



**11** UAE joins Saudi in opening taps as row with Russia hits oil prices



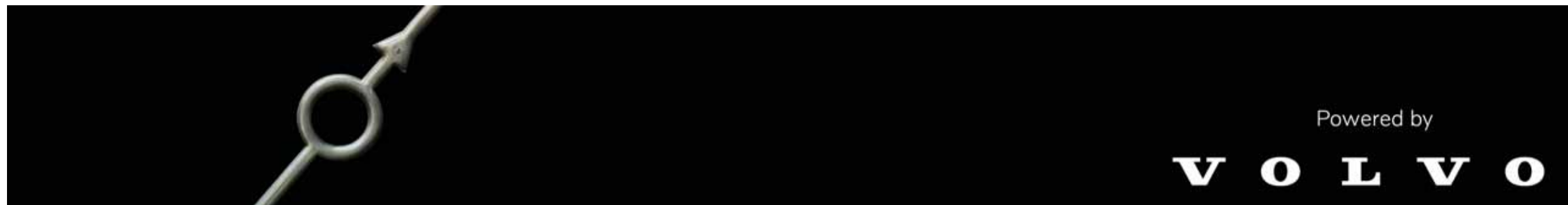
**16** Rare white giraffes killed by poachers in Kenya



**24** Biden says fighting for US 'soul' after big primary wins



**28** Paraguayan judge orders Ronaldinho to stay in jail



# KUWAIT LOCKS DOWN

Public holiday announced from March 12 to 26 • Commercial flights completely halted

- No gatherings at restaurants and cafes, even inside malls
- Banks closed until March 26, except one in each governorate

- Mandatory tests for expats who returned from Feb 27 onwards
- Cooperative societies will remain open; no curfew in country



KUWAIT: (Left) Long queues are seen outside a bakery in Rumaithiya yesterday. (Right) A new center for screening expatriates is being readied at the international fairgrounds in Mishref yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and KUNA

By B Izzak and Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait was yesterday in near lockdown after the government took a series of exceptional measures in a bid to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, halting commercial flights and sending public sector employees on a public holiday for two weeks. The Cabinet said flights to and from Kuwait will stop from midnight on Friday. Flights for returning Kuwaitis will be arranged by authorities. The halt of flights effectively means that Kuwait is completely cut off from the outside world, except for cargo flights and imports.

The Cabinet also banned gatherings at restaurants and cafes including those inside malls, and ordered the closure of gyms, sports and health clubs. But the gov-

ernment denied that a curfew has been imposed, describing such reports as baseless rumors. Banks were also declared closed for a similar period from March 12 until March 26. All transactions can be completed online, the banking association announced, adding one branch will remain open in each governorate to assist clients.

The health ministry also imposed mandatory medical tests for coronavirus for all expatriates who have returned to the country from Feb 27 onward. The ministry established testing centers at the international fairgrounds in Mishref to test expats in accordance with their place of residence from 8.00 am until 6.00 pm. Expats must bring their civil IDs and passports with them.

The days of tests are as follows: Thursday, March 12 - Expats from Jahra governorate; Friday, March 13 -

Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorate; Saturday, March 14 - Farwaniya governorate; Sunday, March 15 - Hawally governorate; Monday, March 16 - Ahmadi governorate; Tuesday, March 17 - Capital governorate. The ministry said testing is mandatory and warned those who fail to report of legal measures.

Officials advised people to stay away from gatherings and remain at home. The health ministry yesterday announced three more coronavirus cases, raising the total number to 72, but Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basal Al-Sabah said three of the cases have been cured and will be released soon.

Following the announcement of the new measures, large crowds rushed to cooperative societies, markets, bakeries and petrol stations, as rumors spread that cooperative societies will be closed. Government

Spokesperson Tareq Al-Mazrem categorically denied that cooperative societies will be closed, stressing that the societies and other essential services will remain open without restrictions.

Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh also insisted that imports to the country will remain open. The ministry of commerce said that all branches of subsidized rations will remain open, while the health and commerce ministries stressed they have ample supplies. MP Saleh Ashour said the health ministry is not capable of controlling a possible spread of the coronavirus among expatriates and called for sending thousands of "marginal" expat workers to their home countries until the problem is over. Earlier this week, Kuwait stopped issuing all types of visas for expats except for diplomats and in coordination with Kuwaiti embassies abroad.

## 238 cases in Qatar; 77 in Bahrain; 63 new deaths in Iran

**DUBAI:** Qatar reported 238 more coronavirus infections among individuals under quarantine in a residential compound yesterday, the latest Gulf state to record new cases in a regional outbreak. Bahrain earlier announced 77 new infections among citizens evacuated by plane from Iran, which has emerged as an epicenter for the virus in the Middle East. Two meetings of G20 economies due to be held in Saudi Arabia have been postponed.

All Gulf Arab states have recorded infections but no deaths. The spike in cases in Qatar, which took the country's tally to 262, was among expatriates who had been quarantined inside one compound after three residents were diagnosed with the virus on Sunday, the health ministry said. Bahrain's new infections were among 165 individuals flown home on Tuesday in the first repatriation flight from Iran. A second government-chartered flight is set for today.

Those who did not test positive will be quarantined in a dedicated facility, Bahrain's government communications office said in a separate statement. There are no direct flights between Bahrain and Iran, the world's fourth most affected country, with more than 8,000 infections. Airlines are cancelling flights across the region as governments try to stem the spread of the virus.

Continued on Page 24

## Panic buying as essentials run out at stores

By Sajeev K Peter

**KUWAIT:** Long queues formed outside cooperative societies and retail outlets across Kuwait yesterday as people resorted to panic buying of essentials after the government declared a two-week public holiday in the wake of coronavirus outbreak in the country.

As soon as the news of the holiday broke, people rushed to supermarkets, co-ops, bakeries and grocery stores to stock-

pile staples like milk, bread, eggs, flour, vegetables and fruits, fearing that food-stuff will soon run out of stock. By 7 pm, huge crowds were seen at supermarkets in most residential areas such as Salmiya, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Riggae, Khaitan and Fahaheel, leading to chaotic scenes in many places.

Some people complained that eggs, milks and vegetables ran out in many small shops and baqalas, while staff at cooperatives and supermarkets struggled to deal with the sudden spurt in demand for basic food items and the unprecedented buying spree. "It was really crazy. I stood in the line for two hours to get a crate of eggs and four packs of milk. But, I don't see any reason for this kind of panic," an expat named Rodrigues said as he came out of a cooperative in Salmiya.



KUWAIT: Long queues are seen at the checkout counter of a supermarket yesterday. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

## WHO: Coronavirus outbreak a pandemic

**GENEVA:** The World Health Organization is describing the new coronavirus as a pandemic, it said yesterday, adding that Italy and Iran were now on the frontline of the disease and other countries would soon join them. "We are deeply concerned both by the alarming levels of spread and severity and by the alarming levels of inaction. We have therefore made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic," WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a news conference yesterday.

He urged the global community to redouble efforts to

contain the outbreak, saying aggressive measures could still play a big role to curb the pandemic. Mike Ryan, head of the WHO's emergencies program, said the situation in Iran was "very serious" and the agency would like to see more surveillance and more care for the sick. The coronavirus, which emerged in China in December, has spread around the world, halting industry, bringing flights to a standstill, closing schools and forcing the postponement of sporting events and concerts.

The WHO declared a public health emergency of international concern, its "highest level of alarm", on Jan 30 when there were fewer than 100 cases of COVID-19 outside China and eight cases of human-to-human transmission of the disease. Now there are more than 118,000 cases in 114 countries and 4,291 people have

Continued on Page 24



GENEVA: World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus speaks during a daily press briefing on COVID-19 at the WHO headquarters yesterday. — AFP

## Kuwait Fights Coronavirus

## Kuwait tightens grip on violators of COVID-19 precautionary measures

## Municipality closes 33 cafes and 41 wedding halls for violating regulations

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Municipality Director Ahmed Al-Manfouhi strongly instructed various municipality officials to make sure Ministry of Health's (MoH) coronavirus-related precautionary measures are followed in various barbershops, salons, spas, sports and social clubs and cafes. "We are more concerned now with people's safety rather than law enforcement," Manfouhi stressed, noting that upon MoH instructions, municipality inspection teams recently closed 33 cafes and 41 wedding halls for violating the recent regulations. "262 citations and 459 warning notices have been filed so far, in addition to closing 33 cafes," he concluded.

Meanwhile, the municipality announced Ahmadi inspectors had filed 140 citations and 120 warning notices and closed 15 wedding halls. Capital teams filed 44 citations and 102 warning notices and closed five cafes. Hawally inspectors filed four citations and 80 warning notices and closed three cafes. Jahra inspectors filed 24 citations and 87 warning notices and closed 20 cafes and 12 wedding halls. Mubarak Al-Kabeer inspectors filed 29 citations and 20 warning notices.

In the meantime, Hawally municipality inspectors inspected various areas, said Hawally cleaning department manager Mohammed Al-Jabah, noting that the tour resulted in removing 2,500 tons of waste, cleaning 120 alleys and 100 main streets, filing seven citations, removing 28 abandoned vehicles and pasting 45 warning stickers on others.

**Commercial fraud**

Separately, MoH assistant undersecretary for food and drug control Dr Abdullah Al-Bader announced a cosmetic cream and injection importing company in Hawally had been refilling its products into non-authentic packages and selling them to various clinics and pharmacies, which a violation of law number 28/1006. Bader added MoH inspectors also found some unregistered products in the company's warehouses, including buttock injections, Chinese cortisone and other products.

Bader explained that in collaboration with Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) inspectors, MoH teams had been investigating the sources



A Kuwait Municipality worker fills a citation form during the campaign.

of some unregistered products found in some clinics, namely cosmetics, and traced them back to the company's warehouses, where large quantities of empty packs and locally printed labels were found. "Further procedures are in progress to refer the case to prosecution," Bader concluded.

**Quarantine fishermen**

Kuwaiti Fishermen's Union yesterday issued a statement urging various concerned bodies to reconsider the problem of impounding some Kuwaiti fishing boats at Doha port, after the coastguards referred over 23 of them for a 14-day quarantine with the justification that these boats had purchased Iranian pomfret from Iranian boats. The union called for investigating the matter to identify the culprits and hold them accountable instead of question-



## 262 citations and 459 warnings filed



KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality personnel close down a violating store during the campaign. — Kuwait Municipality photos

ing everybody without evidence. "The 116 quarantined fishermen are all Indians," the union underlined, pointing out that impounding these boats will have a negative impact on the daily catch and the amount of fish offered for sale in local markets.

**Passenger traffic**

The civil aviation directorate said passenger traffic at Kuwait international airport increased by 4 percent in February, with a total of 1,146,665 passengers compared to 1,105,525 passengers in Feb 2019. In this regard, deputy director for aviation safety and airport security Emad Al-Jlowi said the total number of passengers arriving in February was 572,564, compared to 542,656 in the same period the previous year. Jlowi added the total number of departing passengers in the same period was 574,101, compared to 562,869

in 2019. Jlowi said the total number of flights were 10,162, compared to 9,083 in 2019.

**Special needs**

Director of the public authority for the disabled Dr Shafiq Al-Awadhi stressed the authority is very keen on providing proper care to citizens with special needs. Responding to a social media video showing a disabled female citizen and her bedoon husband living in a camp, Awadhi explained that this particular citizen receives KD 700 in monthly aid and that she had met with the husband and asked him to apply to get additional aid to pay for a driver and housemaid. "The husband said he will soon move to a new residence with a KD 200 in monthly rent," Awadhi explained, adding that special teams had also contacted the citizen to follow up her case daily. Meanwhile, the ministry of social affairs stressed various charities are being currently contacted to help the citizen move into a proper residence.

## Kuwait sets up center for screening incoming expats



**KUWAIT:** Authorities are preparing and equipping a new center for screening incoming expatriates of coronavirus infections at Kuwait International Fairground in Mishref, a Ministry of Health official announced yesterday. Abdulaziz Al-Tasha, the



assistant undersecretary for services affairs, said in a statement that the new center would admit people for testing on daily basis. He was speaking to the press during a tour of the location where the new center was being prepared. —KUNA

## Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait has so far recorded 72 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, as well as two other Egyptian residents and a Sudanese citizen who came in contact with him. With the exception of five 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, five 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. Meanwhile, Kuwait requires all expatriates who arrived from travel on February 27 and beyond to visit Kuwait International Fairground where the Ministry of Health has set up a center at Hall 6 to test people for possible infection. Daily tests will be held from March 12 to March 17 covering residents of the following governorates respectively: Jahra,

Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Farwaniya, Hawally Ahmadi and the Capital.

**Precautions**

Kuwait will halt all commercial flights to and from the Gulf Arab state starting March 13 and until further notice, with the exception of cargo flights. Authorities also announced a public holiday in the country from March 12 to March 26, with work resuming on March 29, while entities providing vital services will remain open. Meanwhile, people are banned from going to restaurants and cafes, including those inside malls until further notice.

State departments have been on high alert to take precautions against the potential spread of the virus. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has taken measures to make sure that facial masks, hand sanitizers and other goods remain accessible to the public. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education has suspended classes for March at all public and private schools (for both students and teaching staffs); first from March 1 to March 12, and later extended it until March 29. In the meantime, the Civil Service Commission suspended the biometric fingerprint system for staff attendance until further notice.

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 procedures and guidelines, and are obliged to implement compulsory home quarantine for a period of two weeks from the date of departure. 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 compulso-

ry 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

**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)

Local

# Modern-day heroes: Health frontliners urged to delay vacations for six months

Memo sent to staff in public and private medical facilities



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti health ministry workers scan employees and visitors of the ministries complex, as they arrive to their work, in Kuwait City on March 4, 2020. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** In an effort to contain the coronavirus outbreak in Kuwait, the Ministry of Health's hospital director recently sent internal memos to all staff urging them to be prepared and proactive in case they are called to face the challenge of dealing with coronavirus patients. The memorandum was sent through department heads addressed to all health personnel including physicians and nurses, urging them to delay their travels by up to six months and stand by in case of emergencies.

"Yes, we got the memo advising us to delay vaca-

tions for at least six months," said a Filipino nurse working in a government hospital who spoke to Kuwait Times on the condition of anonymity. "I am about to travel to the Philippines, my bags are packed, my family is ready to travel and we have plans for our 30-day annual leave. Now those plans are put on hold after we received the advisory," she said. Even private hospitals received the same advisory. "Yes, we are also not permitted to take leave as well. We understand the current situation and we will abide and follow the rules," said a nurse working at a private hospital.

The memo, according to a Kuwait Times' source,

was issued by the hospital director. "I believe the memo is different for each section or department because we have different functions. If you are in the specialized section and are dealing with current emergencies, you are not supposed to take leave or vacation. That was mentioned before, but now it looks like the memo is for everyone. It was made clear to me by my boss that even those who filed for their vacation before February 24 are advised not to go," the source said.

Asked if medics are prepared to deal with a situation of this magnitude, she said: "We are trained to deal with crisis situations, so we are ready at all times. I don't

think it is a problem. But we are human beings too and are afraid, not for ourselves, but for our loved ones."

Ironically, staff of some private clinics received a different warning. "In the private clinic where I work, we have not been advised of anything. In fact we received a verbal notice that we might close since we do not have patients as the number of patients has drastically gone down. The owner is also afraid we might contract the virus since we are on the frontline and attending to the needs of patients. So in order to contain and avoid transmission, they told us we might close temporarily," said a nurse working in a private clinic.



## Legal action against schools forcing teachers to attend

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Director of Public Relations and Educational Media at the Ministry of Education Dhedan Al-Ajmi told Kuwait Times yesterday that the ministry will take legal action against schools that are still working and forcing teachers and students to attend. Kuwait Times received complaints regarding some nurseries that are still accepting children and forcing their teachers to work. Ajmi advised those teachers to come to the education ministry or private education department to file a complaint and provide the name of the school in order to begin legal procedures.

Ajmi affirmed that for teachers who came from infected countries and are required to remain in quarantine for 14 days, the school must pay their salaries. Regarding the backup plan to make up what students missed in schools, he said that the ministry is still studying it. "We are still studying and working on a plan. It is a new situation for us," he said.

Ajmi said people can call the hotlines of the ministry of education to communicate with the educational districts depending on the school's governorate (Capital hotline: 51575591, Hawally: 51576117, Farwaniya: 51576576, Jahra: 51577055, Ahmadi: 51577655, Mubarak Al-Kabeer: 51577951, Services Administration: 51592515, Public Relations: 51594544)

Last week, Kuwait Times interviewed Manager of the Private Education Department Sanad Al-Mutairi to clarify some issues related to private schools, after many schools threatened to cut the salaries of teachers during the closure period. Mutairi said no school has the right to deduct the amount for the days of suspension from teachers' salaries, advising teachers to inform the private education department.

Meanwhile, Education Minister Saud Al-Harbi announced on Tuesday the launch of the first phase of the operational plan for the e-learning project. He stressed that the ministry of education has been working since the beginning of the outbreak of the novel coronavirus to develop mechanisms and solutions to avoid the consequences of this crisis, and one of them was the activation of the Kuwait educational portal including the educational channel and Siraj app, in addition to creating new tools and learning resources for the portal, instant feedback and online classes.

The main tasks of the implementation plan for the e-learning project are equipping the headquarters of the technology team at the ministry, converting textbooks of different levels of study into PDF format, complete the MS-TEAMS database, uploading links to the educational channel to download interactive books, providing online tests and providing technical support to all work teams.



**Kuwait Times**  
Established 1961

Subscribe or renew your subscription  
& get K.D 50

**1 Coupon FREE**

**RASANA SILK FITNESS GYM CENTER**

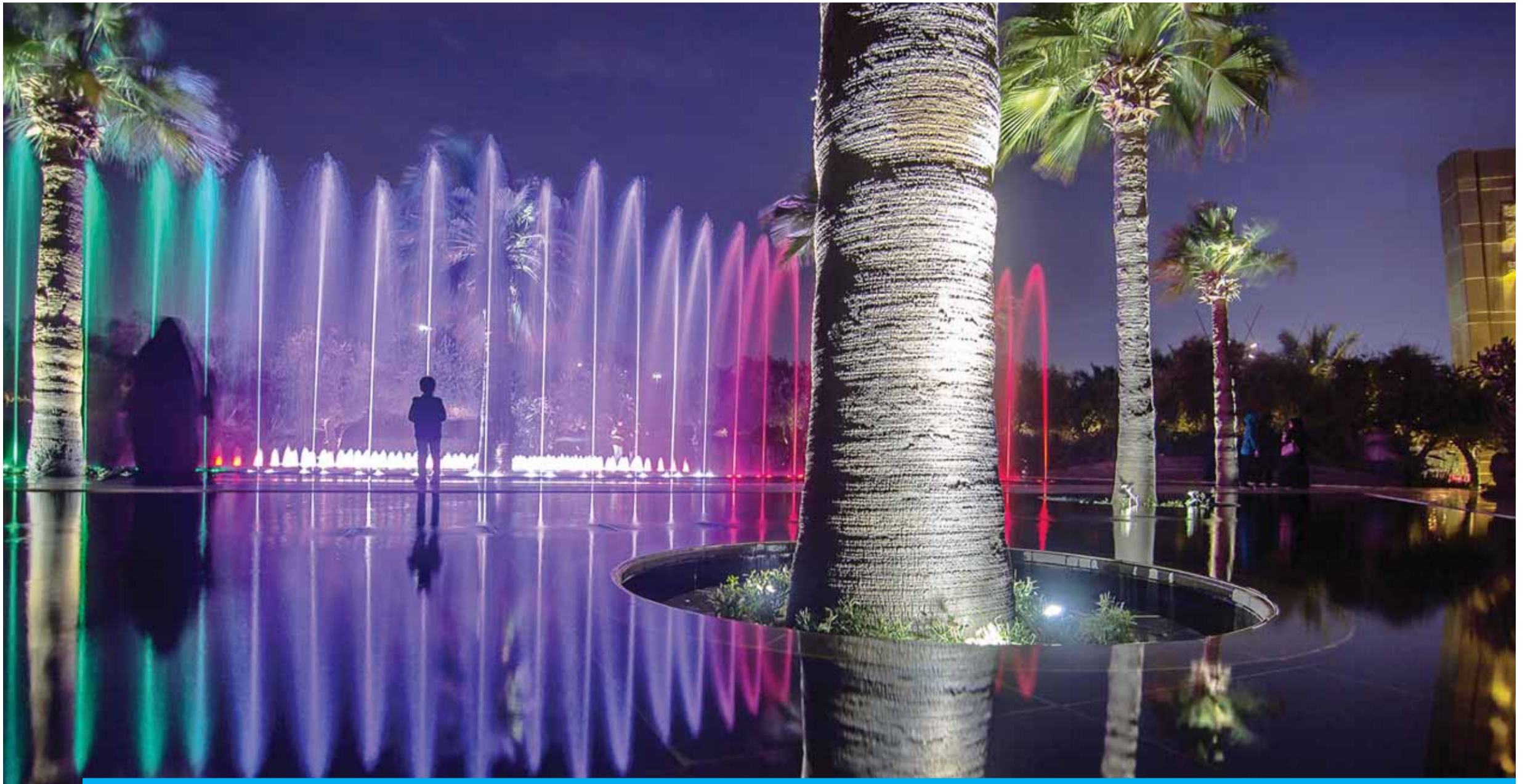
**FACILITIES**

- Professional Coaches
- Specialized machines & Cardio equipment
- Aerobics, Aquo Aerobics & Aquarunning classes
- Indoor tennis/pickleball court with viewing gallery
- Spa, Jacuzzi & Steam Bath
- Spa & Salon

**50 KD**

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

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A colorful Shaheed Park at night. —Photo by Yousef Al-Batashi (KUNA)

## Measures at Palace of Justice to prevent COVID-19 spread

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Litigants and lawyers crowded in front of the criminal court hall at the Palace of Justice yesterday as new measures were taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The court allowed only one person to enter at a time. Other stipulations included using sanitizers and wearing a mask and gloves. Some people said this strict measure is good to prevent COVID-19 spreading in crowds.

