for the Salah and Mane to come off the wings and get the goals, but Firmino has been out of sorts in recent weeks and still has not scored at Anfield all season.

Liverpool can at least rely on a vociferous home support that makes Anfield such a fortress on European nights. Klopp has never lost a European game at home since taking charge of Liverpool in 2015 and has reached three finals in that time.

"Our people will be ready. Welcome to Anfield! It's not over yet," warned the German after the first leg. Unlike matches in Italy, France and Spain there has been no order for games to be played behind closed doors in the United Kingdom to halt the spread of coronavirus.

Paris Saint-Germain will host Borussia Dortmund in front of an empty stadium on Wednesday as will Juventus if the second leg of their tie against Lyon next week even goes ahead.

With PSG, Juve and Real Madrid trailing from their first legs and Barcelona a shadow of their former selves, the competition could open up again for Liverpool if they can break Atletico's resistance.

"It's down to us to turn around a tough result," added Milner. "We know how good they are, we know how well organised they are but hopefully we can push them all the way and overturn that and have another special night at Anfield." — AFP

## Ronaldinho lawyers push for his release

**ASUNCION:** Lawyers for Brazilian football great Ronaldinho are trying to organize a hearing to get him temporarily released from detention for allegedly entering Paraguay with a fake passport, defense sources told AFP on Monday.

Ronaldinho and his brother Roberto were arrested on Friday and held in pre-trial detention in Asuncion for entering Paraguay using forged documents. Sources close to his defense team told AFP the lawyers were trying to get the brothers a hearing today in the hope of securing their temporary release.

Brazilian press reported that the country's justice minister, Sergio Moro, had contacted Paraguayan authorities over Ronaldinho's case. "Moro only called to obtain information on the case, because... the Brazilian government is following it," a justice ministry official said, denying that Brazil was trying to meddle in the case.

Ronaldinho's Brazilian lawyer Sergio Queiroz has previously insisted that the two-time world player of the year's detention was "illicit, illegal and unlawful."

"Ronaldinho did not commit a crime because he did not know that the passport they gave him was faked," he said. The brothers are spending a fourth day behind bars in the Paraguayan capital Asuncion, where late summer temperatures have soared to 40 degrees Celsius.

Queiroz wants the pair to be released and allowed to return to their home country. He said prosecutors originally agreed that the footballer had acted in good faith before a judge ordered their detention, which Queiroz described as unwarranted.

Ronaldinho, considered one of the greatest footballers of all time, was one of the stars of Brazil's 2002 World Cup win and played for European giants Barcelona Paris Saint-Germain and AC Milan, among others.

He and his brother arrived in Asuncion from Brazil on Wednesday and showed their passports to immigration police, who did not immediately notice any problem with the documents. Hours later, when the passports were determined to be fake, investigators raided the hotel room Ronaldinho was staying in and seized the brothers' identity cards and travel documents.

Ronaldinho said the passports had been given to him by people who had invited him to attend conferences sponsored by charities working with disadvantaged children. A



**ASUNCION:** Paraguayan judge Gustavo Amarilla is hounded by the press after ratifying Brazilian retired football player Ronaldinho and his brother Roberto Assis' pretrial detention, for allegedly entering Paraguay with a fake passport, at the Justice Palace in Asuncion, yesterday. — AFP

Brazilian businessman has also been arrested in connection with the fake passports, while two Paraguayan women have been placed under house arrest and Paraguay's migration director has resigned.

Queiroz said the brothers were offered the passports "to facilitate the possibility of doing business" in Paraguay. "The idea was to position Ronaldinho with brands and companies," he added.

Paraguayan president Mario Abdo on Monday revoked by decree the legal status of the foundation that invited Ronaldinho to the country. Defense lawyers for the "Angelic Fraternity" foundation's administrator, Dalia Lopez, acknowledged that she had requested official Paraguayan passports for the brothers but said she had no idea that those delivered were fakes.

Authorities have issued a warrant for her arrest. Lopez's lawyers said the brothers had handed over \$5,000 to "accelerate the process to issue the passports" and that she "never suspected" intermediaries dealing with the request would have submitted false information to authorities. Her lawyers also denied she had paid Ronaldinho to come to Paraguay or that she was involved in business with him. But the arrested businessman, Wilmondes Sousa, claimed Lopez was responsible for making the fake passports. — AFP

## US sports leagues restrict locker room access

**LOS ANGELES:** The professional baseball, basketball, soccer and ice hockey leagues in the United States said Monday they will restrict locker room access to players and team officials only in an effort to limit the risk of exposure to the coronavirus.