Meanwhile, and in view of the exceptional circumstances and the measures taken to fight the spread of the coronavirus, the ministry of awqaf and Islamic affairs yesterday issued a circular to all imams and preachers urging them to shorten prayers and limit the time between the azan and iqamah as well as the Friday sermon to only 10 minutes. The circular also urged imams to focus on supplications during the Friday prayers to lift the calamity and this disease.



praying for HH the Amir and HH the Crown Prince and urging worshippers to follow relevant authorities' instructions and guidelines.

### Woman files sexual assault case in Khaitan

**KUWAIT:** An Arab woman told Khaitan police that an Asian man sexually assaulted her while heading to a store where the suspect works. Detectives are working on the case and looking to arrest the suspect for questioning.

#### Indecent gesture

A Kuwaiti citizen told police that a person made an indecent gesture at him following a traffic dispute, and gave officers the license plate number of the alleged offender's vehicle. The person is being sought to face charges.

#### Scam

An Arab man told Mubarak Al-Kabeer police that he was scammed when a European man sold him a large quantity of perfumes, only to discover it was counterfeit material. Investigations are ongoing.

#### Fight

Police intervened to stop a fight between two women in Abu Halaifa, though the two kept swearing at each other, prompting policemen to take their IDs and asked them to go to the police station. The two were sent for questioning and may face legal action.

#### Cop offender in custody

A traffic policeman used force to control a taxi driver who refused to follow his orders and insulted him. The policeman pulled the taxi driver over for violating traffic law and issued him a citation, so the driver became angry and insulted the cop. The driver refused and resisted arrest, so the traffic policeman forced him in the patrol car and took him to Nugra police station where he was detained for questioning.

#### KD 15,000 theft

A thief stole KD 15,000 from a company in Sharq. The suspect entered the company's building and carried the safe that contained the money in addition to other documents. Detectives took over the case.

#### Medical error

A GCC national accused a doctor of making a medical error while in hospital and lodged a complaint in Jabriya police station. The doctor will be summoned for questioning. — Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

**Kuwait Times**  
ESTABLISHED 1961  
THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

**STAY CONNECTED**

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

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

• Enjoy the first daily paper in Kuwait on your phone

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



**KUWAIT:** Air cargo inspectors seized 480 grams of hashish in 34 pieces wrapped as candy in a shipment that came from London yesterday. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun

# Semi-lockdown triggers panic buying in Kuwait



KUWAIT: Co-operative societies, supermarkets, bakeries and many other outlets were overcrowded yesterday as people went on panic buying in Kuwait as soon as the government announced a series of exceptional measures in a bid to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, halting commercial flights and a public holiday for two weeks. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat, Ben Garcia and Faten Omar





Afghan government to free Taliban prisoners

## After testing delays, US coronavirus cases surge past 1,000

Page 8

Page 9



CODOGNO: Residents line up at a safety distance as they wait to shop at a supermarket in Codogno, southeast of Milan, a day after Italy imposed unprecedented national restrictions on its 60 million people to control the deadly COVID-19 coronavirus. —AFP

# Love in the time of coronavirus

## Flouting the fever - avoid cheek-kissing and handshakes

**PARIS:** People are being warned against cheek-kissing and handshakes for fear of spreading the coronavirus. But at such a time, are love and dating also on hold? Some in Paris, seen by its fans as the capital of romance, seem happy to flout the advice against physical contact and put their quest for love first.

On Camille's second date with Olivier, who she met via dating app Tinder, he offered her a sip from his drink at a Paris movie theatre. There was only one straw. "I hesitated for several seconds, and then I said 'yes' because I was afraid I would spoil the moment," the French architect recalled. In the end, they kissed. The World Health Organization (WHO), which has warned of a real threat of the coronavirus outbreak becoming a pandemic - meaning it has truly spread worldwide - has no specific advice for people pursuing amorous agendas. "WHO's advice on prevention applies to all social situations," the UN's health arm said in a statement sent to AFP in response to a query. Advice includes regular hand-washing, avoiding travelling if you have a fever or cough, and coughing and sneezing into your sleeve or a discardable tissue.

The virus is known to travel in human saliva, which should make kissing on the lips off limits. France has already advised against the less intimate but common greeting "la bise" - which involves touching cheeks while making kissing noises in the air. There is no published data suggesting the virus can spread via sex.

Tinder, the app that famously allows users to swipe through a myriad of candidates for a date or a hookup, has

issued a warning to users that "While we want you to continue to have fun, protecting yourself from the coronavirus is more important." The message, which pops up between two potential "matches", is accompanied by a list of basic prevention measures which include keeping a "social distance" in public gatherings - seemingly at odds with the app's very reason for existence: getting people together.



**WHO: Coronavirus outbreak becoming a pandemic**

### 'Loosening up'

Health authorities say the virus appears to spread between people who are within about 1.8 meters (six feet) from one another. "Tinder is aware that its members are sometimes driven to meet in person," the company, which has some 50 million clients said. It said it wished to highlight safety precautions "given the current environment."

Celia, a 39-year-old Parisian who did not give her full

name, said the outbreak did nothing to dampen her excitement about meeting up with the man she had been flirting with online. "There is an element of 'the end of the world' to this virus, it... makes me want to live a little more intensely, and not necessarily in a wholesome way," she said. The date was ultimately cancelled because her counterpart had a fever.

For some, the outbreak seems to have only fuelled their search for love. "I have the impression that it has served as a boost, that everyone is connecting, loosening up," said a dating app user who gave her name as Leila and said she had observed a sudden increase in "matches" and meet-ups.

Research has shown that periods of high anxiety may drive people to engage in more, and riskier, sexual behavior. The WHO said it was "normal and understandable to feel anxious" in these days, "especially if you live in a country or community that has been affected" by the coronavirus. In the bars and nightclubs of Paris, many seem to be opting for the strategy of avoidance.

A man sitting at a bar counter with three friends jokes that the virus "is a good topic of conversation, it makes it easy to talk to girls". At another popular spot, 30-year-old Jeanne asserts that after a few drinks "one quickly forgets about the risks of infection". And at Mask, a Paris swingers club where guests often wear elaborate disguises, the management has noted a 30-percent drop in clientele, but insists it will not close, for now. At the entrance, guests can collect a mask - of the surgical kind. —AFP

## Russian pranksters dupe Prince Harry in a hoax call

**LONDON:** Russian pranksters yesterday said they duped Prince Harry into believing he was speaking to environmental campaigner Greta Thunberg, after The Sun newspaper gave details of hoax calls. "It was us", Vladimir "Voyan" Kuznetsov told AFP in response to the British tabloid's front-page report, which said the prince was duped into two chats with him and Alexei "Lexus" Soloyarov.

The pair, known as "Voyan and Lexus", have made a habit of fooling politicians and pop stars in prank calls. Their previous victims include Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, pop icon Elton John and Prime Minister Boris Johnson himself when he was foreign secretary in 2018. In the conversations, which took place in December and January, the prince was tricked into believing he was speaking to Thunberg and her father, Svante.

The daily reported he gave his support to Thunberg and attacked US President Donald Trump for his stance on climate change. "Unfortunately the world is being led by some very sick people so the people like yourselves and younger generation are the ones that are going to make all the difference," the prince reportedly said. "I think the mere fact that Donald Trump is pushing the coal industry is so big in America, he has blood on his hands."

The Russian pair reportedly also coaxed Harry to discuss his decision to quit frontline royal life as well as to comment on leading politicians. On British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Harry was said to have added: "He is a good man, so you are one of few people who can reach into his soul and get him to feel and believe in you. "But you have to understand that because he has been around for so long like all of these other people, they are already set in their ways."

On his move to North America with wife Meghan and baby Archie, Harry was quoted as saying it was "the right decision to be able to protect my son" from constant media attention. "It's a tricky one, but we will start a new life," he added. The Duke of Sussex insisted "no one has stripped us of our titles", saying the British press had exaggerated the issue of their future royal status. —AFP

## Biden: Senator, vice president - on brink of White House run

**WASHINGTON:** Joe Biden, whose life has been marked by triumph and tragedy, is on the brink of winning a prize that has eluded his grasp on two previous occasions - the Democratic presidential nomination. The 77-year-old moderate Democrat moved a step closer to heading the party ticket against Donald Trump in November with a series of primary wins on Tuesday over the leftist Bernie Sanders.

One of the youngest senators in US history, vice president for eight years to Barack Obama, America's first black president, Biden has had a storied political career. His two previous White House runs - in 1988 and 2008 - ended in humiliation, however, as the then senator from Delaware failed to win a single state primary or caucus. The second time around, Obama became the Democratic nominee, and selected Biden to be his running mate.

Despite being the favorite of the Democratic establishment, the latest White House bid by Biden also looked like it was headed for disaster after a series of disappointing losses to the fiery Sanders in Iowa, New Hampshire and Nevada. But Biden came roaring back in South Carolina's primary on the strength of overwhelming backing from African-American voters, a crucial base of Democratic support. He followed that up with wins in 10 of the 14 states which voted on March 3 and added to his tally with big victories over Sanders on Tuesday in Mississippi, Missouri and Michigan.

"For those who have been knocked down, counted out, left behind, this is your campaign," Biden said, a phrase he uses frequently on the campaign trail and one that mirrors his own life story. Biden's political success has been intertwined with crushing personal loss. His first wife, Neilia Hunter, and one-year-old daughter, Naomi, died in a car crash in 1972 while

Christmas shopping, just weeks after Biden had defied the odds and won election to the Senate from Delaware.

### 'Highest compliment'

The accident left his two sons, Joseph "Beau" Biden III, 4, and Robert Hunter Biden, 2, badly injured, and the 30-year-old Biden was sworn into the Senate beside their hospital beds. While serving in the Senate, Biden would commute 120 miles by train every day from Washington to his home in Wilmington, Delaware, to be with his family. Biden met his second wife, Jill Jacobs, a schoolteacher from Pennsylvania, in 1975 and they married two years later.

They have a daughter, Ashley, born in 1981. Both boys recovered from their injuries and Beau followed his father into politics, becoming the attorney general of Delaware and contemplating a run for state governor before dying of brain cancer in 2015 at the age of 46.

Biden renounced a presidential bid in 2016 in part because he was still grieving over his son's death. After Pete Buttigieg dropped out of the presidential race, Biden paid the former South Bend, Indiana, mayor what he said was his "highest compliment." "He reminds me of my son Beau," he said. Biden's younger son, Hunter, was thrust into the spotlight last year when Trump asked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to investigate his business dealings in Ukraine.

Hunter, who has had a checkered career as a lawyer and lobbyist, served on the board of a Ukrainian gas company accused of corrupt practices although he was not personally accused of any criminal wrongdoing. Trump's request that Zelensky investigate the Bidens led to his impeachment by the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives but he was acquitted by the Republican majority Senate. Hunter Biden has also struggled with alcohol and drug addiction, a battle he candidly recounted in a profile published in The New Yorker in July.

### 'Uncle Joe'

Joseph Robinette Biden Jr was born on November 20, 1942 and raised in Scranton, Pennsylvania, in an Irish-Catholic family. His father was a car salesman. Biden touts his



PHILADELPHIA: Democratic Presidential candidate former Vice President Joe Biden addresses the media and a small group of supporters with his wife Dr Jill Biden during a primary night event in Philadelphia. —AFP

blue-collar roots on the campaign trail and recalls that he was hampered as a child by a stutter so bad he was cruelly nicknamed "Dash." But he overcame the condition and came to see it as a blessing that he said allowed him "insight into other people's pain."

As "Uncle Joe," he is known for his personal warmth and folksy manner. But he also has a propensity for public gaffes, and his often rambling delivery on the campaign trail has raised questions over his mental agility. Last year, he faced questions about whether his notoriously tactile approach with women might emerge as a liability in the #MeToo era and damage his credibility to challenge Trump on gender issues.

But he emerged with his greatest strength - his knack for connecting personally with voters - largely intact. Under Obama, Biden handled foreign policy crises in Ukraine and Iraq, and pushed gay rights to the fore by publicly supporting same-sex marriage. If he wins the nomination, Biden could face a reckoning during the general election over some of his Senate votes, including supporting the Iraq War, a controversial crime bill, and a measure that weakened longstanding banking regulations. —AFP



MOSCOW: In this file photo, Russian pranksters (left to right) Vladimir 'Voyan' Kuznetsov, and Alexei 'Lexus' Soloyarov speak during an interview with AFP at a bar in Moscow. —AFP

## International

# Corona! Thermal camera protects Erdogan in the Turkish parliament

## Turkey confirms first coronavirus case

ANKARA: President Tayyip Erdogan appeared in Turkey's parliament with an extra cameraman yesterday - an aide with a thermal camera checking people he met for fever which could be linked to coronavirus. The aide scanned journalists and politicians who crowded around the Turkish leader as he arrived in parliament on the day that the first coronavirus case was confirmed in Turkey. Erdogan later told members of his AK Party that Turkey was taking appropriate steps to protect all citizens. "No virus is stronger than our measures," he said.

A presidential official said the thermal camera could be used in Erdogan's future public appearances to limit his exposure to coronavirus. The 66-year-old president has shunned handshakes with dignitaries this week, putting his hand over his heart instead at meetings with European Council President Charles Michel in Brussels and with newly accredited ambassadors in Ankara. On both occasions he gave a one-word explanation for his actions: "Corona!"

Meanwhile, Turkey confirmed its first case of the coronavirus yesterday, becoming the last major economy to report an outbreak after taking what the World Health Organization (WHO) described as "vigilant, cautious" measures to delay the disease. Turkey's tourism sector, which accounts for about 13% of its economy, stepped up calls on the government for financial help to deal with the expected negative impact of the outbreak.

Health Minister Fahrettin Koca confirmed yesterday

that a Turkish man with a high fever and cough had been diagnosed as having the virus and had been isolated. "This is the first case confirmed in our country. The findings show the diagnosis of coronavirus was made early and if the virus has spread it is limited," he told a news conference. "Our country is prepared for this, all measures to prevent the spread (of the virus) have been taken," he said, referring to comprehensive screening and testing programs. Until the announcement, Turkey - a member of the Group of 20 biggest global economies and a major transit hub between Europe, Asia and Africa - had officially managed to avoid an outbreak, though all its neighbors except war-ravaged Syria had reported cases. Iran has an especially high number of cases. In an interview hours before the announcement of the first case, Irshad Shaikh, the WHO Health Security Program Leader in Turkey, praised Ankara's preventative measures and good organization, saying it had been "very lucky, vigilant and cautious".

### WHO praises its screenings and tests

#### Gearing up for battle

The WHO has given guidance globally, and is in contact with health officials in Turkey on legislation, risk management, testing and screening practices, among other issues, he said. "In all those areas...Turkey has taken that to heart." "Turkey is an advanced country, and most of the systems were already there. What was needed was to make sure they are quick to this outbreak," Shaikh told Reuters. Turkish Tourism Minister Mehmet Nuri Ersoy and tourism officials met in Ankara

in large groups," Harvard president Lawrence Bacow said in a statement posted on the university's website.

Without going quite so far, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), also based in Cambridge, canceled all gatherings likely to attract at least 150 people until May 15. Classes with 150 or more students will move online, starting this week, it added. In New York, Columbia, New York University and Fordham have all announced that they are switching to remote learning. Princeton University in New Jersey said it would move all lectures and seminars online from March 23 to at least April 5, as it cancelled events of more than 100 people.

On the other side of the country, in California, at least five universities, including Berkeley and Stanford, have suspended all or most of their in-person classes. A spokesperson for the American Council of Education (ACE) said it was "impossible to say" how many schools and students had been affected because "the situation changes all the time." ACE president Ted Mitchell told the Los Angeles Times the coronavirus was "probably the greatest short-term challenge facing higher education in a generation." —AFP

Desire Abergel, who has had enough of being a Jew and wants to become an anti-Semite like everybody else. He even goes as far as asking a cosmetic surgeon to remake his lost foreskin. The colorful cast of characters includes a female English rabbi who specializes in getting divorces for Hasidic lesbians.

There is also a completely unfunny stand-up comedian called Donnemoidufric - which means 'give me the cash' in French - who may or may not be based on Dieudonne, a convicted anti-Semite who has a cult following in France. "I am terrified of boring my readers," Sfar said. Having given up long ago "the desire to win them over and convince them. I don't write as an activist, or to change the world", he added. "I love the idea of creating dread and making people laugh at the same time," admitted the polymath, whose father Andre is famous for prosecuting neo-Nazis.

He said his guiding principle was a famous line by the great French humorist and avowed fatalist Pierre Desproges, who said: "You can laugh about anything but not with everybody." "Happily there are enough

on Sunday, placing cement blocks and checkpoints to prevent movement in and out of the region while ensuring trade flows continued.

Authorities have said the lockdown was temporary, to contain the infection. Most of the kingdom's 20 cases have involved people who had been in either Iran or Iraq or met individuals who had visited those countries, home to Shiite holy sites. They said several people had not disclosed their visits to the Islamic Republic upon returning to the kingdom, which has long banned its citizens from travelling to arch-foe Iran.

#### Livelihood

In several towns of the region, streets and markets were still bustling. One vendor gutting fish wore a face mask, while his colleague did not. Fisherman went about their business. "Things are normal in Qatif," a 59-year-old man who identified himself as Abu Hussein said, adding that his daughter continued her medical studies remotely like many students throughout the kingdom where schools have been closed.

"The only thing is that masks and sanitizers have disappeared from pharmacies," he said. Work at government and private entities was suspended with the exception of essential activities, such as medical and security services and



QATIF: Saudi security forces guard an entrance of Qatif city in the Eastern Province, some 400km from the capital Riyadh. —AFP

petrol stations. As the lockdown began, there was a rush to grocery shops by residents that went on until midnight. One said he had stocked up on meat, vegetables, bread and water.

"On day one, people were a bit anxious. But since then everything is back to normal... People understand and accept the situation," Abu Ali said. But some residents are worried about businesses outside the zone which sits next to swathes of agricultural land. Jassem Al-Jabroudi said he cannot visit his farm which lies 65 km outside the lockdown area and where he raises chick-

ens, sheep and camels and grows onions and beans.

"I have seven workers on the farm entrusted to my care and I cannot go see them," he said. "How will I get my livelihood?" Qatif has historically been a flashpoint between the Sunni-dominated government and minority Shiites who have complained of discrimination and marginalization, charges the government denies. Some Qatif residents found a silver lining in the closures. "We needed more time to spend with our families," said a 30-year old woman, who asked not to be named. —Reuters



ANKARA: President of Turkey and leader of Justice and Development (AK) Party Recep Tayyip Erdogan (center) waves as he attends his party's group meeting at Grand National Assembly of Turkey in Ankara yesterday. —AFP

just before the first case was announced to discuss possible repercussions of the outbreak.

The Tourism Evaluation Council said it suggested financial support for tour operators and airlines, reductions in utilities costs, and measures to increase bookings. The sector is "starting to be negatively

impacted", it added. Ankara has said that all 81 of its provinces are geared up to handle a potential outbreak and that it has set up seven test centers across the country. Turkey says it has developed its own testing kit, which it is also exporting to other countries, to get faster results. —Agencies

## Coronavirus: Top US universities move classes online

NEW YORK: Major American universities - including Harvard, Princeton and Columbia - have been forced to cancel classes because of the coronavirus and move lessons online, affecting tens of thousands of students. The US government has refrained from imposing an official ban so the often privately run institutions are each grappling with how best to deal with the fast-moving outbreak. Ahead of the start of spring break at the end of this week, Harvard on Tuesday announced it would transition to having all classes online by Monday 23 March.

The university, located in Cambridge, Massachusetts, asked its 36,000 graduate and undergraduate students not to return to campus after the spring recess and to continue studying remotely "until further notice." "The goal of these changes is to minimize the need to gather

in large groups," Harvard president Lawrence Bacow said in a statement posted on the university's website.

Without going quite so far, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), also based in Cambridge, canceled all gatherings likely to attract at least 150 people until May 15. Classes with 150 or more students will move online, starting this week, it added. In New York, Columbia, New York University and Fordham have all announced that they are switching to remote learning. Princeton University in New Jersey said it would move all lectures and seminars online from March 23 to at least April 5, as it cancelled events of more than 100 people.

On the other side of the country, in California, at least five universities, including Berkeley and Stanford, have suspended all or most of their in-person classes. A spokesperson for the American Council of Education (ACE) said it was "impossible to say" how many schools and students had been affected because "the situation changes all the time." ACE president Ted Mitchell told the Los Angeles Times the coronavirus was "probably the greatest short-term challenge facing higher education in a generation." —AFP

## 'Hating the Jews' has become mainstream, French writer warns

PARIS: Watching anti-Semitism rise again across Europe, the acclaimed author Joann Sfar doesn't know whether to laugh or cry. "When I was growing up in France, hating the Jews was something repugnant; now it's almost the consensus," said the French graphic novelist and director of the film "Gainsbourg: A Heroic Life". "Anti-Semitism has become a way of bringing together people who have nothing else in common but can unite" under that banner, said Sfar with bitter irony.

The writer of the bestselling "The Rabbi's Cat" books decided to tackle his fears head-on with the oldest Jewish weapon of all - humor - in his new satirical novel. "The Last European Jew" turns on the elderly

## In Saudi region, residents adapt to virus lockdown

DUBAI: Worshippers went online to listen to sermons. Families stocked up on groceries. And shoppers rushed to buy up hand sanitizers and masks. For the most part, though, residents in Saudi Arabia's Qatif region are adapting to new restrictions after the oil-producing area was sealed off from the rest of the kingdom on Sunday to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

Vigilance against the infection appears high. Like others in the eastern region on the Gulf coast, Abu Ali and his family watched a religious sermon on their mobiles instead of gathering with other worshippers. Husseinias - Shiite Muslim religious gathering places - were empty on Monday when Qatif's large Shiite community commemorated the death of Sayida Zaynab, daughter of Imam Ali, considered the father of Shiite Islam.

Religious leaders broadcast sermons on the Internet. "Everybody was on their phones watching Youtube channels," Abu Ali told Reuters by telephone on Tuesday. Authorities locked down Qatif

### News in brief

#### Egypt jails prominent figure

CAIRO: An Egyptian court sentenced one of the leading activists of the 2011 "Arab Spring" uprising to a one-year prison term yesterday after convicting him of spreading false news, a judicial source and a lawyer said. Ziad Elelaimy, a prominent rights lawyer and former member of parliament already in detention since June last year over separate charges, was also fined 20,000 Egyptian pounds (\$1,272) by a Cairo misdemeanor court on Tuesday, they added. The court found Elelaimy guilty three years after a lawyer reported him to prosecutors citing an interview he had given to the BBC, his lawyer Ahmed Fawzi said. Fawzi said the defense team had been unable to clarify in court which comments Elelaimy was being prosecuted for. The defense team has appealed against the sentence, and a hearing is due to be held on April 7, Fawzi added. —Reuters

#### Romania highway thefts

BUCHAREST: Romanian officials have arrested dozens of suspects in connection with heists from moving lorries as part of an operation spanning five countries, prosecutors and regional police agency Europol said on Tuesday. Prosecutors said the thefts had "a high degree of sophistication" while Europol described a "Fast and Furious"-style of operation that required driving within inches of the lorry to cut its locks, often without the driver being aware. "One car would start to drive slowly in front of the lorry while two other cars held up the other traffic. A fourth car would drive up close behind the lorry," the Europol statement said. "One of the criminals would climb out of the car's sunroof onto the bonnet and break open the lock on the lorry with an angle grinder." Stolen goods would be thrown to one of the cars or on the side of the road to be picked up later. —AFP

#### Jordan authorities bar entry

AMMAN: Jordan has closed border crossings with Israel and the Israeli-occupied West Bank and its sea-ports to shipping from Iraq as well as barred over-land passenger traffic from Iraq to protect the kingdom from coronavirus, the health minister said. The government has also banned travel to Lebanon and Syria and from Monday will bar entry to travelers from France, Germany and Spain, Saad Jaber told a news conference. Jordan announced earlier this month that a man who had arrived on a flight from Italy had tested positive for coronavirus, the first case confirmed in the country. Jordanian authorities have not announced any new cases. Jaber said the moves approved by the cabinet were part of emergency measures that also included reducing airline service by half to Egypt and only allowing travel for emergency reasons. —Reuters

#### Palestinian teen shot dead

NABLUS: A Palestinian teenager was shot dead by Israeli forces during clashes in the occupied West Bank yesterday, the Palestinian health ministry announced. Mohammed Hamayel, 15, "died as a result of being shot in the face with live ammunition by the (Israeli) occupation" during clashes in Nablus in the northern West Bank, a ministry statement said. The Israeli army said it was looking into the incident. An AFP correspondent in Nablus said hundreds of Palestinians had gathered in an area south of the city following rumors that Israeli settlers would arrive and seize some land. Clashes broke out from early morning, with Israeli forces firing tear gas, live ammunition and rubber bullets to break up the demonstration. Some officers were wearing masks seemingly to protect themselves from the coronavirus, an AFP photographer on the scene said. —AFP

## International

# Whatever it takes: EU in show of unity, tackles coronavirus

## Crisis talks followed doubts about EU solidarity

BRUSSELS: European leaders sought to present a united front on Tuesday as the coronavirus cast a lengthening shadow across their continent, but fell short of agreeing radical measures to tackle an exceptional crisis. The leaders of the European Union's 27 member states, used to meeting in person at Brussels summits, joined a video conference after days of criticism that they had failed to close ranks on the crisis and were bickering over how to respond.

French officials said the show of solidarity was proposed by President Emmanuel Macron, who wanted the EU to echo the words of Mario Draghi, who as head of the European Central Bank pulled the euro zone back from the brink of collapse in 2012: "Whatever it takes". "We will use all the tools at our disposal to make sure that the European economy weathers this storm," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told a news conference after the extraordinary summit of leaders, all of whom have now confirmed cases of coronavirus in their countries.

She said the European Commission, the executive arm of the EU, will set up a joint investment fund with firepower of 25 billion euros (\$28 billion) from existing resources to cushion the blow to vulnerable sectors of the bloc's economies. However, the fund will have no fresh money, an EU official said, raising doubts about its effectiveness to provide a sufficient fiscal boost to counter a serious downturn. Under the plan, EU states would use 7.5 billion euros of EU funds that national governments had not been able to spend due to bureaucratic complexities. Instead of being sent back to Brussels, the funds can be used to help the economy, the official said.

The 25 billion euro total would be reached by

adding EU "structural funds" which had been already committed to EU countries under the current EU budget, the official said. A diplomat said the plan was not discussed in detail during the video conference, but will be on the table at a meeting of euro zone finance ministers on Monday. In addition, the Commission offered to provide this week new guidance on how to interpret fiscal rules and public subsidies regulations more leniently. This would allow EU governments to spend more national funds to help their economies.

### 'A lot is at stake'

Divisions did not appear to be overcome, however, about the sharing of medical equipment needed to counter the health crisis. France, Germany and the Czech Republic last week refused to lift controls on the export of protective gear to avoid shortages at home, despite a formal request for kit from Italy, which is reeling from an explosion of infections and deaths. Leaders agreed "to task the Commission with analyzing the needs and to come up with initiatives to prevent shortages," the chair of the meeting Charles Michel said after the video conference.

The EU executive is already coordinating joint procurement of equipment in short supply. Earlier on Tuesday Austria had unilaterally broken with the EU principle of free movement of people by denying entry to people arriving from Italy to slow the spread of the disease. This is the first case of restrictions being placed on the free-travel Schengen area of 26 European countries since the outbreak of the virus, an echo of 2015, when a wave of migrants and refugees prompted several to close their borders.

Sharp differences over the influx of migrants



BRUSSELS: King Philippe of Belgium (center) and Minister of Health Maggie De Block (center right) visit the Sciensano, the Belgian institute for health, for an informative meeting on the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, in Uccle, Brussels yesterday. —AFP



### Plans to cushion Europe's already stuttering economies

one of its public pharmacies. It was also awaiting the results of a second person who came in contact with a virus carrier at an event organized by the Vatican at the start of the month.

## Vatican closes to tourists - but not the faithful

VATICAN CITY: The Vatican said it was closing Saint Peter's Square and its main basilica to tourists - but not the faithful - as part of a broader clampdown to curb the coronavirus. The Holy See said the measures will remain in place until April 3 "to halt the spread of the coronavirus". The announcement sparked a wave of confusion because churches are supposed to remain open across Italy as a whole during the country's month-long ban on public gatherings. A Vatican source later clarified to AFP that anyone who expresses a wish to pray at the basilica can still pass through the police barrier and walk onto the main square.

Italy's new nationwide restrictions on social events and travel are designed to curb the spread of a disease that has killed 631 and infected 10,149 in just over two weeks. The Vatican has so far officially confirmed one case of the COVID-19 disease caused by the new virus that was detected in a person who was using

### 'Go out and see'

The 83-old-pontiff is still recovering from a cold he developed about two weeks ago. He spoke with a slight rasp in on Tuesday during a morning prayer in which he urged priests across the world to go out and meet those suffering from the new disease. "Let us pray to the Lord also for our priests, may they have the courage to go out and see the sick, bringing them the strength of the word of God and the Eucharist, and accompany health workers and volunteers in the work they do," the



VATICAN CITY: A wide angle view shows barriers preventing access to the Vatican's Saint Peter's Square and its main basilica a day after they were closed to tourists as part of a broader clampdown aimed at curbing the coronavirus outbreak. —AFP

pope said a video from his residence in the Vatican. He bowed carefully and gingerly kissed the bible before delivering the prayer. "Let us continue to pray together for the sick, the health workers, so many people who are suffering because of this epidemic," he said.

The Argentine-born pope has enjoyed a life of good health and follows a rigor-

ous schedule despite having a part of a lung removed when he was young. His unusual absence during the coronavirus scare prompted immediate speculation that he had contracted COVID-19. A newspaper reported last week that the pope had been tested for the virus but was not infected. The Vatican neither confirmed nor denied the report. —AFP

## Cyprus locks down hospitals, shuts schools over virus

NICOSIA: Cyprus said it was closing schools in the capital, banning mass gatherings and locking down two major hospitals to combat novel coronavirus, after three people on the Mediterranean island tested positive for the illness. The Republic of Cyprus had on Monday reported its first two cases of the disease, including the chief heart surgeon at its biggest hospital.

And on Tuesday, the Turkish-controlled north of the island announced the first case there, a 65-year-old German woman. Cyprus is divided between EU member state the Republic of Cyprus and the northern third controlled by the breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which is recognized only by Ankara.

The Republic of Cyprus' health ministry said all schools in the capital Nicosia

would close for three days as a precaution against the virus. Even before the first confirmed cases, fears over a spread of novel coronavirus had caused frictions between the north and south and sparked angry protests after the Republic of Cyprus on February 29 closed four of the eight checkpoints on the line dividing the island, initially for a week.

On Tuesday, the Republic of Cyprus' health minister, Constantinos Ioannou, extended the closures and announced a series of other measures to stop the virus spreading. The four crossings would now remain closed until March 18, he said. The other four crossings will remain open. "All mass events, gatherings, concerts, parades in public places including football and other games are cancelled," Ioannou told reporters after a four-hour cabinet meeting to discuss the virus.

### Hospital lockdown

The ministry said it had locked down Nicosia General Hospital for at least 48 hours to carry out a "deep clean", after the facility's head of heart surgery tested positive for the novel coronavirus following a trip to Britain.

## After testing delays, US coronavirus cases surge past 1,000

WASHINGTON: The number of novel coronavirus cases in the US surged past 1,000 on Tuesday, after public health experts criticized authorities for downplaying the epidemic and lagging behind in testing efforts. At least 28 people have died and 1,025 people have been infected, according to a running tally by Johns Hopkins University - nearly double the 550

total confirmed cases the day before. The rise is linked to an expansion in testing as the bulk of diagnoses have shifted from federal to state laboratories. Epidemiologists have said faulty test kits coupled with a diagnostic strategy that initially targeted too few people allowed the disease to spread beyond US authorities' ability to detect it. The failings had contributed to the virus taking root across the country, academics from Johns Hopkins University and Stanford University wrote in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) on Monday. Vice President Mike Pence defended the government's response at a White House briefing and said that "a million tests are in the field." He said that more would be added as the government partnered with private companies.

Just over 8,500 tests had been performed as of Monday,

according to the latest figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). South Korea announced its first case on the same day as the United States, has tested more than 189,000 people in the same period, Business Insider reported. The JAMA report authors wrote that the only test initially authorized was one developed by the CDC.

It relied on the same technology as one authorized by the World Health Organization (WHO) and deployed around the world - except that a fault meant the CDC kit was returning inconclusive results. It was not until February 29, the date of the first US death and more than a month after the first confirmed US case, that the Food and Drug Administration lifted a ban on state laboratories developing their own kits based on the WHO's tests. —AFP

## Parliament backs changes allowing Putin to run again

MOSCOW: Constitutional changes allowing Vladimir Putin to run for president again in 2024 sailed through Russia's lower house of parliament yesterday, opening the way for him to potentially stay in power until 2036. Putin, 67, who has dominated the Russian political landscape for two decades as either president or prime minister, made a dramatic appearance in the chamber a day earlier to argue that term limits were less important in times of crisis.

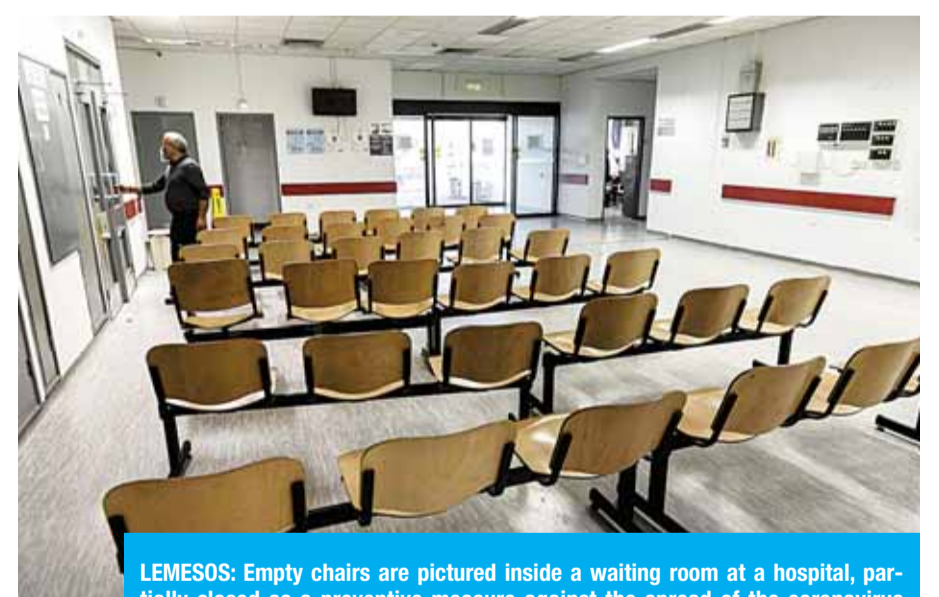
Putin, a former KGB officer, is currently required by the constitution to step down in 2024 when his second sequential and fourth presidential term ends. But the amendment which he backed would formally reset his presidential term tally to zero. The 450-seat State Duma, the lower house of parliament yesterday voted in favor of the change, along with other amendments to the constitution, by 383 votes, in a third and final reading.

Nobody voted against, but 43 lawmakers abstained. Twenty-four lawmakers were absent. If, as Putin critics expect, the constitutional court now gives its blessing to the amendment and it is backed in a nationwide vote in April, Putin would have the option to run again for president in 2024.

Were he to do that, and his health and electoral fortunes allowed, he could potentially stay in office for another two back-to-back six-year terms until 2036 at which point he would be 83 and have spent 36 years at the top of Russian politics. Kremlin critic and opposition politician Alexei Navalny has said he believes Putin will now try to become president for life. Putin has not spelled out what his plans for the future are after 2024, but has said he does not favor the Soviet-era practice of having leaders for life who die in office. —Reuters



MOSCOW: A bust of Russian President Vladimir Putin is seen on sale among other items at a gift shop in Moscow yesterday. Supporters celebrated and critics called for protests yesterday as the prospect sunk in of Russian President Vladimir Putin staying in power until 2036. —AFP



LEMESOS: Empty chairs are pictured inside a waiting room at a hospital, partially closed as a preventive measure against the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19, in the southern Cypriot coastal city of Limassol yesterday. —AFP

It instructed people to self-isolate if they had come into contact with the doctor or travelled to countries affected by the virus in the past two weeks. Limassol General Hospital, the country's

second-largest public health facility, will also suspend operations for 48 hours from Wednesday to investigate three suspected coronavirus cases, health authorities said. —AFP



## International

## New Zealand fighting rising hate, one year after mosque massacre

## March 15 attack emboldened other extremists

WELLINGTON: Days before the first anniversary of a shooting in Christchurch that killed 51 Muslim worshippers, a post appeared on an encrypted messaging app showing a balaclava-clad man outside one of the attacked mosques with a threat and a gun emoji. The message was the latest in a number of threats against minorities in New Zealand, evidence of what experts say is an increase in hate crime and xenophobia since the mosque massacre by a suspected white supremacist on March 15 last year.

The gunman, armed with semi-automatic weapons, attacked Muslims attending Friday prayers in the South Island's largest city, broadcasting New Zealand's worst mass shooting live on Facebook. Brenton Tarrant, an Australian national, faces 92 charges in relation to the attacks on Al Noor and Linwood mosques. He has pleaded not guilty and faces trial in June.

New Zealand's extraordinary outpouring of love and compassion for the Muslim community after the attack was led from the front by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. She swiftly introduced new gun laws and started a global movement to stamp out online hate in a response that was hailed as a model for other leaders. But the attack also inspired far right nationalists and anti-immigration campaigners to be more active both online and offline, according to Muslim leaders, activists and experts.

"The attack certainly emboldened people who want to spread hate," said Anjum Rahman from the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand. The council has repeatedly alerted the government in the past year about the rise of the extreme right and the growing

threat felt by Muslim women in New Zealand. Rahman reported the latest threat against the Al Noor mosque to police after she was shown the image which was being shared on the encrypted social media messaging app Telegram.

Police said a 19-year-old man was charged with failing to assist police with a search warrant in relation to the incident and would appear in court later this month. Local media reports have linked the man to a white nationalist group called Action Zealandia, which was formed in July 2019, just months after the Christchurch attack. On its website it says it is focused on "building a community for European New Zealanders".

In response to the incident, Action Zealandia said in a statement on Twitter the alleged actions of the accused are not within its code of conduct and was "immature and unproductive as we do not use violence to reach our goals". Police said they were working to ensure they have an in-depth knowledge of individuals and groups whose actions pose a threat but did not comment on any specific group.

## More extremists

In a parliamentary committee meeting chaired by Ardern last month, New Zealand's spy chief laid down the growing challenge since the attack. "It (the attack)

beginning of a fresh tide that leads to a widespread regional outbreak," Seoul Mayor Park Won-soon told a briefing. At least 90 cases confirmed this week, including 62 in Seoul, were linked directly to the call centre located near a public transportation hub connecting Seoul with Incheon and other major cities, the KCDC said.

## Workers used subway

Authorities say they are testing the 200 employees who worked on the floor where the first cases were discovered, while monitoring the other 550 in the centre's workforce who are self-quarantined. Many of the workers who tested positive were found to have used the subway and buses for their daily commute, prompting extensive disinfection work around key stations, city officials said.

The government urged high-risk organizations to take extra prevention measures, including remote working, staggered shifts and greater separation between office desks. It identified call centers, private academies, karaoke bars, computer cafes and sport facilities as among places most at risk. President Moon Jae-in visited health officials at the KCDC headquarters in Cheongju, 140 km (87 miles) south of Seoul, for the first time since the crisis began. He encouraged officials to increase their efforts to contain the virus.

Around 90% of cases in South Korea, including 140

has given encouragement to some people, it has been inspirational to other people, and so it remains still quite a fluid picture." NZ Security Intelligence Service Director-General Rebecca Kitteridge told the committee, according to transcripts of the meeting seen by Reuters.

"We have got more information about more people who are expressing extremist views than we had before 15 March, and some of those people existed beforehand, and then there is the impact of the attacks themselves afterwards," she said. Between 30 and 50 people are being actively investigated by the agency at any given moment for posing a terror threat, a higher number than in previous years.

Kitteridge said between March 15 and the end of June 2019 the spy agency received leads about people who had expressed racist, Nazi, identitarian, or white supremacist views.

A survey by online safety agency Netsafe in December showed hate speech online increased in New Zealand in the last 12 months, with about 15% of the adult population targeted with online hate. Offline too, white supremacist posters have appeared in Auckland universities in the past few weeks leading up to the March 15 memorial.

There are about 60 to 70 groups and somewhere

between 150 and 300 core right-wing activists in New Zealand, said Paul Spoonley, from Massey University, who has been researching far-right extremism for decades. Proportionate to population the number was similar in size to far-right activists in Germany, he said. "New Zealand is now part of an international far-right ecosystem in a way that you can't have said 20 years ago," Spoonley said. "We do well on the league tables for tolerance, but that does not mean there are no extreme elements," he said.

## Hate speech

Ardern said she was "devastated" by the latest threats against Al Noor mosque and it indicated that more the work needed to be done. "We have to get back to the basics of why is it that people would feel that they can make those kinds of threats against other people's lives," she told reporters. A big part of the problem was that unlike the United States or Britain, New Zealand has never recorded specific hate crime offences, raising questions about what signs security agencies may have missed.

Police have now started recording instances of offences that appear to be motivated by hate, Justice Minister Andrew Little said. The ministry is also reviewing the country's hate speech laws, although these plans have been challenged by groups who say free speech would be curtailed by such laws. "Further work is needed on where the line on free speech is drawn. But I anticipate a balanced approach will be taken when the review process is complete," Little said. A decision is expected within months. —Reuters

## S Korea coronavirus cases jump after call centre outbreak

SEOUL: South Korea reported a jump in new coronavirus cases yesterday, reversing 11 days of slowing infections, as authorities tested hundreds of staff at a Seoul call centre where the disease broke out this week. Another 242 new cases were reported, compared with 35 a day earlier, bringing the total to 7,755 in Asia's worst outbreak outside mainland China, the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) said. The official death toll rose by four to 63.

The daily tally of new cases in South Korea peaked at 909 on Feb. 29, as authorities tested about 200,000 followers of a fringe Christian church at the centre of the nation's epidemic. The infection rate had slowed in recent days, raising hopes that South Korea might be bringing the virus under control. But new clusters at the call centre in the capital Seoul, and among teachers and students of a dance school with classes around the country, have kept authorities on high alert for a fresh spike in infections.

"The mass infections at the call centre could be the

## Afghan government to release Taliban prisoners

KABUL: The Afghan government will gradually release 5,000 Taliban prisoners starting this week if the insurgents significantly reduce violence, President Ashraf Ghani's spokesman said yesterday, seeking to resolve a dispute that has delayed peace talks between the militants and Kabul. The announcement came hours after the US said its forces had started pulling out of two bases in Afghanistan, in line with a deal signed between Washington and the Taliban in Doha last month aiming to end America's longest war.

The government will "release 1,500 Taliban prisoners as a gesture of goodwill" starting Saturday, with another 3,500 to be freed after negotiations begin, spokesman Sediq Sediqi said on Twitter. The agreement, which will initially see 100 prisoners freed each day, will depend on the Taliban's willingness to significantly limit attacks in the country, he added.

The decision attempts to resolve one of the long-running spats that has stymied potential peace talks between the insurgents and the Afghan government. Although the Taliban were due to

start talks with Kabul on Tuesday, negotiations were delayed because the insurgents' demanded as a prerequisite the prisoner release in exchange for 1,000 captives. Ghani had refused but yesterday's decree signaled a softening of his stance, with the proviso that none of the released prisoners would return to the frontlines.

According to the decree, after the first 1,500 captives are freed, a further "500 Taliban prisoners will be released every two weeks" once negotiations begin. US negotiator Zalmay Khalilzad welcomed the announcement and urged the Afghan government and the Taliban to meet "immediately" in Qatar to sort out prisoner details. The State Department voiced confidence that Afghan peace talks would open soon, saying Ghani was speaking to rivals and would name a negotiating team "in the coming few days."