In a joint statement, Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer, the National Basketball Association, and the National Hockey League said the decision would go into effect from yesterday.

"After consultation with infectious disease and public health experts, and given the issues that can be associated with close contact in pre- and post-game settings, all team locker rooms and clubhouses will be open only to players and essential employees of teams and team facilities until further notice," the statement said. "Media access will be maintained in designated locations outside of the locker room and clubhouse setting. These temporary changes will be effective beginning with tomorrow's games and practices. "We will continue to closely monitor this situation and take any further steps necessary to maintain a safe and welcoming environment." US sports leagues are renowned across the world for allowing media to access locker rooms following practices or games, a practice that is unheard of in most sports.

Monday's announcement comes amid growing concern across the sports world about the threat posed by the COVID-19 virus. The NBA has already informed teams that playing games in empty arenas may be necessary to help thwart the spread of the disease.

The league has also urged players to limit interactions with fans, advising against taking such items as pens, balls and jerseys to autograph.

On Sunday meanwhile the ATP-WTA Tour's Indian Wells tennis tournament in Southern California — one of the biggest tournaments in the world outside of the four Grand Slams — was shelved after health authorities confirmed a case of coronavirus in the surrounding area. The US has recorded at least 26 deaths from the coronavirus and 605 confirmed cases across 35 states, according to a Johns Hopkins tally. — AFP



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## Nuggets send Bucks to 3rd straight loss



DENVER: Sterling Brown #23 of the Milwaukee Bucks shoots the ball against the Denver Nuggets at the Pepsi Center in Denver, Colorado. — AFP

**DENVER:** Jamal Murray scored 21 points, including Denver's first nine to start the fourth quarter, Paul Millsap had 20 points and 10 rebounds, and the host Nuggets beat the short-handed Milwaukee Bucks 109-95 on Monday night. Jerami Grant added 19 points for Denver, and Gary Harris had 15. Will Barton scored 13 points and Nikola Jokic had 10 points, nine rebounds and seven assists for the Nuggets, who swept the season series from the NBA leaders. Milwaukee played without reigning MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo (left knee injury) and nearly the entire starting lineup to end an 0-3 road trip. Also out were Eric Bledsoe (knee), George Hill (groin), Khris

Middleton (rest), Brook Lopez (rest) and Donte DiVincenzo (rest), leaving them without their top six scorers. Kyle Korver led the Bucks with a season-high 23 points, Sterling Brown had 16 points, Robin Lopez scored 11 and D.J. Wilson contributed 10 points and nine boards.

### ATLANTA HAWKS 143 - CHARLOTTE HORNETS 138 (2OT)

De'Andre Hunter gave host Atlanta the lead by making three free throws with 13.3 seconds left in the second overtime, and the Hawks held on to defeat Charlotte. Atlanta was led by Trae Young with 31

points and 16 assists. John Collins had 28 points on 12-for-13 shooting and grabbed 11 rebounds, and Cam Reddish, who returned after exiting the previous game due to leg cramps, had 22 points. The Hawks set a season high with 21 3-pointers (on 43 attempts). The Hornets got a career-high 40 points from Terry Rozier, 27 points and 10 rebounds from Devonte' Graham, and a career-high 23 points from rookie Caleb Martin, who entered the game averaging 4.3 points.

### TORONTO RAPTORS 101 - UTAH JAZZ 92

Serge Ibaka scored 27 points and grabbed 13 rebounds as Toronto defeated Utah in Salt Lake City

to extend its winning streak to four games. Pascal Siakam added 27 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists, and Kyle Lowry had 21 points for the Raptors, who finished a 4-1 road trip. Joe Ingles had 20 points off the bench — 10 in the fourth quarter — for the Jazz, who had their winning streak end at five. Royce O'Neale added 15 points, Mike Conley had 13 and Donovan Mitchell scored 11 for Utah. Mitchell and Conley combined to his 8 of 28 field-goal attempts. The Raptors lost guard Norman Powell 95 seconds into the first quarter with a sprained left ankle after he collided with teammate OG Anunoby on a defensive play under the basket. —Reuters

## Virus as deadly for Italy football as two wars

**ROME:** Only the gunfire of two World Wars had previously stopped "calcio" in football-mad Italy. But from yesterday all sporting events in the Mediterranean country, including the top-flight Serie A league, will be suspended for a month because of the coronavirus crisis. Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte made the dramatic announcement as the nation grapples with a disease which has killed 463 people and prompted the government to restrict movement for its 60 million citizens. The suspension until April 3 amounts to the postponement of two championship days, in a league which has already been hit by delays, with four previous games yet to be played. The Italian Football Federation meets later, and the Lega Serie A later in the week to try and develop a recovery plan.