## UN backs deal

The UN Security Council on Tuesday endorsed the US-Taliban deal, a rare step for an agreement involving insurgents. The Council urged the Afghan government "to advance the peace process, including by participating in intra-Afghan negotiations". Under the US-Taliban deal, foreign forces will quit Afghanistan within 14 months, subject to Taliban security guarantees and the insurgents holding talks with Kabul.

"When they came to see me, they said it was very difficult to buy face mask out there. I said to them 'Daddy is making face masks here, and that maybe you will have the benefit and the opportunity to use it,'" he said.

"Every time I sew face masks, I think to myself that it can bring some security to my family." Yuh is currently ten years into a 23-year sentence for possession of drugs and firearms. "This little face mask not only lets us contribute to society, it also gives us self-esteem," he said. The inmates - who have volunteered for the job - work quickly with machines they have clearly come to know well.

After stitching the fabric with the sewing machines, they carefully trim the masks with small scissors before ironing and packaging them. Taiwan's prisons routinely employ prisoners to make products from food to garments and soaps. The programs are designed to teach inmates practical skills as well as raise funds for victim compensation and the improvement of facilities. The



NISHAGAM: An Afghan boy watches US soldiers from 1st Infantry Division patrolling in a village during a mission searching for a weapon cache in Nishagam, in Afghanistan's eastern Kunar province. —AFP

The US is initially supposed to cut its troop presence from about 12,000 currently 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 west, a US official said on the condition of anonymity. Helmand is where US and British forces fought some of the bloodiest

campaigns of the 18-year war.

The initial drawdown comes as the Taliban, which see themselves as having achieved "victory" over America, test the Pentagon's resolve to protect local partners by conducting dozens of low-level attacks against Afghan forces. The US has only responded to a few of these attacks, but the State Department warned Tuesday that the level of violence was "unacceptable." —AFP

masks are sold for around Tw\$25 (83 cents) each and the inmates are paid a small wage which they can spend within the prison.

Correctional facilities across Taiwan are taking part in the new scheme to manufacture cloth face masks and face mask protectors to supply their staff and the public. Taiwan was briefly struck by panic buying of medical face masks earlier this year until the government introduced a rationing system. The island has been held up as an example of how to handle an outbreak, with the government moving fast to reduce overseas arrivals from infected areas and issue clear medical guidance that has been widely adopted by the public.

Despite being so close to the original outbreak in mainland China, Taiwan has just 48 confirmed cases of the Covid-19 disease with one death. The wearing of face masks among the public has become fairly widespread. But many Taiwanese say the current rationing of three surgical masks a week is insufficient. —AFP

## Bangladesh women promote hygiene in refugee camps amid coronavirus fears

DHAKA: Women in Bangladesh are promoting hygiene in the world's largest refugee settlement to prevent coronavirus from spreading there, aid workers said yesterday, after the nation reported its first case of the disease. A confirmed case of COVID-19 on the Greek island of Lesbos has sparked fears about the impact of an outbreak in refugee camps from Mexico to France where people live in dire conditions with poor hygiene and little medical care.

So far there are no reported cases of the virus in Bangladesh's densely-populated Cox's Bazar camps but medics are setting up isolation units in hospitals and teaching children about cleanliness through a network of mostly women volunteers. "(Women will) help carry out systematic preventative health and health promotion messaging in their communities," said Louise Donovan, spokeswoman of the UN's refugee agency.

Around 700,000 Rohingya refugees who arrived in Bangladesh in 2017 in a mass exodus from neighbouring Myanmar live in huts built out of plastic and bamboo in an area half the size of Manhattan. They face overstretched and poorly-resourced health services which is "why we have been advocating for refugees to be included in national preparedness and response plans," said Donovan. Bangladesh confirmed its first three cases of coronavirus on Sunday and postponed a major public event marking the centenary of the country's founder.

## Early warnings

Rohingya women, many of whom suffered sexual violence in Myanmar and who now run most of the camps' households are uniquely positioned to spread awareness about the disease, said Razia Sultana, a Rohingya lawyer. "More than 70% of the people in the camps are women and children. These children will pick up habits from their mothers, so it's important to get as many women trained as possible," said Sultana.

Data released by Chinese authorities on coronavirus deaths suggest fewer women are dying than men with some scientists citing hormonal differences. Shamima Bibi, a refugee who runs several schools said that she has started telling students to "stay as clean as possible" in order to not get infected.

"Not just in class but in other places in the camps as well, we are telling everyone to wash their hands and cover their face while sneezing and do whatever we can to stay safe," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Bibi said people in the camps are not "excessively worried" about the virus but have been cautious ever since Bangladesh confirmed the presence of the disease in Dhaka, about 400 kilometers away. —Reuters



DHAKA: Women wearing facemasks amid fears of the spread of COVID-19 novel coronavirus, walk through a street in Dhaka. —AFP

## Taiwan inmates join coronavirus fight with mask factory

TAOYUAN: Behind the barbed wire-topped fences of Taipei Prison, a small group of inmates are hunched over clacking sewing machines, working overtime to churn out face masks and help ward off the new coronavirus. Usually the men would be making prison uniforms in the bright-lit sewing factory in the city of Taoyuan.

But after the coronavirus spread to Taiwan they switched to making masks, putting together some 52,000 face coverings since mid-February. Sporting a grey face mask himself, a 50-year-old inmate surnamed Yuh said he was keeping his family close to heart as he worked.

## Analysis

**Kuwait Times**  
Established 1961  
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT  
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF  
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher  
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief  
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432  
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7  
FAX : 24835620/1  
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163  
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125  
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.  
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com  
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

## Autoworkers hope to repeat Michigan magic vs Trump

**E**ric Truss has worked in Michigan's famed automotive plants for 24 years, and watched as many of his coworkers helped flip the state Republican four years ago. On Tuesday he voted for Joe Biden, who has his sights set on ousting Donald Trump. Support from people like Truss - current and former automakers in and around Detroit - almost certainly contributed to Biden's decisive primary victory in this industrial Midwestern state.

Should Biden become the Democratic nominee, which looks increasingly likely after a banner night that included winning crucial Michigan, automakers may also help the centrist former vice president flip the state back to the Democrats in November's election. Truss accurately predicted Biden would "win Michigan" and take a potentially unassailable lead over his leftist rival Bernie Sanders on the march to the Democratic nomination, he told AFP in an interview.

The 53-year-old African American is a production technician at Ford's Dearborn Diversified Manufacturing Plant and a member of the influential United Auto Workers union. Detroit is the birthplace of the auto industry and it wears its status as "Motor City" proudly. Truss sees autoworkers today, including UAW members, wanting a change in the White House. "They're definitely going Democrat," Truss said of several coworkers who told him they voted for Trump in 2016 and will not do so again. "Trump will not win Michigan this time around."

### Back to blue?

Trump won Michigan by a sliver in 2016, flipping the battleground that had voted Democratic in the previous six presidential elections, in part by claiming he would bring manufacturing jobs back to suffering industrial states. The administration touts impressive economic numbers including low unemployment. But the auto industry, despite recent record profits, has seen its employee numbers dive over the past few decades.

Two decades ago General Motors alone had 450,000 workers, while today's entire UAW membership is roughly 130,000, noted Frank Hammer, a 30-year GM veteran who worked at the powertrain plant in Warren, near Detroit, during the glory days of high employment. Michigan, a state of 10 million people, lost 5,300 manufacturing jobs last year, and GM closed its transmission plant in Warren on Trump's watch, the Democratic Party points out.

"Considering Trump won the state by not even 11,000 votes, there's every possibility that the state goes back in the blue column," Hammer said. Hammer voted for Sanders, but acknowledges he may be in the minority. "There's a lot of working friends who now really hate Trump, but can't see themselves voting for Sanders," said Hammer, 76. "They may end up voting for Biden, or not at all."

Trump does remain popular among significant numbers of employees, the autoworkers said. The UAW, perhaps eager to avoid the spotlight as it contends with multiple scandals, has not endorsed a candidate this year. "But my reading is that Biden has gained a lot recently," said retired autoworker Ron Lare, who worked for 30 years at the Ford Rouge Plant in Dearborn. Biden supporters point to his role in helping orchestrate the Barack Obama administration's 2009 bailout of GM and Chrysler.

But Biden is earning backing not just because he served eight years as Obama's deputy. They trust he will preserve the private health care insurance programs that UAW negotiated over the years. Sanders, a self-declared democratic socialist, is advocating universal, government-run healthcare and an end to private health insurance. "Most blacks in the plant are not for a socialist type president," Truss said.

Outside Chrysler's Warren Truck Assembly plant near Detroit, Felicia Andrews wore her hard hat as she entered the massive complex to begin her afternoon shift on the assembly line. One hour earlier she voted for Biden. "I think he does" have autoworkers' support, the 38-year-old said. "I just don't feel Trump is the best president for us right now." She opposes the brash New York billionaire in part because he championed Andrews' industry, but then stood by as some facilities were shuttered, including GM plants in Warren and Lordstown, Ohio. That Midwestern state votes next Tuesday. —AFP

All articles appearing on this page are the personal opinion of the writers. Kuwait Times takes no responsibility for views expressed therein.



A view of exhaust-emitting vehicles at the busy Inter Junction Principal Road that connects Pakistan's twin cities, Rawalpindi and its capital Islamabad, on Feb 18, 2020. —Reuters

## Electric vehicles struggle to accelerate in Pakistan

**A**s Pakistan's first-ever electric three-wheeled rickshaws start to roll off the assembly line, the country is struggling to build momentum for its shift to electric vehicles in efforts to cut air pollution and curb climate change. It has been four months since Prime Minister Imran Khan's cabinet approved the National Electric Vehicle Policy, offering tax exemptions and incentives to manufacturers, importers and buyers of electric vehicles.

But pushback by traditional automakers has stalled the government's finalizing of the policy, leaving electric vehicle (EV) makers worried that eco-friendly cars, vans, motorcycles and rickshaws will remain too expensive for the mass market. "The electric rickshaws have comparatively much lower running and maintenance costs," said Syed Ismail Ghaznavi, sales head at Sazgar Engineering Works Limited, which launched the country's first electric rickshaw in January.

Sazgar's electric rickshaw can travel up to 170 km on a charge, has almost no moving parts - which means fewer trips to the mechanic - and produces zero emissions, Ghaznavi pointed out. "But we need the government support to roll it out on a larger scale for the public," he said. Transport accounts for more than 40 percent of the air pollution produced in Pakistan, according to data from the country's climate change ministry.

In the policy it approved in November, the government set a target to bring half a million electric motorcycles and rickshaws, along with more than 100,000 electric cars, buses and trucks, into the transportation system in the next five years. By 2030, the government wants to have about one-third of the vehicles in Pakistan running on electrical energy, said Malik Amin Aslam, the prime minister's advisor on climate change. The move to electric vehicles is "a win-win strategy", Aslam told the Thomson Reuters

Foundation, saying it should reduce emissions by nearly three-quarters and cut the cost of running a vehicle by 60 percent.

### 'Severe' air pollution

Pakistan generates less than 1 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, but it is one of the countries that suffers most from the effects of climate change, including flooding, droughts, heat waves and melting glaciers, environmental experts say. The Global Climate Risk Index 2020, issued by environmental think-tank Germanwatch, ranked Pakistan fifth among the 10 countries most affected by extreme weather over the last 20 years.

"Our food security is at risk due to these climate change conditions, and we have to focus on adaptation," said Imran Saqib Khalid, a research fellow at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, an Islamabad-based independent think-tank. In particular, the new electric vehicle policy will help curb air pollution and smog, "a major environmental problem the country has been facing for the past few years," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Urban air pollution levels in Pakistan, a country of more than 200 million people, are among the most severe in the world, stemming from increasing energy use and rapid motorization, noted a World Bank study published in 2014. The number of vehicles on Pakistan's roads jumped from about 2 million in 1991 to more than 10 million two decades later, the report noted.

As it tries to spark an electric mobility revolution, Pakistan is following countries such as Norway, France and the United Kingdom, all of which have said they will ban sales of petrol and diesel vehicles within the next 20 years. Pakistan's government plans to use a raft of monetary incentives to convince the coun-

try's auto manufacturers and the public to switch to environmentally-friendly modes of transport. To encourage prospective buyers, the government says it aims to lower or do away with various taxes on electric vehicles and bring down customs duty for imported parts to 1 percent. It also plans to establish fast charging stations in all major cities and along major motorways and highways every 15-30 km. But some automobile manufacturers are pushing back, saying that creating incentives specifically for electric vehicles unfairly benefits the nascent industry while leaving the traditional automobile sector floundering.

Sales of petrol and diesel vehicles in Pakistan dropped drastically last year following the devaluation of the rupee, which led to a sharp increase in the price of vehicles and parts. "Our only concern is that there should be only one auto policy and not a separate policy for EVs," Abdul Waheed Khan, director general of the Pakistan Automotive Manufacturers Association, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The association has agreed to the tax exemptions and incentives being offered for e-vehicles, but has urged the government to also protect existing investment in the traditional auto sector. Khan said over the phone.

Majeed Ghauri, chairman of the Awami Rickshaw Union, which represents the country's rickshaw drivers, said the group welcomed the government's announcement of special incentives to promote electric rickshaws. But, he said, the government should find a way to make electric rickshaws cheaper than traditional ones - which can cost up to 270,000 rupees (\$1,700) - to make them affordable for low-income drivers. "We want to get rid of noisy, smoke-emitting rickshaws and it is better that environmentally-friendly rickshaws should ply on the roads to end pollution," said Ghauri. —Reuters

## Will oat become the king of plant based milks?

**A**lmond, soy, coconut, nonfat or whole? American stores offer a dizzying array of milk but a new option is experiencing unprecedented growth and fast becoming a vegan favorite: Oat milk. The oat milk market was virtually non-existent five years ago, but in the 12 months to April 2019 revenues from the sale of the non-dairy creamy drink catapulted 222 percent, according to The Good Food Institute. In recent months, Starbucks, American yogurt giant Chobani, and Nesquik have all started offering oat milk, known for its nutritional and environmental benefits.

"There seems to be a buzz around oat milk, especially in the US, which isn't there with other plant-based milks," Andy Coyne, food correspondent at research firm GlobalData, told AFP. Swedish world leader Oatly entered the US market in 2016 by first offering oat milk in coffee shops for cappuccinos and lattes. "(That) was a very clever piece of ground-up marketing from Oatly," said Coyne. "It became a word of mouth phenomenon and its popularity has grown from there."

## Women bear the brunt of climate change in Angola

**T**handjila Quessale's heart sank every time her mother sent her to fetch water for their crops, up in the mountains of Angola's southern Huila region. The 16-year-old had to leave school early and walk three hours to join a long queue of people at the nearest water point. Since she rarely managed to fill her bucket before dark, she was vulnerable to attacks and was scared. She knew of two girls that had been raped walking back to their village late at night, she said. "I felt afraid because there were boys that used to attack or grab people," Quessale told AFP.

Huila province has been hit by drought after lack of rain for several years running dried up most water sources and devastated crops across the southern Africa region, where some 45 million people face growing hunger, the United Nations warns. The dry spell was followed by violent and erratic downpours that saturated the soil. Quessale can now find water at a nearby spring, a short walk from the one-bedroom stone house she shares with her mother and six younger siblings in a hamlet.

But that has provided little relief after the family's crops failed and food has remained difficult to come by. In addition, most men from the area have migrated to towns and cities in search of work, so it is left to the women to try to fill their children's rumbling stomachs. Aid workers have said that some young girls are

resorting to sex in a desperate quest for money and food.

Oat milk sales represent just over one percent of sales of almond milk in the United States, according to the data compiled by The Good Food Institute, which promotes plant-based alternatives to meat, dairy and eggs. But oat milk companies expect their product to rapidly catch up, saying it has the edge over rivals when it comes to taste. "Almond milk is great but it tastes like almond," said Peter Truby, chief marketing officer at Elmhurst, an American oat milk producer. "And what if you don't want an almond taste in your coffee and you're just looking for something creamy to go with your coffee and will not overpower it?" he added. While oats have a very common-man image, Oatly succeeded in positioning oat milk as a high-end product by first establishing it in the coffee market. Now it is ubiquitous on shelves across supermarkets.

### Environmental benefits

For Mike Messersmith, president for North America at Oatly, on top of taste, oat milk has two other advantages which fit well with the rise of veganism. Firstly, its nutritional properties: It's low in calories, possesses lots of fiber, has more protein than other grains and unlike soy or almonds is known to cause few allergies. Secondly, it "minimizes the impact on our natural resources," Messersmith told AFP. The production of cow's milk and almond milk requires about 15 and 8 times the amount of water needed to make oat milk respectively, according to a study published in the journal Science in 2018.

"Sustainability is becoming an important selling point and it's something that clearly resonates with consumers," said Coyne, the food correspondent. Oatly sends some of its residue to mushroom farms to be used in soil while Elmhurst claims it produces almost no residue. Oat milk has another major advantage over its competitors: production costs, which are around one third less than that of almonds. —AFP

### 'I do my own thing'

"Climate change has a huge impact on the lives of women, especially women and girls of reproductive health age," said Florbela Fernandes, Angola representative for the UN Population Fund (UNFPA). Crises caused by extreme weather events disproportionately affect "vulnerable groups". "It also increases their exposure to violence and abuse," she added. Women make up 80 percent of the people displaced by climate change, according to the UN.

Quessale's 47-year-old mother Mousaka Fernanda has stayed put but has had to shoulder the responsibility of feeding her family on her own as best she could. Last year, her husband found a job as a security guard in Lubango city, around 20 km away, but barely sends any money. "When he comes home he finds hunger... and I do my own thing," said Fernanda, feet sinking into the mud as she pulled weeds from her maize field.

The little she had to show of her plants were knee-high and wilted. Yellowed leaf tips suggested roots were rotting below the surface. "The children are not crying for their father," Fernanda added, as she pulled up a maize shoot to reveal a dying jumble of radicles. "They are crying for their mother to find something to eat."

### Early marriage

Since the drought hit, Fernanda has relied on her home-brewed liquor to buy food. The matriarch's grandfather taught her to brew sorghum into macau, a popular spirit she makes and sells on weekends. From two cups of macau, Fernanda can buy just over one kilogram of staple maize. With barely enough for her and her children, she also has to provide for her own mother who is



Oat milk cartons are seen on display in a grocery store in Manhattan, New York on Tuesday. —AFP

too weak to fend for herself. When Fernanda's eldest daughter Domingas Quessale fell pregnant, the pressure proved too much. Concerned she would not be able to provide for yet another child, Fernanda asked her daughter to move in with her boyfriend - making them married by status and causing Quessale to drop out of school. "My mother told me to get married because she did not want another mouth to feed," the 19-year-old said. "I did not want to," she added, bouncing the baby on her lap. Like her father, Quessale's boyfriend has moved to the nearby town of Humpata, where he works in a juice factory. During the drought she would join forces with friends to fetch water in a group. They were still occasionally harassed and "grabbed" by men on the way, she said. —AFP



Mousaka Fernanda poses for a portrait in a village near Lubango in Angola on Feb 15, 2020. —AFP

## Business

THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2020

**12** Cathay Pacific 2019 profits plunge, predicts virus losses**13** Europe's major auto industry shuts factories, sends workers elsewhere**14** NBK-Bahrain reports net profits of BHD 117.89 million for 2019

LOS ANGELES: Gas prices are displayed at a Mobil gas station on Tuesday in Los Angeles. The average price of one gallon of regular self-service gasoline in LA County dropped to \$3.494, the lowest price since March of last year. Demand for gas and oil is declining in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak. — AFP

# UAE joins Saudis in opening oil taps

## Saudi, UAE will add 3.6 million bpd to oversupplied market

**DUBAI:** The United Arab Emirates joined Saudi Arabia yesterday in promising to raise oil output to a record high in April, as the two Gulf Arab oil producers in OPEC took a united stand in a standoff with Russia that has hammered global crude prices.

US crude slid 2.5 percent to \$33.49 per barrel, while Brent crude dropped 2.31 percent to \$36.36 after Saudi Aramco announced plans to raise its production capacity at the same time as the coronavirus was set to weaken demand.

The extra oil the two Gulf allies plan to add is equivalent to 3.6 percent of global supplies and will pour into a market at a time when global fuel demand in 2020 is forecast to contract for the first time in almost a decade due to the coronavirus outbreak. Oil prices have almost halved since the start of the year on fears OPEC states would flood the market in its battle with Russia after Moscow refused to agree last week to deep production cuts in a pact that has propped up prices since 2016.

Saudi Arabia, which has already announced it would hike supplies to a record 12.3 million barrels per day

(bpd) in April, said yesterday it would boost production capacity for the first time in more than a decade.

UAE national oil company ADNOC said in its announcement that it would raise crude supply to more than 4 million bpd in April and would accelerate plans to boost its capacity to 5 million bpd, a target it previously planned to achieve by 2030. By raising supplies, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi will add a combined 3.6 million bpd of extra oil in April to a market already awash with crude, compared to their existing output that is limited by the pact with Russia that expires in March.

Adding to that, Moscow has said Russian oil companies might boost output by up to 300,000 bpd and could increase it by as much as 500,000 bpd.

State-run Saudi Aramco plans to raise capacity to 13 million bpd from 12 million bpd, Chief Executive Amin Nasser said, adding that the move was ordered by the Energy Ministry.



### OPEC row with Russia hits crude prices

"The company is exerting its maximum efforts to implement this directive as soon as possible," Nasser said. No timeframe was given for the plans, which will require billions of dollars of investment.

#### Scrapping limits

Saudi Arabia had said OPEC, Russia and other producers, members of an informal alliance known as OPEC+, needed to cut supplies from the market to cope with the impact of coronavirus. When Moscow refused, they said all limits would be scrapped. Moscow had said it was too soon to cut more deeply and that pro-

ducers should wait to see the full impact of the virus, which has prompted lockdowns in major economies such as China and Italy, disrupting businesses and sending shares into tailspin.

Moscow said supporting prices simply helped boost costlier production in the United States, whose output has surged above that of Saudi Arabia and Russia. Russia indicated on Tuesday it was ready for more talks, but Saudi Arabia said there was little point if fresh discussions simply confirmed their inability to reach a deal.

Brent was trading at about \$36 on Tuesday, off this week's low of about \$31 but 45 percent lower than at the start of year. Much of Saudi Arabia's international influence has derived from its role in the oil market that is akin to a central bank. It holds nearly all the world's spare capacity and can turn the taps on and off to deal with shortfalls or surpluses.

The clash between Saudi Arabia and Russia has triggered panic selling of shares on Wall Street and other stock markets that were already pummeled by the virus outbreak. — Reuters

## Britain launches £30bn stimulus, shock rate cut

**LONDON:** Britain's government and the Bank of England yesterday launched a coordinated emergency response to the country's "significant but temporary" economic impact from the coronavirus, pledging fiscal stimulus worth £30 billion (\$39 billion, 34.4 billion euros) and slashing interest rates to a record-low 0.25 percent.

The effects of COVID-19 "will have a significant impact on the UK economy—but it will be temporary", finance minister Rishi Sunak told parliament as he announced a stimulus package, notably to help small businesses struck down by disruptions to supply chains and an absent workforce.

There is likely to be a "temporary disruption" to the economy while up to a fifth of the UK's working-age population could be off sick at any one time, Chancellor of the Exchequer Sunak warned.

On Tuesday, it was revealed that a minister in the health department, Nadine Dorries, had tested positive for COVID-19. Six people have died in Britain from the virus, with more



LONDON: A video grab from footage broadcast by the UK Parliament's Parliamentary Recording Unit (PRU) shows Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak giving his 2020 Spring budget statement in the House of Commons in London yesterday. — AFP

than 370 confirmed cases. "I am announcing today in total a £30-billion fiscal stimulus to support British people, British jobs and British businesses through this moment," said Sunak on delivering the government's first post-Brexit budget, one that was dominated by action to tackle the coronavirus crisis.

"If further action is needed if the situation evolves... I will not hesitate to act," added the

39-year-old finance minister in an hour-long speech outlining also plans for big UK infrastructure projects. The Bank of England earlier revealed that at an extraordinary meeting on Tuesday, "the Monetary Policy Committee voted unanimously to reduce Bank Rate by 50 basis points to 0.25 percent"—its biggest cut since the global financial crisis more than a decade ago. — AFP

## OPEC, EIA chop oil demand forecast

**PARIS:** OPEC and EIA chopped yesterday its forecast for oil demand this year on the impact of the coronavirus impact and warned it may do so again. In its latest monthly report the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries lowered its forecast for global average daily demand by 0.92 million barrels to 99.73 million barrels.

That sees average daily global demand still rising by 60,000 barrels per day, but OPEC said: "Considering the latest developments, downward risks currently outweigh any positive indicators and suggest further likely downward revisions in oil demand growth, should the current status persist."

The outbreak of the new coronavirus has already caused massive economic disruption in China and beyond as

authorities impose measures to try to contain its spread, hitting demand for oil. Oil markets have also been roiled by an escalating price war led by Saudi Arabia against Russia.

Last week, Russia rejected a Saudi-led proposal to deepen production cuts to support oil prices as demand falls. In response, Saudi Arabia announced discounts and production increases, leading to steep falls in oil prices on international markets. Meanwhile, Global oil demand is expected to dive by 910,000 barrels per day (bpd) in the first quarter, the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) said yesterday, as the rapid spread of coronavirus has slammed economic activity and travel, raising the specter of a global recession.

Oil prices plunged by the most in nearly three decades on Monday as top producers Saudi Arabia and Russia began a price war that threatens to overwhelm global oil markets with supply even as demand has slid. For the first quarter, EIA expects world crude oil and liquid fuels consumption to drop by 910,000 bpd from a year earlier to 99.06 million bpd. — Reuters

Business

# Cathay Pacific 2019 profits plunge, predicts virus losses

## HK carrier battered throughout the second half of last year

**HONG KONG:** Cathay Pacific yesterday said profits plunged in 2019 as it reeled from political unrest in Hong Kong, while it warned financial losses lay ahead owing to the spread of the new coronavirus.

The flagship carrier was battered throughout the second half of last year as violent pro-democracy protests raged for months in Hong Kong, sparked by widespread public anger at Beijing's rule.

The demonstrations, which saw battles between police and protesters rage for seven straight months, hammered tourist arrivals into the city, traditionally one of the world's busiest transport hubs.

Yesterday, the flagship carrier reported an attributable profit of HK\$1.7 billion (US\$220 million) for 2019, a significant drop from the HK\$2.3 billion it made in 2018. And it warned of slipping into the red as airlines around the world suffer the huge travel disruptions caused by the rapid global spread of the deadly coronavirus.

"We expect to incur a substantial loss for the first half of 2020," chairman Patrick Healy said. "We expect our passenger business to be under severe pressure this year and that our cargo business will continue to face headwinds," he added.

### Turbulent year

The last time the airline made a loss was in the first half of 2018. It then embarked on a major overhaul that brought the carrier back into the black but Cathay has found itself hammered by events beyond its control.

Hong Kong's political unrest put Cathay squarely in the crosshairs of Beijing last summer after some of its 27,000 employees in the city expressed sympathy for the pro-democracy movement.

Nationalists on the mainland agitated for a boycott while Chinese aviation authorities placed a host of onerous extra checks on the airline. Cathay responded with the departure of its CEO and chairman as well as measures to punish staff that joined or voiced support for the protests, leading to an easing of regulations on the mainland. Protests began winding down in

December and January but before Cathay could recover, the deadly coronavirus emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan and has since spread around the world.

International flight routes have been hammered with Cathay especially vulnerable because so much of its business relies on the Chinese mainland and connecting Asia to the rest of the world.

It has since slashed its capacity to mainland China by 90 percent and is flying 40 percent fewer routes globally. Last month the airline announced it was asking all its 34,000 staff worldwide to take up to three weeks of unpaid leave in a bid to alleviate a major cash shortage.

Dozens of passenger jets are now parked on the tarmac at Hong Kong's airport. Cathay's transportation headquarters. The profit results came as the airline separately confirmed a crew member had tested preliminary positive for the new coronavirus. The employee had last flown on a flight from Madrid to Hong Kong on March 7.



**HONG KONG:** A Cathay Pacific staff member wearing a facemask as a preventative measure against the COVID-19 coronavirus stands next to a row of self-check in terminals at Hong Kong's Chek Lap Kok International Airport on Tuesday. —AFP

The plane has since been deep cleaned and fellow crew members are quarantining at home, Cathay said. Hong Kong's economy is currently in recession, battered by the China-US trade war, the protests and now the coronavirus.

The city has 120 confirmed cases of the COVID-19 disease with three deaths. Shares in the firm ended up

more than three percent. Despite the profits fall and liquidity squeeze, Cathay said it still planned to take delivery of 70 new and more fuel-efficient aircraft by 2024.

The International Air Transport Association has estimated that the coronavirus outbreak will cost the airline industry between \$63 billion to \$113 billion in lost revenue from passengers this year. —AFP



**Airline reports profit of \$220m for 2019**

## Adidas, Puma warn of virus blows to 2020 business

**FRANKFURT:** German sportswear makers Adidas and Puma yesterday warned the coronavirus outbreak would deal painful blows to their business in 2020, weighing especially on the first quarter with store closures and lower sales.

Adidas said its revenues in key market China would come in between 800 million and one billion euros (\$907 million-1.1 billion), lower than the 2019 January-March period. Sales in China plunged by 80 percent in late January-early February. "Following the outbreak of the coronavirus, our business in Greater China has experienced a significant negative impact since Chinese New Year," chief executive Kasper Rorsted said.

Meanwhile Puma said it "cannot quantify the negative effect" but pointed to sales "severely affected" in China and other Asian countries, adding there was also "significantly lower" traffic to its stores in Europe as the virus spreads. The historic rivals both faced disruption to their supply chains, although the gradual reopening of factories in China and sourcing from other countries has so far limited the impact.

Nevertheless, "we cannot yet reliably quantify the magnitude of the overall financial impact in 2020," Adidas CEO Rorsted said. Shares in Adidas fell on the news, plunging 8.1 percent to trade at 203.15 euros around 1:00 pm (1200 GMT) in Frankfurt and trailing the DAX blue-chip index which was up 0.8 percent. Looking ahead, "the further recovery in Greater China, the extent of spillover into other countries as well as the availability of raw materials remain largely uncertain," Rorsted added. Adidas finance director Harm Ohlmeier said the group expected a sales impact of between 50 and 70 million euros if this year's major sporting events, the Euro 2020 football tournament and the Summer Olympics in Japan, are cancelled. Rorsted said the likely effect would be "marginal", while he expected people to continue to exercise at home and shop online even under pandemic conditions. —AFP

## China allows some firms to resume work in Wuhan

**BEIJING:** China announced yesterday that key companies can resume work in coronavirus-hit Wuhan, in another sign authorities are confident the quarantined city is winning its battle against the epidemic.

The decision came a day after President Xi Jinping paid his first visit to the capital of Hubei province since it was placed under lockdown in late January after the outbreak became a national emergency.

The number of daily new cases has fallen steadily in Wuhan in recent weeks, while all other cities in Hubei have reported zero fresh infections for several days in a row-prompting Xi to declare that the spread of the virus has been "basically curbed" in the province. The Hubei provincial government said yesterday that Wuhan businesses involved in providing daily necessities, prevention and control of the epidemic, or in the operations of public utilities, are among those that can resume work and production immediately.

Wuhan firms that are key to "global industrial chains" may do so as

well, after getting approval, the government added.

Other companies are expected to resume production only after March 20. Japanese carmaker Honda said on Wednesday that some of its staff have started going to work in its Wuhan plant.

Honda has also begun production of a "small number of vehicles" while checking on its production equipment starting yesterday.

Similar rules apply to areas outside Wuhan that are considered high-risk, where companies involved in epidemic prevention, public utilities and providing necessities are among those that may resume work. In areas considered medium or low risk, there is a broader range of companies allowed to return to work.

Passenger flights, trains, cars, ships and city buses in middle and low-risk areas-moving within the province and excluding Wuhan-will "gradually resume operations" as well, although no timeframe was given. But authorities said they will continue strict control measures on channels out of Wuhan and Hubei.

### Health codes

The announcement came a day after Hubei authorities loosened travel restrictions, allowing people from medium and low risk areas to move within the province if their health code is labelled "green".



**WUHAN:** A medical staff member sprays disinfectant at a residential area in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province yesterday. —AFP

A mobile app will be used to give residents a colored health code. Green indicates holders have no contact with virus cases, while those with yellow codes are close contacts. Confirmed or suspected cases will get a red code, and must be quarantined.

Authorities added in the latest statement yesterday that outside of Wuhan, a "point-to-point" system will be adopted to send employees back to work, and

help those stranded in Hubei to return home. Schools will continue to be suspended in Hubei. Wuhan city has been on lockdown since January 23 as China scrambled to contain the spread of the deadly coronavirus, which has now killed over 3,100 and infected nearly 81,000 in the country.

Other cities in Hubei soon followed suit, placing a total of around 56 million people under quarantine. —AFP

## BOJ likely to ease policy next week

**TOKYO:** The Bank of Japan is expected to ease monetary policy next week in an attempt to limit the impact of the coronavirus outbreak and recent market volatility on business sentiment, sources familiar with the central bank's thinking told Reuters.

While there is no consensus yet on what steps the

BOJ should take, increasing the size of its exchange-traded fund (ETF) purchases is among the most likely options, the sources said. "It's impossible to fight the coronavirus with monetary policy. But it can play a role in breeding confidence among the public, which the BOJ may need to do next week," one source said, on condition of anonymity. "The BOJ must avoid the market volatility from triggering a downward spiral in the economy via souring sentiment," another source said, a view echoed by two other sources.

The plan is preliminary and subject to change as the

BOJ's nine-member board has yet to engage in fully-fledged talks on the preferred next step, the sources said. The BOJ has been under pressure to loosen monetary policy at its March 18-19 rate review as slumping stock markets, a spike in the yen and jitters over the epidemic threaten to curtail corporate investment and derail a fragile economic recovery. Pledging to buy ETFs at a faster pace would help put a floor under the stock market and prevent business sentiment from worsening too much as a result of slumping prices, the sources said. —Reuters

## EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.	
<b>ASIAN COUNTRIES</b>	
Japanese Yen	2.945
Indian Rupees	4.167
Pakistani Rupees	1.952
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.679
Nepali Rupees	2.590
Singapore Dollar	221.680
Hongkong Dollar	39.492
Bangladesh Taka	3.606
Philippine Peso	6.087
Thai Baht	9.781
Malaysian Ringgit	78.465
<b>GCC COUNTRIES</b>	
Saudi Riyal	81.868
Qatari Riyal	84.320
UAE Dirham	797.401
Bahraini Dinar	815.200
UAE Dirham	83.585
<b>ARAB COUNTRIES</b>	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	20.450
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	19.587
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.232
Tunisian Dinar	114.910
Jordanian Dinar	433.240
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.205
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	33.348
<b>EUROPEAN &amp; AMERICAN COUNTRIES</b>	
US Dollar Transfer	306.800

Euro	350.060
Sterling Pound	398.230
Canadian dollar	225.090
Turkish lira	50.420
Swiss Franc	330.600
US Dollar Buying	299.500
<b>Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd</b>	
<b>Rate for Transfer</b>	<b>Selling Rate</b>
US Dollar	305.950
Canadian Dollar	225.080
Sterling Pound	400.865
Euro	349.070
Swiss Frank	289.085
Bahrain 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	
<b>BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL</b>		
<b>CURRENCY</b>	<b>BUY</b>	<b>SELL</b>
<b>Europe</b>		
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
Swedish Krona	0.028266	0.033266
Swiss Franc	0.320705	0.331705
<b>Australasia</b>		
Australian Dollar	0.192382	0.204382
New Zealand Dollar	0.186452	0.195952
<b>America</b>		
Canadian Dollar	0.219343	0.228343
US Dollars	0.302200	0.306750
US Dollars Mint	0.302700	0.306750
<b>Asia</b>		
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 Baht	0.009410	0.009960
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.000013
<b>Arab</b>		
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	0.084313
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

# Europe's major auto industry shuts factories, sends workers elsewhere

## Coronavirus disrupting region's struggling automotive industry

**BARCELONA/MILAN:** Europe's major car and parts makers rushed yesterday to close factories and cut output in Italy and considered sending workers home elsewhere, in the first signs that coronavirus is disrupting the region's struggling automotive industry. Fiat Chrysler said it was temporarily halting operations at some of its Italian factories and would reduce production in response to Europe's largest coronavirus outbreak.

The Italian-American carmaker has stepped up measures across its facilities, including intensive cleaning of all work and rest areas, to support the government's directives to curb the spread of the infectious disease. Italian tyre maker Pirelli had said on Tuesday it was cutting production at its Settimo Torinese plant in northern Italy after a worker tested positive for the virus.

Italy is the worst-affected country in the world after China and the unprecedented lockdown of the country has heaped fresh pressure on the region's ailing car sector. Other companies including Britain's biggest carmaker Jaguar Land Rover and Peugeot owner PSA were also scrambling to deal with infections among staff, highlighting the risks to business beyond supply chains and Italy's borders.

The French carmaker was beefing up safety rules yesterday at its Mulhouse plant with a 5,000-strong workforce in eastern France after one employee tested positive, a spokeswoman said. The man has been on

sick leave since Feb. 29. The actions come as Volkswagen said it may send staff home temporarily from two plants in Spain - one run by its Spanish unit Seat near Barcelona and another in the Navarra area - if supply issues worsen.

"The Martorell plant is currently working normally. However, there are several risks derived from COVID-19, which has affected the supply chain," a Seat spokesman said.

VW's Czech Skoda unit also said there was the risk of a shortage of parts from China that might affect several of its plants.

### Brakes on

The disruptions are the latest blow to Europe's car makers, which are struggling with weak global demand and high costs of meeting the region's tough emissions targets. The virus has already taken its toll on business in China, the world's top car market, where vehicle sales tumbled last month as customers stayed home due to the epidemic.

An industry association warned last week that car sales in Italy, Europe's third-largest economy, could shrink by more than 15 percent. Seat would make temporary layoffs if it had to cut production due to supply issues, the spokesman said.

Seat union representative Matias Carnero said the company's supply chain was being affected by the worsening coronavirus outbreak. "It all looks like it is



German carmaker Porsche hosts a photo tour showing the production and the manufacturing of the new Macan in Leipzig, Germany, in this file photo. — Reuters



### Italy's car sales could drop 15%

going to be requested," said Carnero, a representative for UGT, the main labor union at Seat, referring to the potential temporary layoffs.

Under temporary layoffs, Spanish workers are normally paid part of their salary.

The company spokesman said the duration of these layoffs had not been discussed yet, but Carnero

said they could last between two and five weeks, adding that this could potentially affect about 7,000 people at the plant. Italian brake maker Brembo warned on Tuesday that its northern Italian production could struggle if the government introduced even more stringent measures to tackle the spread of the coronavirus. — Reuters

## Stock rebound runs out of steam despite BoE cut

**LONDON:** The rebound in stocks ran out of steam yesterday despite the Bank of England joining other central banks in cutting interest rates, as investors weighed up whether coordinated monetary and fiscal stimulus could counter the shock from coronavirus.

The surprise move from the BoE, which on the day that Britain's budget opened the taps on spending - also announced measures to support bank lending, initially lifted shares after a lacklustre session in Asia. Wall Street had rallied sharply on Tuesday, helping reverse some of Monday's brutal losses, but that did not translate into improved sentiment yesterday as skepticism grew about the stimulus package announced by Washington to fight the epidemic.

By 1100 GMT, European stock gains had fizzled as caution set in. The FTSE 100 fell 0.4 percent after earlier being up more than 1 percent, the Euro Stoxx was 0.09 percent lower and Germany's DAX down 0.06 percent.

US stock futures dropped 3.32 percent. As of Tuesday's close, \$8.1 trillion in value has been erased from global stock markets in the recent rout. The MSCI all-country index has lost more than 15 percent of its value since it peaked on Feb. 12, and was 0.38 percent lower yesterday.

With the Federal Reserve having already cut rates this month, the pressure is now on the European Central Bank to act when it meets today. "It is the only thing central banks can do in a public health crisis," said Neil Dwane, global strategist and portfolio manager at Allianz Global Investors. "They are trying to take the shackles off the banks to ensure we don't get a cash crunch."

The BoE, which cut rates by 50 basis points to 0.25 percent, did not announce new quantitative



TOKYO: Pedestrians pass in front of a quotation board displaying the share price numbers of the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo yesterday. — Reuters

easing measures but it did launch a new scheme to support lending to small businesses. The UK finance minister began presenting his first annual budget shortly after 1230 GMT.

Italy, which is on lockdown in an attempt to slow new infections, earmarked \$28.3 billion to soften the economic impact. After a decade of extraordinary monetary policy, investors say the impact of easier policy has clear limits and increased government spending must bear the brunt of the policy response to the economic consequences of the outbreak.

"For the ECB their problem is that there is even more pressure because they face the third-largest euro zone economy - Italy - in dire straits," Dwane said.

A key gauge of long-term euro zone inflation expectations dropped to another record low yesterday, in what analysts said suggested investors were positioning for deflation risks.

### Declining dollar

Sterling initially fell sharply following the BoE decision before rebounding. It was last up 0.5 percent at \$1.2938 but down 0.3 percent versus

the euro at 87.67 pence. The dollar resumed its decline against the yen, the Swiss franc and the euro, weighed down by uncertainty about the US government's response and the drop in US Treasury yields. The greenback remained significantly above levels seen on Monday, however.

Benchmark US 10-year Treasury yields fell 7 basis points to 0.684 percent, still more than double Monday's record low yield of 0.3180 percent. Market participants largely expect the Fed to cut rates for the second time this month at next week's scheduled policy meeting, after it surprised investors with a 50-basis-point cut last week. German government bond yields rose after the BoE cut supported sentiment, while Italian yields - which had shot up on worries the country with Europe's worst outbreak of the virus is sliding into a recession - tumbled as much as 20 basis points as bets on ECB stimulus grew. Karen Ward, Chief Market Strategist for EMEA at JP Morgan Asset Management, said all eyes were now on British finance minister Rishi Sunak, who announced a big rise in spending to help businesses and households through the coronavirus epidemic. — Reuters

## KFH customers benefit from buying gold biscuits

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) customers benefit from purchasing and receiving gold biscuits (10 grams) and instant cheque printing services that the bank has recently launched.

In line with its strategy of digital transformation, KFH offers such digital services to enhance customer experience and fulfill their requirements and needs around the clock, easily, simply and safely, under the slogan "New Generation of Easy Banking Services".

In 9 different areas in Kuwait, customers can visit the nearest KFH Go branch to purchase and receive the gold biscuit (10 grams) immediately by using

the ATM machines or calling KFH "ALLO BAITEK".

For instant cheque printing, customers can visit the nearest KFH Go self-banking station, request and print a cheque book of 10 leaves by video conference with KFH agent. KFH is keen on constantly improving its digital banking solutions, especially that the bank has uniquely rolled out innovative services that can be completed online and via mobile using robotics, AI, X-TMs and the smart branches KFH Go. This contributed to adding value to the customer's experience, confirming that the easy banking services encourage customers to use KFHOnline in their transactions.

KFH offers online financial solutions, including local and telex financial transfers, opening deposits, adding beneficiaries, balance inquiry, cheque book request, opening KFH gold account, conducting gold transactions (purchase, sell and trade), requesting financing, opening an account, applying for Al-Khair card, and checking the PINs for credit and debit cards.



KFH-Go self-banking station

## Oil price crash: Will it affect move to green energy?

**LONDON:** The collapse in global oil prices may end up being bad news in the short term for the transition to green energy, as cheaper crude could see more use of cars and aircraft. But on the flip side, it could see companies move away from exploiting expensive fossil fuel deposits.

### Fossil fuel switch

The plunging price of crude could prompt more people to use cars and planes rather than public transport, and encourage the purchase of bigger fuel-hungry models such as SUVs. For individuals as well as businesses, a cheap barrel of crude also means cheaper heating oil, a slowdown in energy savings and could delay schemes to convert to "greener" electricity.

### Green slowdown

However, by reducing profits of oil majors cheap oil could see some potentially less profitable exploration projects put on hold, which would help cut future carbon emissions. That is

particularly the case with shale oil in north America, for example, which is costly to extract and is seen as not profitable below \$50 a barrel.