A plan which could only be effective if the championship resumes in April, which will depend on the evolution of the epidemic. "I'm not an optimist, unfortunately," said AC Milan president Paolo Scaroni, whose club donated 250,000 euros (\$294,000) on Monday for the care of patients in the Lombardy region, hardest hit by the contagion.

"So many of us are involved in football that there is a real risk of contagion. Even if

it is true that nobody is as monitored as the players." Club CEO Ivan Gazidis added: "There are things in life more important than football. We must all act with the utmost responsibility and listen to the advice of the relevant authorities."

Since 1898, only the dark days of two World Wars had stopped Serie A — between 1916 and 1919 and from 1943 to 1945. And in 1915 it was interrupted following Italy's entry into the First World War, with Genoa awarded the title which Lazio still claim was tied. In 1973 a cholera epidemic which left 227 dead in Italy, including more than 170 in Naples, did not halt play. Even if competition resumes in early April, time is running out with the end of the season scheduled for May 24. There is little room for manoeuvre because of Euro 2020 beginning on June 12.

And there are also concerns that the European tournament, due to be hosted across 12 countries with Italy hosting the opening match, might face an unprecedented cancellation. The Italian press have speculated of a possible reduction of the time allocated to teams to prepare before Euro 2020. As for the Italian Cup, interrupted after the first leg of the semi-finals, it is almost impossible for it to be complet-

ed before the summer.

In the meantime, training continues, along with UEFA's Champions League and Europa League matches behind closed doors. The government decree allows for the possibility of organising matches under international jurisdiction in empty stadiums, such as ties in UEFA's Champions League and Europa League.

Juventus are due to host Lyon in the second leg of their Champions League last-16 tie in Turin next week. Inter Milan are due to host Spain's Getafe in the Europa League on Thursday while Roma welcome Sevilla a week later. There is a kind of legal vacuum. Neither the statutes of the federation nor those of the League provide for the case of an interrupted championship, and precedents are extremely rare.

There is also the problem of who qualifies for next season's European competitions, and which teams are relegated. According to the Italian sports press, the hypothesis of validating a final classification on the last full day of play, the 24th round of 38 games, does not suit many clubs. In that case Juventus would be crowned champions of Italy for a ninth consecutive season. —AFP

## Spain's La Liga football behind closed doors

**MADRID:** Spain's La Liga confirmed yesterday that first and second division football matches will be staged behind closed doors for at least two weeks due to the coronavirus. The measures follow the decision of the Spanish High Council of Sports that all sporting events in Spain at state and international level should be played without fans to limit the spread of the virus.

"According to information from the High Sports Council (CSD), La Liga Santander and La Liga SmartBank matches will be played behind closed doors from today and for at least the next two weeks," a La Liga statement read.

"La Liga will remain in permanent contact with the Ministry of Health and the CSD to meet their recommendations and/or decisions, and put first the health of fans, players, club employees and journalists during the health crisis of COVID-19."

Real Madrid's game against Eibar at the Santiago Bernabeu on Friday night will be the weekend's first fixture affected as authorities step up attempts to contain the out-

break. Two local derbies will also go ahead in empty stadiums as Valencia face Levante at Mestalla on Saturday before Sevilla host Real Betis at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan on Sunday night.

Spain had registered more than 1,500 cases of coronavirus yesterday, with the decision made on Monday to close all schools in the Madrid area from yesterday until the end of March. La Liga's announcement comes after several European matches involving Spanish teams had already been put behind closed doors.

Earlier yesterday, Barcelona confirmed their Champions League tie against Napoli at Camp Nou on March 18 would be played in front of empty stands. Valencia's Champions League game at home to Atalanta later on Tuesday and Sevilla's Europa League match at home to Roma on Thursday will also both be played without supporters.

However, Real Madrid fans will be hoping to be able to travel to England to see their team go up against Manchester City at the Etihad Stadium on March 17. La Liga said there were also plans in place should any Spanish league matches have to be suspended.

"For weeks, La Liga has been working on alternative plans in coordination with the UEFA in case the health authorities decide on the suspension of any matches, with dates to ensure fixtures are played within established deadlines," the statement added. —AFP