But Charlie Kronick, oil finance adviser to environmental campaigners Greenpeace UK, said it could also delay companies in their move towards becoming more environmentally friendly. "In purely financial terms, cheap oil will make it easier for fossil fuels to compete with the increasingly affordable renewables, making the economic case for companies like BP that are trying to reinvent themselves as greener energy producers more challenging, and potentially slowing the transition," he said.

"Expensive oil makes the alternatives, like electric vehicles, more attractive. Cheaper oil creates a headwind for that change," he told AFP.

### 'Carbon risk'

Bobby Banerjee, from City University in London, stressed that given the climate crisis and promises from a number of countries to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, investments in the sector were long term. "Oil prices always fluctuate, no government makes decisions on oil prices," he said, adding that investment had already begun, helped by state subsidies which guarantee oil majors income.

Countries such as Britain are gradually closing all their coal-fired power stations. The combined result has been that CO2 emissions in the energy sector dropped 2.0 percent

worldwide in 2019, according to the independent energy think-tank, Ember. Many businesses, notably investment funds, are also taking into account a high "carbon risk", which has led the world's biggest asset manager, Blackrock, to pull its investments in coal.

### The coronavirus effect

All these factors risk being supplanted in the short term by the coronavirus outbreak, which has paralyzed the economies of several countries, grounded air traffic, and in the case of Italy, put the entire country into lockdown.

The demand for oil, especially from the world's second-biggest consumer China, is in free-fall. This should lower CO2 emissions temporarily and even on a more sustainable basis if the effects of coronavirus are as severe as the 2008 global financial crisis.

Banerjee said the situation was "a perfect opportunity to remove the subsidies to oil companies because oil prices are low". "It's a good time to put the carbon tax very high to accelerate the energy transition." But given the likelihood of a looming economic slump, that could be politically problematic.

Kronick stressed that the transition to low carbon energy is not dependent on the price or availability of fossil fuels. "The shift is ultimately driven by the need to avoid catastrophic climate change and the inevitable economic disruption that comes with the climate emergency," he added. — AFP

## Tanker rates soar as Bahri books up to 14 ships

**SINGAPORE:** Saudi Arabia's National Shipping firm, Bahri, has tentatively chartered as many as 14 super-tankers to ship crude oil to customers worldwide, as the Kingdom follows through with its promise to boost crude oil output.

"VLCC's provisionally hired in the spot market for quite prompt dates - 10 days to 2 weeks forward - have surged over the course of the last two days," said Anoop Singh, head of tanker research in Asia at Braemar ACM Shipbroking. The spike in bookings by Bahri has helped to more than double the charter rates for very large crude-oil carriers (VLCC) amid this week's 'fixing frenzy', shipping sources said.

The bookings by Bahri are in addition to its own fleet of 42 VLCC's which it mainly uses to ship Saudi oil to customers across the world, the sources said.

VLCC tanker rates along the Middle East Gulf to China route have more than doubled to over \$100,000 per day yes-

terday, up from about \$30,000-\$40,000 per day on Monday, according to several ship broking sources. Saudi's state oil giant Aramco said on Tuesday it would boost oil supplies to a record 12.3 million barrels per day (bpd) in April, or 300,000 bpd above its maximum production capacity.

On Friday, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, including Russia, - together known as OPEC+ - failed to reach an agreement for deeper production cuts to support prices hit by the coronavirus outbreak, sending global oil prices plunging and threatening to overwhelm global oil markets with supply. In February, freight rates plunged nearly in half as the spreading coronavirus hit demand for crude oil in China, the world's top importer, and after the US partially lifted sanctions on one unit of Chinese shipping firm COSCO. But as worries about the economic fallout from the coronavirus outbreak and its impact on energy demand continue to weigh, some of the increased Saudi exports may be destined for storage.

Some crude volumes onboard the West-bound tankers fixed by Bahri, which were about half of the ships it booked this week, "are likely to be headed straight into storage," said Singh. — Reuters

## Business

# NBK-Bahrain reports net profits of BHD 117.89 million for 2019

## Solid results a testament to the role being played by NBK's international branches

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait-Bahrain (NBK Bahrain) reported net profits of BHD 117.89 million (equivalent to KD 94.9 million) for the year 2019, relatively unchanged from 2018.

Comprehensive income increased by 93 percent to reach BHD 161.636 million for the year 2019 compared with BHD 83.706 million in 2018. As of end of 2019, NBK-Bahrain's total assets increased by 15 percent y-o-y to BHD 7.293 billion, compared with BHD 6.339 billion in 2018. Total shareholders' equity increased by 15 percent y-o-y to BHD 788.357 million. Customers deposits stood at BHD 3.050 billion by end of December 2019.

Isam Al-Sager, NBK Group Chief Executive Officer said, "We successfully achieved a solid performance in 2019 despite the operational challenges on the back of volatile oil prices."

Al-Sager highlighted that NBK-Bahrain's earning growth in 2019 was driven by the Bank's operating activities, which the Bank continually strives to maintain by expanding its footprint and growing its operations in the Bahraini market. Al-Sager added: "The

strong profitability growth of NBK-Bahrain is a testament to the success of NBK Group's strategic regional expansion strategies, with our internal branches and subsidiaries playing a vital role in mitigating risks and diversifying our income sources".



**Total assets increased by 15% y-o-y to BHD 7.293bn**

"Our diversification extends to expanding our product and service offerings, in addition to our commitment to digital transformation that will position NBK Group for future growth." Al-Sager added.

Meanwhile, Ali Fardan, NBK-Bahrain General Manager, said "NBK Bahrain continues to consolidate its prominent position in the Bahraini market, thanks to the full range of exceptional banking products and services it provides to its retail and corporate clients".

Fardan praised the Central Bank of Bahrain's efforts in particular and all government agencies in general for their continued support extended to NBK-Bahrain and the entire Bahraini banking sectors. He also highlighted the great support extended by NBK Group through its vast regional and global network of branches and subsidiaries, as it has been vitally important in strengthening the bank's activities in the Bahraini market, through capitalizing on its high credit ratings, extensive network and leading reputation as the top bank in the Middle East and one of the safest banks in the world.

NBK is the largest financial institution in Kuwait with effective market dominance in the commercial banking market and has been consistently awarded the highest credit rating of all banks in the region



Isam Al-Sager



Ali Fardan

from Moody's, Standard & Poor's, and Fitch Ratings. NBK also stands out in terms of its local and international network, which includes branches, subsidiaries and representative offices in China, Geneva, London, Paris, New York, and Singapore alongside its regional presence in Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Turkey, and the UAE.

## Fed faces headache, taps epidemiologists in hunt for policy clues

WASHINGTON/SAN FRANCISCO: The escalating coronavirus outbreak is giving the US Federal Reserve a policy headache like never before: how to judge the potential impact on the economy in the absence of reliable data on how fast the flu-like illness is spreading across the United States.

The central bank slashed interest rates by half a percentage point a week ago in a pre-emptive bid to shield the US economy from the fast-evolving global epidemic. But Fed Chair Jerome Powell also said it was too early to tell the impact it would have, with most of the data the Fed typically relies on being too backward-looking to be of use.

Instead, the Fed is turning to new methods to assess the likely spread and get a read on local responses as policymakers weigh what further action may be needed in the days and weeks ahead. "I am talking extensively to epidemiologists and healthcare experts across the country...to try and interpret what we are seeing and what we are likely to see," Dallas Fed President Robert Kaplan said in Chicago last week.

For real-time impacts, the Richmond Fed has reached out to city and county executives "to understand what this might look like in our cities," research director Kartik Athreya told Reuters on Friday. Minneapolis Fed economists are monitoring credit card transactions



In this file photo, US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell gives a press briefing after the surprise announcement the Fed will cut interest rates in Washington, DC. — AFP

while San Francisco Fed researchers are now tracking a daily measure of consumer sentiment published by Morning Consult.

These snapshots could quickly show whether the American consumer, the engine of US growth, is pulling back. But assessing how long that could last relies on a good grasp of the outbreak's escalation. The economic impact "is largely going to depend on how many people are going to be infected by this...how many people will be able to go to work, and how many hours they will be able to put into production," said Arizona State

University's Bart Hobijn, who was a Fed economist during the financial crisis.

For Kaplan, the number of new cases will be a key indicator as he heads into the central bank's policy meeting on March 17-18, at which he and his fellow policymakers will have to provide their next set of economic forecasts. But an accurate reading remains elusive. The Trump administration has been criticized for its slow response and the short supply of test kits. The number of US cases of coronavirus grew to 761 on Tuesday, including 27 deaths, with fast-growing concentrations in cities like Seattle, San Francisco and New York.

"Once you have a cluster in a certain city, there's a risk, in light of the facts here, that you might have many more undiagnosed cases than we are aware of and there is a risk that those undiagnosed cases will in turn infect other people," Kaplan noted. About three-fourths of the 50 US states have now reported infections. The slow pace of rolling out kits and testing capabilities means that policymakers will have little concrete evidence about the extent of the US outbreak ahead of next week's meeting.

"The amount of extra information that they'll have in the next few days, until these tests are widely available, is going to be minimal," said Mac Hyman, a professor of mathematics at Tulane University, who is an expert in epidemic modeling.

Only with more widespread testing to identify cases can experts more accurately track the disease's likely spread, he said. Key to the length of the impact is also the extent to which people are made more aware of how they can become infected and provided with tools to prevent spreading the virus, from face masks to disposable gloves. — Reuters

## German ports brace for blow from virus disruptions

BERLIN: German ports are bracing for their trade to take a severe blow in the coming days as the coronavirus outbreak and related plunge in shipments from China compound a container shortage and push up transport costs in Europe's largest economy.

Since ship deliveries from China to Germany take up to six weeks, the port of Hamburg, Germany's largest trading hub, and smaller inland ports are only now beginning to feel the full impact of the COVID-19 virus, which has disrupted the container shipping trade and supply chains the world over.

"We're currently bracing for the impact. It will hit us with full force from mid-March," Axel Mattern, CEO of the Port of Hamburg Marketing, a business association that represents public and private sector entities of the harbor, told Reuters.

"The entire supply chains have been thrown completely off balance," Mattern said. "In the course of the year, we expect container volumes to drop sharply due to the coronavirus." China is Germany's biggest trading partner, with

companies depending on both Chinese demand and supply chains. In Hamburg, more than a quarter of the 9.3 million TEU container units traded in 2019 came from or went to China. This means that China has also become the Achilles heel of the German economy, with the port of Hamburg especially vulnerable. Trade volumes at the port are already down 40 percent due to the Chinese New Year festivities and a series of unusually heavy storms in February, according to Mattern.

"And this period of weakness has now been extended due to the coronavirus - and there is no end in sight. Nobody can say how long this weak phase will last," he said.

There were some hopeful signs from China, where factories restarted in recent weeks.

"What we're hearing from on site in Shanghai is that there are first signs of normalization. In Shanghai, more than 50 percent of employees now go to work. But then again, this also shows that we're still a long way from normal and a 'business as usual'."

The trade and supply chain problems are expected to send the economy into a recession in the first half of the year, increasing the pressure on Chancellor Angela Merkel's government to come up with a large fiscal stimulus in the coming weeks. Economy Minister Peter Altmaier said on Tuesday he expected supply chains to be impacted especially in the industrial sector and that the full extent of the disruptions would become visible gradually over the next weeks. — Reuters



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange during the opening bell on Tuesday in New York. — AFP

## Global investors navigate virus data fog

LONDON: For money managers, it's bad enough watching the coronavirus wipe trillions of dollars off world markets' value. Even worse is not knowing how bad the outbreak really is for the economy, company balance sheets, and in turn for their portfolios.

Having torn across borders to almost 100 countries in the space of a few weeks, the virus is leaving official data releases and corporate trading statements struggling to keep up. That means many fund managers and economists who typically use forecasts to guide investment decisions or strategy calls are disregarding them altogether.

In short, investors, a group that hates uncertainty, are groping their way through what is the worst stock market rout and growth scare in years.

Government and business efforts to contain the virus are expected to wreak the most economic damage; those responses are ongoing and asymmetric and subject to constant change as the virus threat shifts. All of this is making it much harder to forecast the hit to growth or profits.

Nor are central bankers' signals much use, given monetary firepower is more or less exhausted after a decade of deploy-

ment, said Paul O'Connor, head of multi-asset at Janus Henderson Investors, which runs \$370 billion.

"Economic data are not going to be much use at all. We face at least a month, some more weeks of weak economic data, downgrades to growth and downgrades to company earnings. Data won't tell me where the market may bottom," O'Connor said.

"Nor is there a clear circuit-breaker where policymaking is concerned." Instead, O'Connor is using market moves to gauge when to buy or sell on Monday when the S&P 500 and Europe's STOXX index suffered their biggest daily falls since 2008, he stepped in to buy, reckoning sentiment was near bottom.

As for economic data, that's getting short shrift. February US payrolls, which last week showed robust job creation and unemployment near 50-year lows, were brushed off by a plunging Wall Street that - quite simply - saw the numbers as old news.

February Purchasing Managers Indexes (PMIs) - considered one of the few forward-looking economic indicators available - showed euro zone businesses growing at their fastest pace in six months; even compiler IHS Markit dubbed them "a false dawn".

Meanwhile, economic forecasts roll in with caveats attached. Oxford Economics (OE) cut its 2020 global growth forecasts by a half percent on Monday, assuming a Chinese bounceback. But this hinged on "the extent to which households and firms are able and willing to go about their normal business", it added. — Reuters

## Markaz proposes a national disaster management plan

KUWAIT: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" has released a number of out-of-the-box ideas for crisis management in the time of Corona. Markaz said that the management of the Novel Coronavirus (also called COVID19) crisis should be through a country-wide National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP) that can enable Kuwait to tackle the problems in a more organized way. A properly conceived NDMP can enable resumption of services following a crisis. An emergency communication plan is integral to NDMP as good and swift communication can calm nerves easily and enable people to return to normal routine at the earliest. While the suggested NDMP is focused on Coronavirus issue, the concept of NDMP should be a permanent one so that Kuwait can face future crises with minimal dislocation.

The proposed initiatives include a number of various areas, such as consumables, capacity and capital expenditures, human resources, governance and critical health protocols as per the following:

### A - Consumables

1. Adequate supply of PPE (Protective Personal Equipment) e.g. gowns, masks, PCR test kits, etc.
2. Availability of sanitizers in crowd centric areas like community gatherings, hospitals and malls.
3. More machines for temperature screening in the airport to avoid queue congestion.
4. Tracking bracelets for people who are quarantined.

### B - Capacity and capital expenditures

1. Sufficient ICU rooms.
2. A warehouse with enough medical supply for 6 months at the very least.
3. Use of a mobile application for fingerprints in the airport to avoid scanning by an officer.

### C - Human Resources

1. Emphasis on Medical and Paramedical staff and their morale through the social media.
2. Real-time tracking and monitoring of medical shipments from a country of origin.
3. Discourage annual leave for health care employees in this period with suitable incentives.
4. Reduce the working hours of medical staff.
5. To allow all the health care provider to enter the country after corona test clearance.
6. Arrangement of a portable clinic for large companies that have a vast workforce to check their daily temperature.
7. Termination of unnecessary unskilled labor.

### D - Governance

1. Increase government regulations towards utilization time of medical facilities (limiting low priority cases such as plastic surgeries).
2. Halt all elective surgery (cold cases) in order to save the supply of medical resources.
3. Encourage digitization system everywhere.
4. Maintain transparency even with emergency contracts and avoid conflict of interest when applying any of the above.

### E - Critical Health Protocols

1. Random temperature screening after prayers during their exit from prayer houses.
2. Apply strict policies in ministries, banks, companies to reduce mobilization of the employees from one department to another.
3. Random Temperature screening in high residency areas.



The port of Hamburg, Germany's largest trading hub, and smaller inland ports are only now beginning to feel the full impact of the COVID-19 virus, which has disrupted the container shipping trade and supply chains the world over.

## Health

# As pressure for coronavirus vaccine mounts, scientists debate risks of accelerated testing

## Testing of vaccine enhancement in animals to proceed simultaneously with human trials

**CHICAGO:** Drugmakers are working as quickly as possible to develop a vaccine to combat the rapidly spreading coronavirus that has infected more than 100,000 people worldwide. Behind the scenes, scientists and medical experts are concerned that rushing a vaccine could end up worsening the infection in some patients rather than preventing it.

Studies have suggested that coronavirus vaccines carry the risk of what is known as vaccine enhancement, where instead of protecting against infection, the vaccine can actually make the disease worse when a vaccinated person is infected with the virus. The mechanism that causes that risk is not fully understood and is one of the stumbling blocks that has prevented the successful development of a coronavirus vaccine.

Normally, researchers would take months to test for the possibility of vaccine enhancement in animals. Given the urgency to stem the spread of the new coronavirus, some drugmakers are moving straight into small-scale human tests, without waiting for the completion of such animal tests.

"I understand the importance of accelerating timelines for vaccines in general, but from everything I know, this is not the vaccine to be doing it with," Dr Peter Hotez, dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, told Reuters.

Hotez worked on development of a vaccine for SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), the coronavirus behind a major 2003 outbreak, and found that some vaccinated animals developed more severe disease compared with unvaccinated animals when they were exposed to the virus. "There is a risk of immune enhancement," said Hotez. "The way you reduce that risk is first you show it does not occur in laboratory animals."

Hotez testified last week before the US House Committee on Science, Space and Technology about the need for sustained funding for vaccine research. There remains no vaccine for any of the new coronaviruses that have caused outbreaks in the past 20 years.

At least for now, the world's experts have concluded that accelerated testing is a risk worth taking. At a specially convened World Health Organization (WHO) meeting in mid-February, designed to co-ordinate a global response to the new coronavirus, scientists representing government-funded research organizations and drugmakers around the world agreed that the threat was so great that vaccine developers should move quickly into human trials, before animal testing is completed, four people who attended the meeting told Reuters.

"You want to have a vaccine as quickly as possible," Dr Marie-Paule Kiény, former assistant director-general at the WHO, who co-chaired the meeting, told Reuters. "You have to balance this with the risk that you impose on a very small number of people, and do all you can do to mitigate this risk as much as possible."

The conclusion of that meeting, which was not open to media, has not been officially publicized by the WHO. It does not reflect any official position adopted by the WHO, a United Nations body whose job it is to help shape global

health policy. Regulatory oversight of drugmakers and medical research is in the hands of national regulators. The most powerful of those, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), has signaled that it is in agreement with the consensus and will not stand in the way of accelerated testing schedules.

"When responding to an urgent public health situation such as novel coronavirus, we intend to exercise regulatory flexibility and consider all data relevant to a certain vaccine platform," FDA spokeswoman Stephanie Caccamo said in a statement. The agency had no comment specifically on animal testing for vaccine enhancement.

Coronavirus vaccine developers are still required to conduct routine animal testing to make sure the vaccine itself is not toxic and is likely to help the immune system respond to the virus.

**Seattle risk**  
Some 20 coronavirus vaccine candidates are being developed by research institutes and drugmakers including America's Johnson & Johnson and France's Sanofi S.A. The US government has earmarked more than \$3 billion for coronavirus treatments and vaccines.

Biotechnology company Moderna Inc, which is working with the US-funded National Institutes of Health (NIH), is the closest to human testing, announcing plans to start a trial with 45 people in Seattle this month.

Testing for the specific risk of vaccine enhancement in animals will proceed simultaneously with human trials, the NIH told Reuters, which it said should establish whether it is safe to expose larger numbers of people to the vaccine. Moderna did not respond to requests for comment.

The plan is consistent with the WHO consensus and FDA requirements, said Dr Emily Erbeling, director of the Division of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), part of the NIH. The trial is expected to take 14 months, a spokeswoman for the NIH said.

Dr Gregory Poland, a virologist and vaccine researcher with the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, expressed doubts about that approach. "This is important, but it has to be done in a way that reassures scientists and the public that these (vaccines) are not only efficacious, but safe," he told Reuters.

Hotez said he was surprised human trials were going ahead. "If there is immune enhancement in laboratory animals vaccinated with the Moderna vaccine, that's a show-stopper," he said. US immunotherapy company Inovio Pharmaceuticals Inc, which is developing a coronavirus vaccine in collaboration with a Chinese company, also expects to start human clinical trials in 30 US volunteers in April rather than wait for animal studies on vaccine enhancement.

"The community as a whole weighed that and said we don't want to delay the clinical process. We've been encouraged to go as rapidly as possible into Phase I studies," Inovio Chief Executive Joseph Kim told Reuters.

The company plans to start human safety trials shortly



### Risk of immune enhancement



**NAPLES:** A street seller/performer sits at his stall next to a sign reading "Only in Naples is being sold the vaccine against the coronavirus" on Piazza San Domenico Maggiore in Naples. — AFP

thereafter in China and South Korea - two countries that have been hit hard by the virus. Kim said he expects to have an answer to the question of vaccine enhancement at some point this year.

The Moderna/NIH trial is enrolling patients at the Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute in Seattle. The choice of location, made several weeks ago, could prove to be problematic. To reduce the risk to volunteers, scientists at the WHO meeting recommended that drugmakers restrict early clinical trials to small groups of healthy people and conduct them in places where the virus is not spreading, according to Kiény, who now works at French research institute Inserm. That lowers the chances that people who get the vaccine could encounter the virus and trigger a more severe reaction.

Since the location was chosen, the Seattle metro area has emerged as the epicenter of infections in the United States. Washington state has reported 162 coronavirus infections and 22 deaths, out of a total of 755 infections and 26 deaths in the country as of Tuesday, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Nevertheless, Moderna and the NIH plan to go ahead. "We think there is no reason to have to change the site. If you change it, there might be community transmission in another site over the next couple of weeks," Erbeling said. "Any risk of that to participants is very small. It would be manageable as the trial progresses. People are being observed very, very carefully."

#### Early warning signs

Tragic lessons from other vaccines and prior work on coronaviruses have raised some warning flags for developers. The best-known example occurred in a US trial in the 1960s of a vaccine created by the NIH and licensed to Pfizer Inc to fight respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), which

causes pneumonia in infants. The vast majority of babies who received the vaccine developed more severe disease, and two toddlers died. A more recent example occurred in the Philippines, where some 800,000 children were vaccinated with Sanofi's dengue vaccine, Dengvaxia. Only afterward did the company learn that it could increase the risk of more severe disease in a small percentage of individuals.

Research, including that conducted by Hotez, has shown that coronaviruses in particular have the potential to produce this kind of response. But testing for the risk of vaccine enhancement is time-consuming because it requires scientists to breed mice that are genetically altered to respond to the virus like humans. Work on these and other animal models is just getting under way in several laboratories around the world.

Moderna, Inovio and several other vaccine developers are not waiting for that process to be completed and are planning to launch human trials in record time for a virus that was only discovered in December.

Both Moderna and Inovio say their vaccines are likely to have a lower risk of vaccine enhancement because they are made using newer technology that focuses on specific genes on the outer 'spike' portion of the virus. Coronavirus vaccines that caused vaccine enhancement were typically made using an inactivated version of the entire virus. Neither company has produced a licensed vaccine to date.

J&J said it is developing animal models to test for vaccine enhancement and hopes to have a vaccine candidate ready for human trials in October. A Sanofi spokeswoman said the company will examine this risk before testing the vaccine in clinical trials.

"People know how traumatic the RSV experience was," said Dr Johan Van Hoof, global head of Janssen Vaccines, J&J's vaccine unit. "When you see signals in animals like this, we should not ignore them." — Reuters

## US see blood shortages as coronavirus cancels office blood drives

**NEW YORK:** US blood banks are concerned about potential shortages as Americans concerned about catching the new coronavirus avoid donation sites and companies with employees working from home cancel blood drives.

There have already been shortages over the past week in Washington that required other blood banks to move blood in from outside the region, according to Brian Gannon, who runs the Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center and chairs a disaster task force for AABB, formerly known as the American Association of Blood Banks. Supplies in New York were also low because of blood drive cancellations, he said.

"I'm concerned. This is different than most of the types of pandemics we've had in the past or the other types of disasters that I've been involved with because it has to do with people social distancing themselves," Gannon said.

"Blood has a short shelf life, so it's not like we can stockpile it." Most blood centers try to keep an inventory of a three-day supply, according to the AABB.

The disease has so far sickened more than 800 in the United States and killed 28, mostly in Washington state.

Blood supply in Seattle started to dwindle at the beginning of the month, according to Bloodworks Northwest, which collects and distributes blood around the Northwest U.S. "Last week was really bad and we were at critical and emergency levels," said Vicki Finson, executive vice president of blood services at Bloodworks Northwest.

Finson said 60% of Bloodworks Northwest's blood is from mobile blood drives, and the push to have people work from home has resulted in many being canceled. "If this gets worse, people will quit responding and then we will be in a very difficult situation," Finson said.—Reuters



**CUCUTA:** File photo shows an immigration officer wearing a protective face mask as a precautionary measure to avoid contracting COVID-19 (coronavirus) checks a woman's temperature at Francisco Paula Santander International Bridge, in Cucuta, Colombia, at the border with Venezuela. — AFP

## Venezuelan hospitals await coronavirus unprepared

**MARACAIBO/SAN CRISTOBAL:** In a hospital in Venezuela's western city of Maracaibo, chronic water shortages have left staff using paint buckets as toilets. With medical gloves in short supply, workers use the same pair on multiple patients.

Years of recession, hyperinflation, and underinvestment in public services have left Venezuela in poor condition to confront any cases of the coronavirus that is spreading rapidly worldwide. Its hospitals suffer from chronic shortages of medicine and supplies, as well as frequent lapses in electricity and running water.

So far, Latin America has been spared the worst ravages of the virus. Around 100 cases have been reported in the region since Brazil announced the first case on Feb. 26.

But - with neighboring Colombia confirming its first case last week - it is only a matter of time before it reaches Venezuela, officials say.

The Pan American Health Organization said last week it would be prioritizing Haiti, Venezuela and a handful of other Central and South American countries who have "more challenges to their health systems."

Hania Salazar, president of Maracaibo's nursing school in the western state of Zulia, said hospital workers have been without supplies for years.

"Workers bring their own kits with soap and towels, and their own water to drink and wash," said Salazar.

"They also carry paint containers because here there is no hospital that has a bathroom in good condition."

As in other parts of Venezuela, Zulia's health system has hemorrhaged workers. Salazar said only emergency units were operating and workers often clock upwards of 18 hours a day.

Residents say a lack of access to water or affordable soap can make basic hygiene practices - needed to guard against the spread of the virus - out of reach for many.

"I am very concerned that in Venezuela there are no supplies, medicines, or even water in hospitals or homes," said Josefina Moreno, a 50-year-old university professor with a history of respiratory disease. "The prevention measures that everyone is talking about are hard to comply with here."

Gustavo Uribe, president of a medical school in the state of Tachira near the Colombian border, said hand-washing would be difficult due to water shortages.

"We're asking everyone to comply with hygienic norms, but we all know about the precarity of the system," he said. "The worry is that it will come here first, being by an international border." Vice President Delcy Rodriguez said on state television on Monday that the country was implementing "strict controls" at ports of entry and a series of protocols in health centers. The government has issued a list of hospitals charged with handling cases.

But some of those hospitals were not even open, said Douglas Leon, head of the Venezuelan Medical Federation.

"There is no hospital in Venezuela with capacity to attend to a patient with a condition as serious as this," he told a news conference on Monday. — Reuters

## From boom to bust, Chinese football faces bleak winter

**SHANGHAI:** One Chinese Super League club is on the brink of going bust and a dozen lower-tier teams have already gone to the wall, indicating the problems facing football in China run far deeper than the current coronavirus suspension.

All football in China is indefinitely on hold over the deadly virus, but even before the shutdown a string of clubs had folded in recent weeks and several more are in grave danger. It is a far cry from the lavish spending of 2016 and 2017 when Chinese Super League clubs, encouraged by President Xi Jinping's ambitions to make China a force in the sport, repeatedly smashed the Asian transfer record.

Tianjin Quanjian were typical of the largesse that saw the CSL make headlines in attracting foreign coaches and players on world-leading wages.

But now, just a few years later, the club is up for sale free of charge, although it is saddled with reportedly heavy debts. The near-demise of the team from China's northeast has provoked introspection about the state of the sport in the country and suggestions that the "football bubble" has burst.

Bankrolled by a traditional Chinese medicine firm, Tianjin finished third in the CSL in 2017 under coach

Fabio Cannavaro, the Italian World Cup-winning captain. They boasted Brazilian international Alexandre Pato in attack, had 20-million-euro Belgian Axel Witsel in midfield and were closely linked with Chelsea forward Diego Costa. But when the Quanjian Group's founder was arrested on charges of pyramid selling and false advertising in January last year, the club was thrust into the hands of the local sports bureau.

Thirteen players have left since the end of last season when Tianjin — rebranded as Tianjin Tianhai — escaped relegation by four points. "Its business model is typical of many CSL clubs — relying heavily on the investment of owners and unable to generate significant revenue via marketing or endorsements in the same way that elite European clubs can," said the China Daily, calling it "a bleak winter".

#### Quick profit

When the communist government said in 2016 that it wanted China to be a "top-class" football nation by 2050, it is unlikely that football-fan President Xi envisaged clubs falling like skittles. But including Tianjin, at least 15 teams in the top three tiers have dissolved, are facing financial ruin or will not compete in the new season, said Chinese sports writer William Bi.

Teams in China League One and League Two — the second and third divisions — on average lost 20 million yuan (\$2.9 million) in 2018, according to state media. Liaoning Hongyun in League One are still just about afloat, but captain Sang Yifei said on the Twitter-like Weibo that the players were not paid for the whole of the 2019 season.—AFP

# Close to tipping point, Amazon could collapse in 50 years

PARIS: The Amazon rainforest is nearing a threshold which, once crossed, would see one of the world's largest and richest ecosystems morph into arid savannah within half-a-century, scientists said Tuesday. Another major ecosystem, Caribbean coral reefs, could die off in only 15 years were it to pass its own point-of-no-return, the scientists reported in the journal Nature Communications.

Each of these so-called "regime changes" would have dire consequences for humanity and other species with which we share habitat, they warned. In both cases the projected tipping point for irreversible change results from global warming and environmental damage — deforestation in the case of the Amazon, and pollution and acidification for corals.

The UN's climate science advisory panel, the IPCC, has said that 1.5 degrees Celsius of atmospheric warming above preindustrial levels would doom 90 percent of the world's shallow-water corals. A 2C rise would spell their near-complete demise. Earth's surface has already heated up more than 1C.

The temperature tipping point for the Amazon is less clear, but scientists estimate that clearing 35 percent of its surface would trigger its eventual demise. About 20 percent

of the Amazon basin rainforest — straddling seven nations and covering more than five million square kilometers (two million square miles) — has been wiped out since 1970, mostly for the production of lumber, soy, palm oil, biofuels and beef.

"Humanity needs to prepare for changes far sooner than expected," said lead author Simon Willcock, a professor at Bangor University's School of Natural Science. Recent out-of-control fires in the Amazon and Australia — both made more likely and more intense by climate change — suggest that many ecosystems are "teetering on the edge of this precipice," he added.

### From 'sink' to 'source'

Scientists not involved in the research endorsed its methodology and sounded an alarm at its conclusions. "The implications of the study for the Amazon are terrifying," said Alexandre Antonelli, director of science at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Kew, London.

"Unless urgent action is taken now, we may be on the brink of losing the world's largest and most biodiverse rainforest, which has evolved for at least 58 million years and sustains the lives of tens of millions of people."

The Amazon ecosystem could pass a

point-of-no-return as soon as next year, Willcock and colleagues reported. Another study, published last week, showed that the world's tropical forests are rapidly losing their capacity to absorb planet-warming carbon dioxide emitted by burning fossil fuels, with the Amazon in the process of flipping from a CO2 "sink" to "source".

Global forests — and especially the tropics — soak up 25 to 30 percent of the CO2 humanity spews into the atmosphere. Oceans take up another 20 to 25 percent. The Amazon's dense tropical canopy — the largest in the world — also stores a huge amount of carbon, roughly equivalent to 10 times the amount discharged into the atmosphere every year.

"The new findings are a further reminder that this ecosystem ... is at risk over a timescale of no more than a few decades," Georgina Mace, a professor of biodiversity and ecosystems at University College London, commented.

It has long been known that ecosystems can shift, sometimes quickly, under stress. The researchers analyzed such transformations in more than 40 natural environments on land and in water, ranging in size from small ponds to the Black Sea. —AFP

## Rare white giraffes killed by poachers in Kenya

NAIROBI: Kenya's only female white giraffe and her calf have been killed by poachers, conservationists said Tuesday, in a major blow for the rare animals found nowhere else in the world. The bodies of the two giraffes were found "in a skeletal state after being killed by armed poachers" in Garissa in eastern Kenya, the Ishaqbini Hirola Community Conservancy said in a statement.

Their deaths leave just one remaining white giraffe alive — a lone male, borne by the same slaughtered female, the conservancy said. "We are the only community in the world who are custodians of the white giraffe," said Mohammed Ahmednoor, the manager of the conservancy. "Its killing is a blow to

tremendous steps taken by the community to conserve rare and unique species, and a wakeup call for continued support to conservation efforts."

The white giraffe stirred huge interest in 2017 when she was first spotted on the conservancy and again when she birthed two calves, the latest in August last year. Their alabaster color is caused not by albinism but a condition known as leucism, which means they continue to produce dark pigment in their soft tissue, giving them dark eyes. Ahmednoor said their deaths, confirmed by rangers and community members, was a "sad day" and a major loss for researchers and tourism providers working in the remote corner of Kenya. —AFP

CLINIC

PAGE







248 33 199

GASTROENTEROLOGY

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

- Dysphagia
- Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)
- Peptic Ulcer Disease (PUD)
- Helicobacter infection (diagnosis and treatment)
- Esophageal Motility Disorders
- Performing Esophageal Manometry, 24 hr pH study
- Acute and chronic Diarrhea





1808088

taibahospital.com  
@taibahospital

GASTROENTEROLOGY



Dr. Emad Al Hamar  
Consultant Gastroenterologist  
& Endoscopist



Dr. Ahmad Al Fadhi  
Consultant - Gastroenterologist  
& Hepatologist



Dr. Asmaa Al Kandari  
Consultant of Internal Medicine  
& Gastroenterology



Dr. Abdelmoneim Alsawal  
Specialist of Internal Medicine  
& Gastroenterology



Dr. Yaqoub Al Awadh  
Gastroenterology Specialist



Dr. Silvia Hana  
Internal Medicine  
& Gastroenterology Doctor



Dr. Sameh Emara  
Gastroenterologist



1808088

taibahospital.com  
@taibahospital

Ophthalmology Services



Dr. Ahmed Hosni Abd Elhamid  
Consultant



Dr. Rany Essam Mitwally  
Senior Registrar



Dr. Abeer Khattab  
Specialist



Cataract Surgery



Glaucoma



Retina



General Ophthalmology



Follow-Up All Treatments

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA @hadidnickw



Tel: 1828282  
Whatsapp Us  
+965-6000 2184



To advertise on this Page



Call: 24833199 ext:101,102

To advertise on this Page

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

WELCOME

Dr Tammam Abou Ali

Consultant ENT, Head & Neck, Facial Plastic Surgeon

Fellowship at the royal college of surgeons in UK and Ireland.

10 years work experience in Zain Hospital MOH Kuwait.

Ex Head of ENT department in Forensic Hospital, MOH Kuwait

10 years work experience in UK and Ireland.



مركز قطيانه الطبي  
Qattainah Medical Center

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



1 888 883

www.qmc-kuwait.com



qmckuwait

Our Doctors Provide care For the entire Family

Book your appointments today!



Dr. Kiran Turaka  
Ophthalmologist



Dr. Zareena Zahir  
Ophthalmologist



Dr. Hassan Khan  
Senior Cardiologist



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

50721507  
24551555  
www.exircenterku.com

EXIR MEDICAL SUBSPECIALITIES CENTER

Block No.4 Jahra - Kuwait

WE ACCEPT ALL MAJOR INSURANCES

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





# CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

248 33 199

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

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

**Salmiya, Belajat Street, Tel: 1881122**

@Malhajry

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

**ACADAMIC CERTIFICATES:**

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

**SPECIALIZED IN:**

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

SHARQ, Ahmad Aliaher st., Building b8, Floor 13.  
Tel.: (+965) 22060777  
@Drbuhaimed, @Renovabb, @dardonabb  
Email: drbuhaimed@beautybeyond.com.kw  
www.beautybeyond.com.kw

**To advertise on this Page**

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

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

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

**مستشفى دار الشفاء**  
Dar Al Shifa Hospital  
Tele:1802 555

daralshifa

**DR KHALED ALMERRI**  
Consultant interventional Cardiology  
Department: Heart & Vascular Center

**Specialized in:**

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

**alsalam.int.hospital**

**Dr. Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj**  
ENT Consultant, Laryngologist

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

**Experienced In:**

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

**2536 0000**  
www.royalehayat.com

**مستشفى رويال حياة**  
ROYALE HAYAT HOSPITAL

**INTERNATIONAL CLINIC**  
INTERNATIONAL CLINIC  
AL SALAMI INTERNATIONAL HOSPITAL

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

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

**Dr. Hani Haider**  
General Surgery Consultant  
http://www.international-clinic.com  
Tel: 1886677

**Scope of Clinical Practice:**

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

◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment  
◆ Laparoscopic mini bypass  
◆ Transanal minimally invasive surgery

**Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:**

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

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

**مستشفى دار الشفاء**  
Dar Al Shifa Hospital  
Tele:1802 555

daralshifa  
Email: aalihaddad@daralshifa.com

**DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM**  
Consultant Pediatrician

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

**Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368**  
**Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St.1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B**

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

**Academic Certificates – Training**

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

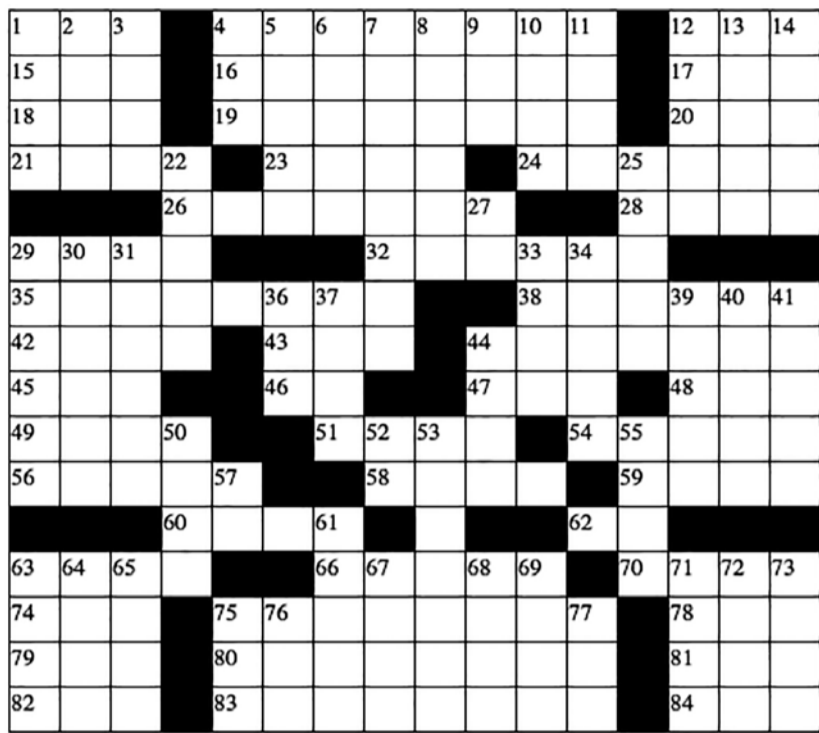
**Scope of clinical Practice.**

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

email: wbuhaimed@gmail.com **Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228** Jabriya, 4th Ring Road,Block 1A Floor 9 -Clover Center Mazaya Building

Stars

CROSSWORD 2456



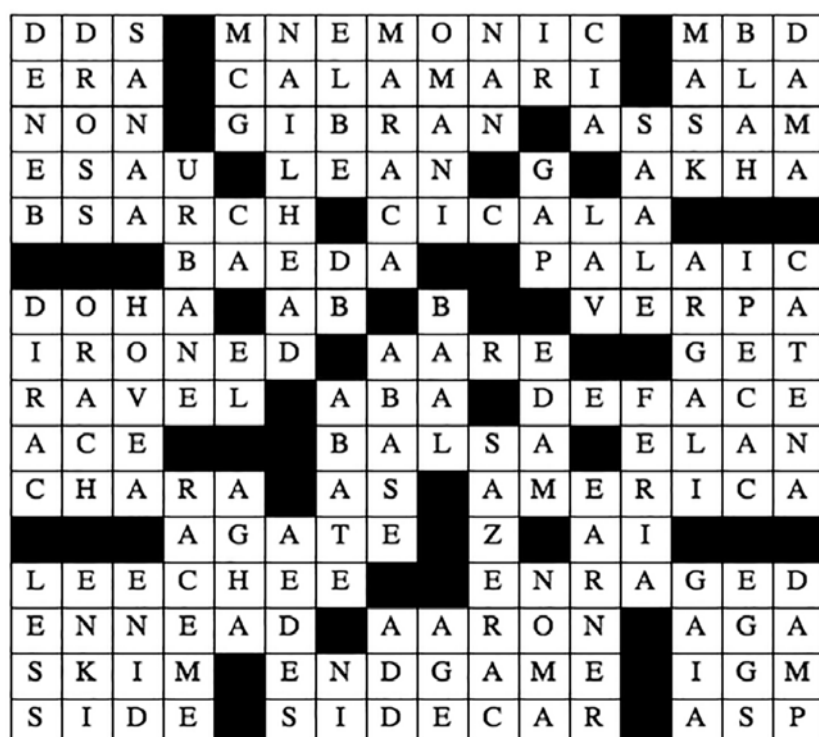
ACROSS

1. Characteristic of a mob.
4. Providing no shelter or sustenance.
12. Preferred above all others and treated with partiality.
15. Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
16. Someone who asks a question.
17. The seed of the cereal grass.
18. Having leadership guidance.
19. The physical condition of being stretched or strained.
20. Alsatian artist and poet who was cofounder of Dadaism in Zurich.
21. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
23. Flat and uninspiring.
24. A technician who is highly proficient and enthusiastic about some technical field (especially computing).
26. A ship with a reinforced bow to break up ice and keep channels open for navigation.
28. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
29. A translucent mineral consisting of hydrated silica of variable color.
32. Covered with or as if with clothes or a wrap or cloak.
35. (formerly) A mound earth inside a fort from which heavy gun can be fired over the parapet.
38. Relating to the Andes and their inhabitants.
42. An annual award for outstanding achievements in television.
43. Someone who is morally reprehensible.
45. An accountant certified by the state.
46. After noon.
47. The compass point midway between south and southeast.
48. (astronomy) A measure of time defined by Earth's orbital motion.
49. A pilgrimage to Mecca.
51. Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
54. Device for resetting instruments or controls v.l.
56. (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
58. The second largest of the Hawaiian Islands.
59. The capital and chief port of Qatar.
60. Large lipoproteins rich in triglycerides.
62. Functioning correctly and ready for action.
63. A small cake leavened with yeast.
66. Feeling or showing extreme anger.
70. (Babylonian) God of wisdom and agriculture and patron of scribes and schools.
74. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
78. The act of slowing down or falling behind.
79. A bachelor's degree in theology.
80. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
81. United States liquid unit equal to 4 quarts or 3.785 liters.
82. Grass mowed and cured for use as fodder.
83. More of the same adv.
84. American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).

DOWN

1. A master's degree in library science.
2. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
3. English monk and scholar (672-735).
4. The shorter of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
5. Related on the mother's side.
6. Short and fat.
7. Out of fashion.
8. (mathematics) Directly proportional.
9. A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
10. Of the nature of or undergoing an experiment.
11. Any of several related languages of the Celts in Ireland and Scotland.
12. Capital and largest city of the Czech Republic.
13. 100 avar equal 1 krona.
14. A native American tent.
22. Bandicoot with leathery ears like a rabbit.
25. A group of Plains Indians formerly living in what is now North and South Dakota and Nebraska and Kansas and Arkansas and Louisiana and Oklahoma and Texas.
27. A hard gray lustrous metallic element that is highly corrosion-resistant.
30. The vast grassy plains of northern Argentina.
31. A large fleet.
33. (football) Of advancing the ball by throwing it.
34. To come or go into.
36. A protocol developed for the internet to get data from one network device to another.
37. A tool for tamping (e.g., for tamping tobacco into a pipe bowl or a charge into a drill hole etc.).
39. The Uralic language spoken by the Yeniseian people.
40. Having help.
41. Italian chemist noted for work on polymers (1903-1979).
44. (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.
50. An island in Indonesia south of Borneo.
52. Before noon.
53. A spot that is open late at night and that provides entertainment (as singers or dancers) as well as dancing and food and drink.
55. Very dark black.
57. Being ten more than one hundred forty.
61. Of a pale purple color.
64. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
65. Being or befitting or characteristic of an infant.
67. Not widely known.
68. Any of several weedy vetches grown for forage.
69. An independent ruler or chieftain (especially in Africa or Arabia).
71. Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
72. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
73. Large sweet juicy hybrid between tangerine and grapefruit having a thick wrinkled skin.
75. A fatal disease of cattle that affects the central nervous system.
76. (usually followed by 'to') Naturally disposed toward.
77. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Put an extra spring in your step, Aries. The slow, steady pace may be something that you're comfortable with, but note that the situations of the day call for something much more dynamic and brave. Pull out your leadership hat and put it on proudly. Today is the day for you to call the shots, instead of compromising in order to get along with others.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Be careful of getting into fights today, Taurus. However, if a squabble or altercation of some sort seems inevitable, don't shrink away and hide. It's important that you face the source of the attack and stand up to whomever or whatever is getting in your path. Conjure up the warrior inside you and you might surprise yourself with the incredible power you have within.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Control is apt to be a big theme for you and the people around you today, Gemini. You'll find such a brutal dispute over who is holding the reins that once someone finally gets a firm hold of them, he or she is apt to take the situation to the extreme. There's an aggressive tone to things that can't easily be ignored. Keep an eye on your associates on a day like this.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

In general, things should be going extremely well for you today, Cancer, so don't miss this opportunity to pursue your dreams in every sense of the word. Do things with passion and don't hold back. Remember that your mind and will are the only things stopping you from getting where you want to be. There's a great deal of magnetism at your disposal today, so enlist others to help you.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may feel anxious today, even more so than usual, Leo. Your nerves may be quite jittery, and there's a feeling that you may not be on exactly the right track. More than likely, what you need to do is simply calm down and relax. Let your brain slow down and think clearly without the distraction of many people telling you what to do.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Other people are the most important aspect of your day today, Virgo. You'll find that things might get a bit difficult and unruly alone, but if you connect with others, even the most challenging task becomes almost effortless. One toothpick is easily broken, but 50 toothpicks together are as strong as steel. Conjure up this power created by a force of people who all share a common goal.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Don't be a pushover today, Libra. This is your time to lead. At least get your opinion out in the open and let it be known to the people around you. Put some passion in your day in order to liven things up and get the energy moving. A powerful transformation may take place within you as you start to wield your power instead of give it blindly away to others.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You have a great deal of power at your disposal today, Scorpio. You should keep in mind that just about anything you wish for will come true. Don't waste words or actions. Concentrate your energy and focus it on one or two important things instead of dispersing it and thereby diluting your overall power. There isn't anything to fear on a day like this.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Be careful of getting into fights today, Sagittarius. However, if a squabble or altercation of some sort seems inevitable, don't shrink away and hide. It's important that you face the source of the attack and stand up to whomever or whatever is getting in your path. Conjure up the warrior inside you and you might surprise yourself with the incredible power you have within.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Issues regarding freedom are apt to come up today in more ways than one, Capricorn. These issues could be connected with opportunities for adventure and travel. Although you initially want to dive into this promised freedom, take time to reflect on what you need in your current situation before making any final decision. Don't forget the other people in your life and how such actions might affect them and your relationships.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

There is a great deal of startup energy working for you today, Aquarius. You may feel as if you're walking on hot coals. This isn't a good day to sit on the couch watching TV. The coals will burn you for sure. It's important that you keep moving. Engage in activities that exercise your mind as well as body. You'll feel much better if you can point to something and say that you created it.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Your energy will light up any room you enter today, Pisces. Feel free to take advantage of this incredible magnetism by initiating and encouraging others to join you in creative activities and bold adventures. However, be careful that your head doesn't get too big. You can be proud without becoming egotistical; otherwise you'll end up losing your followers before you even get started.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Parkinson's Disease

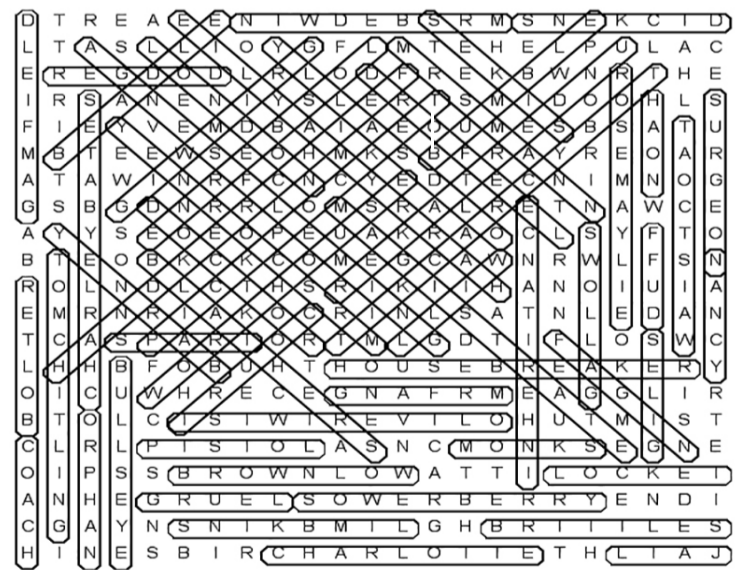
Find and circle all of the Parkinson's Disease related words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a Helen Keller quote.



- |              |             |                 |                 |
|--------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| AEROBIC      | DODGE       | LATERAL SHUFFLE | QUALITY OF LIFE |
| AGONIST      | DOPAMINE    | LEVODOPA        | RED TULIP       |
| AMYGDALA     | DYSKINESIA  | LEWY BODIES     | RESEARCH        |
| BETA BLOCKER | DYSPHAGIA   | LONG TERM       | RIGIDITY        |
| BOXING       | EXERCISE    | MICHAEL J FOX   | SENSORY         |
| BRADYKINESIA | FESTINATION | MOTOR SYSTEM    | SIALORRHEA      |
| CHALLENGE    | FLEXIBILITY | MUHAMMAD ALI    | SINEMET         |
| CHARCOT      | FREEZING    | NEUROLOGIST     | STAGES          |
| COGNITION    | GAIT        | NEURON          | SYMPTOMS        |
| DEGENERATIVE | HYPOKINESIA | PLACEBO         | TREMORS         |
| DEMENTIA     | IDIOPATHIC  | POSTURE         | WALKING POLES   |

Yesterday's Solution

Oliver Twist



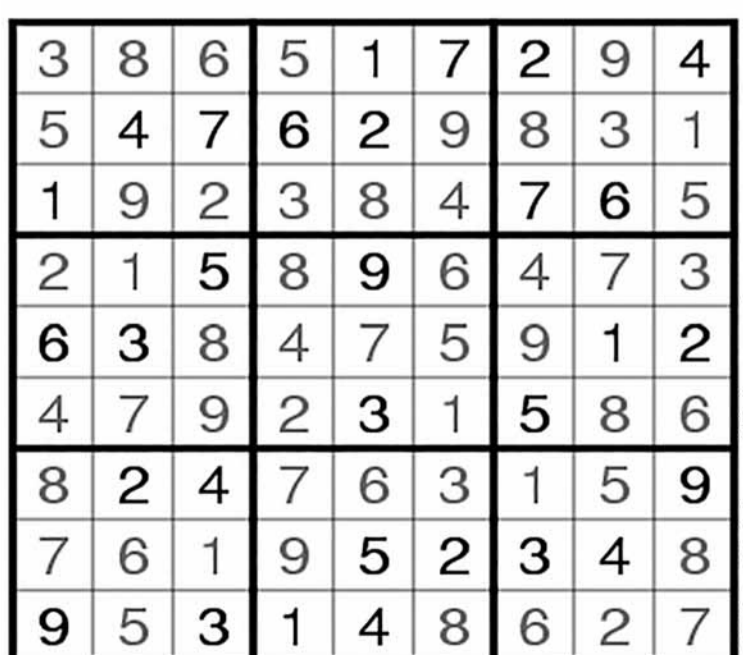
- |               |              |              |               |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| AGNES FLEMING | DODGER       | LIMBKINS     | ORPHAN        |
| BARNEY BEADLE | DUFF         | LOCKET       | PICKPOCKET    |
| BLATHERS      | FAGIN        | LONDON   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

The hidden sentence is: TREATS OF THE PLACE WHERE OLIVER TWIST WAS BORN AND OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES ATTENDING HIS BIRTH

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



# Lifestyle

THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2020



Revelers dance as they celebrate Holi, the spring festival of colors, in Allahabad on March 10, 2020. — AFP

## INDONESIAN SINGLES PROPOSE 'MARRIAGE WITHOUT DATING'

Frustrated after a string of break-ups, Dwita Astari Pujiartati quit the casual romance circuit and turned to a growing trend among Indonesian singles—marriage without dating. The 27-year-old professor exchanged resumes with prospective suitors—helped by a Muslim cleric-cum-matchmaker—until she was contacted by a long-lost acquaintance who also wanted to give contact-less dating a whirl. There was no hand holding or kissing. The pair didn't even meet in person for almost a year, chatting on the telephone instead. "Once we felt 'the click', (my now husband) asked my parents if he could propose to me," Pujiartati said.

The practice known as taaruf, or introduction, is derided by critics as old fashioned and more fitting to conservative Gulf nations like Saudi Arabia than relatively liberal Indonesia, the world's biggest Muslim majority country. But Pujiartati saw it as a way to ditch dating that went nowhere and be a devout Muslim at the same time by avoiding premarital touching and sex. "Why should I choose something that wastes my time and doesn't please God?" she said.

### Mass breakup

While the practice isn't widespread, Pujiartati is not alone. A movement called Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran (Indonesia without dating) is blossoming in the Southeast Asian nation where people born from the mid-Nineties make up about one-quarter of its more than 260 million people. The nuptials-focused group, which has a million followers on its Instagram page alone, targets this enormous Generation-Z audience largely through social media. Any premarital contact should be supervised and getting

married younger is ideal, according to the group, which portrays pre-marital dating as a sinful product of Western decadence.

Pujiartati's courtship was long by the standards of many marriage-without-daters who often tie the knot in a matter of months. To get its message out, the group also sells branded products including hats, keychains and hijab head coverings worn by many women in Indonesia. The movement was kicked off in 2015 by then university student La Ode Munafar, who recently hosted a "mass breakup" on New Year's Eve in Kendari city on Sulawesi island. With dozens in the audience, the 29-year-old denounced dating and called on attendees to break up with their partners. One young man walked on stage and broke it off with his girlfriend over the phone, eliciting cheers and clapping. "I've researched dating from a scientific and psychological point of view," Munafar told reporters after the event. "It's harmful in every respect," he added, without elaborating.

### 'Public piety'

Cheery stories about marriage-without-dating bliss populate Indonesia's huge Internet space. Among them is the tale of Muhammad Alvin Faiz, son of a prominent pro-polygamy cleric, who married his 19-year-old wife, a Catholic convert to Islam, through a no-contact relationship. Faiz shares the couple's story with 1.4 million social media followers under the hashtag #NikahMuda or young marriage.

The seeds of this trend may have been planted back in 1998 — when many adherents were toddlers—in the ashes of Indonesia's collapsed Suharto dictatorship, which largely suppressed religious

expression. "This era of democracy has opened up space for religious expression," said Sidiq Harim, a sociologist at Gadjah Mada University. "Public piety through religious symbols is emerging and taaruf is one of them."

In recent years, Indonesia has seen a shift toward religious conservatism, with some celebrities announcing they'll adopt a more pious lifestyle. And last year the government unsuccessfully tried to push through a criminal code overhaul, backed by conservative Islamic groups, which would have banned pre-marital sex, sparking a public outcry. Marriage-without-dating is also a pushback against fears that two decades of democracy have broken down traditional values in a country where arranged marriage was once the norm, and still endures in some rural areas, experts said.

### 'Sudden marriage thing'

Advocates insist the practice empowers women by giving them control over choosing a partner without feeling compelled to have sex before marriage. And it doesn't require permission from family members like arranged unions do, they say. Still, a successful marriage means both partners must follow Islam's teachings on what's expected of a husband and wife, said Taufiq Andika, who married his wife after about three months of non-contact courtship. "It's a problem if the couple doesn't know each other's rights and obligations," the 28-year-old said. "That could lead to divorce."

But even the most liberal interpretations of those obligations tend to call on women to prioritize their husband and children's needs over their own. Critics say brief, resume-based relationships can set couples up for failure—and put women at risk. "I've



Indonesian cleric Arif Rahman Lubis (right) speaking during a religious lecture on marriage without dating at a mosque in Bekasi, on the eastern border of the capital Jakarta.

heard many stories about domestic abuse," said Kalis Mardiasih, a Muslim feminist and gender campaigner at Gusdurian National Network, which represents thousands of grassroots social activists. "It can happen in other relationships too. But it's critical to assess someone's attitude as early as possible and see what kind of person they are." Despite its growing popularity, not all Indonesians are sold on the idea. "I don't agree with this sudden marriage thing," said 25-year-old Azara Mahdaniar. "You don't want to commit and find out later on that your partner is mean or abusive."—AFP



This photograph shows Indonesian women attending a religious lecture on marriage without dating at a mosque in Bekasi, on the eastern border of the capital Jakarta. — AFP photos

## Lifestyle | Gossip

# Ashley McBryde bemoans inequality in the music business

**A**shley McBryde thinks there's a lack of equality in country music. The 36-year-old singer has bemoaned the double standards within the music business, and Ashley feels the inequality is particularly evident in terms of the division of radio play between male and female artists. She said: "When I first started doing a radio tour, I thought about the horror stories about the imbalance and was like, 'Surely it's not that bad? It can't be that bad!' "It is definitely that bad. It's: 'If you have a beard and a ball cap, here's

your record deal, here's your No.1 - if you don't, we're barely going to recognize you even have a voice.'" Despite this, Ashley remains broadly optimistic about the future, acknowledging that the landscape is changing within the genre. She told Music News: "The things that need to happen for change are happening: there are stations in the States that have committed, in small chunks of time, to equal play between male and female artists for a week or two weeks." Ashley also insisted she won't allow her frustrations to influence the music she makes. The acclaimed

country star - who is set to release her new album, 'Never Will', in April - explained: "One of the theories over here is that women don't want to listen to women on country radio, which is asinine. "Really, the only solution for somebody like me is, again, don't listen to the background noise, write songs that you believe in and perform them in an infectious way that brings people to the show. And, radio or not, they come."



## Robbie Williams wants to please 'everybody' in Las Vegas

**R**obbie Williams is determined to please "everybody" during his Las Vegas residency. The 46-year-old singer is returning to Sin City later this month for a 16-date residency, and Robbie has a clear idea of how he'll entertain his fans. Robbie - whose residency kicks off on March 24 - told Billboard's 'Pop Shop Podcast': "I want people who have never seen me before to come to the show and be entertained and not be bored. "I'm not going to bore people with songs that they may not know from my repertoire. So I've just constructed a show where if you know me or you don't, you will be entertained and you will know the songs." Robbie performed his first 16 dates last year at Wynn Las Vegas' Encore Theatre. And the pop star is eager to take on board some of the feedback he's subsequently received from fans. He shared: "People have come to the show and said, 'There's not enough Robbie Williams songs!' So it's a dilemma. And I hear them and I get it. So I'm adding a few more Robbie Williams songs this time around, because I am Robbie Williams. "We shall see how it goes. But for those people leaving comments ... I'm really sorry. I'll try my best next time to please absolutely everybody, because that's what this job is at the end of the day: it's pleasing everybody." Despite this, Robbie freely admits he doesn't understand the current landscape of the music business. He confessed: "The landscape has changed so much for music right now. I don't understand it. I don't get it. I don't know what the function of it is. "Music is full. It's horrible news for musicians out there, but music is full. I don't know if I should add any more noise to the pit."

## Biffy Clyro's Simon Neil warned by The Who about hearing damage

**B**iffy Clyro's Simon Neil wishes he'd listened to The Who before damaging his hearing. The 'Many of Horror' band's frontman revealed Roger Daltrey and Pete Townshend - who both suffer from tinnitus - warned him about the volume he was playing at live, and now he's having issues with his ears. Speaking to the 'Slacker' podcast, he said: "I do have problems with my ears now. "When we played with The Who, Roger Daltrey and Pete Townshend took real exception to the volume of my guitars. "To be fair they found out the hard way why you shouldn't be that loud." Simon admitted he and his bandmates - brothers James and Ben Johnston - were twice told to turned their music down by The Who, with the second time coming at T In The Park. However, the singer saw it as a badge of honor, adding: "On two separate occasions the same summer we got told

by The Who that the noise was outrageous. "For a few months I was like, 'We're too loud for The Who.' " Meanwhile, the 'Wolves of Winter' rockers are set to release their ninth studio album 'A Celebration of Endings' on May 15. The record will come as a follow-up to 2019's 'Balance, Not Symmetry', which also served as the soundtrack to a film of the same name, co-written by Simon. And the group recently revealed their 2018 acoustic tour made them desperate to make heavy music again. Simon said: "Well, it's Biffy 2020! This is a record that only our band could make, I think. "After doing the 'Unplugged' album, we realized we weren't at that stage yet as a band. "We loved doing the 'Unplugged' tour, but I think if anything it made us fall in love with noise again."



## Niall Horan: I now feel more comfortable as a solo artist

**N**iall Horan now feels "more comfortable" as a solo artist. The 26-year-old singer is set to release his second solo album, 'Heartbreak Weather', later this week - and Niall has admitted to feeling more "confident" than when he released his debut solo record, 'Flicker', back in 2017. Niall reflected: "I was excited with the first one. But now that I have lived with my new solo life for a little bit, I feel more comfortable and I am feeling more confident when I walk into a studio. "I feel like I've written personally - I mean, it could all go head t\*\*s up and it could be game over - but I feel like I've written my best stuff. You don't realize until you look back in hindsight, the difference between when I was 17 to 20 or 20 to 22. "When I made the first album, I was probably 22 or 23 years old and the gap between 23 and 26 years is even more. You look completely different; although I hope I hold onto the baby face for a little bit." Niall - who first found fame as part of One Direction - thinks he's "matured" in his personal and professional life over the last few years. He said to Glamour magazine: "I feel like I matured a lot in certain aspects. "Musically, I found I'm willing to take a few more chances and it's given me a little bit more confidence when I walk in a room." Meanwhile, Niall recently claimed touring with One Direction was like going on a "school trip". The band - who are currently on an indefinite hiatus - embarked on their first arena tour of the US back in 2013, and Niall admitted to having had an "unbelievable" time on the road. He said: "The craic we had was unbelievable. Because we were so young, it was literally like being on a school trip, but we'd go on stage in the evening. It was such a good laugh."



## Williams wants Misery Business removed from playlists



**H**ayley Williams calls for Paramore's 'Misery Business' to be removed from playlists. The 31-year-old singer wrote the Paramore track when she was just 17 years old, and in recent years the song has come under fire from people claiming the message is "anti-feminist", particularly due to the line: "Once a whore, you're nothing more, I'm sorry that'll never change." In 2018, the band's frontwoman announced the track had been axed from Paramore's live shows, and she has now spoken out again about the track, after it appeared on a new Spotify playing honouring women in music. Hayley's solo track 'Simmer' was included on Spotify's 'Women of Rock' playlist alongside 'Misery Business', and the singer took to Instagram to ask that the song be removed, as "we don't need to include it on new playlists in 2020". She wrote: "SIMMER is on this playlist. thx @spotify "but so is Misery Business. i know it's one of the band's biggest songs but it shouldn't be used to promote anything having to do with female empowerment or solidarity. i'm so proud of Paramore's career, it's not about shame, it's about growth and progression... and though it'll always be a fan favorite, we don't need to include it on new playlists in 2020. (sic)" 'Misery Business' appeared on Paramore's second studio album 'Riot!' in 2007, and became one of the band's best known songs, as well as their highest charting song on Billboard's Alternative chart, playing the track for one last time in 2018. Hayley said it felt like the time was right to "move away" from the song, which talks about stealing a boy away from another girl. She said on stage at the time: "This is a choice that we've made because we feel that we should. We feel like it's time to move away from it for a little while."

## Wyatt says Pussycat Dolls reunion was the 'challenge of a lifetime'

**K**imberly Wyatt says returning to The Pussycat Dolls after having a baby was the "challenge of a lifetime". The 38-year-old pop star performed on stage as part of the chart-topping girl group in 2019, shortly after giving birth to her third child - a son called Ford - in October, and Kimberly has admitted it's been an enormous challenge for her. Asked about the pressure of being a Pussycat Doll, the singer told news.com.au: "It's more a pressure on myself to find acceptance within my skin and in my new body. "The tough thing was I didn't have much time after a caesarean to whip it back into shape. It gave me the challenge of a lifetime, and a chance to accept myself in that moment for what it was. "I stood in that moment as a woman and a mother doing what I love." Meanwhile, Kimberly's bandmate Nicole Scherzinger recently claimed The Pussycat Dolls have "evolved" over the last decade. Nicole, 41 - who stars in the group alongside Ashley Roberts, Carmit Bachar, Kimberly and Jessica Sutta - said: "Even our mindset is a lot different. "We're always talking about empowering others, but it's really great to actually evolve into the women that we are and to be able to empower others out there." Nicole also believes the group can have an empowering influence on their fans. She explained: "We've each individually stepped into our own power. We can empower each other and that means we can empower our fans more."

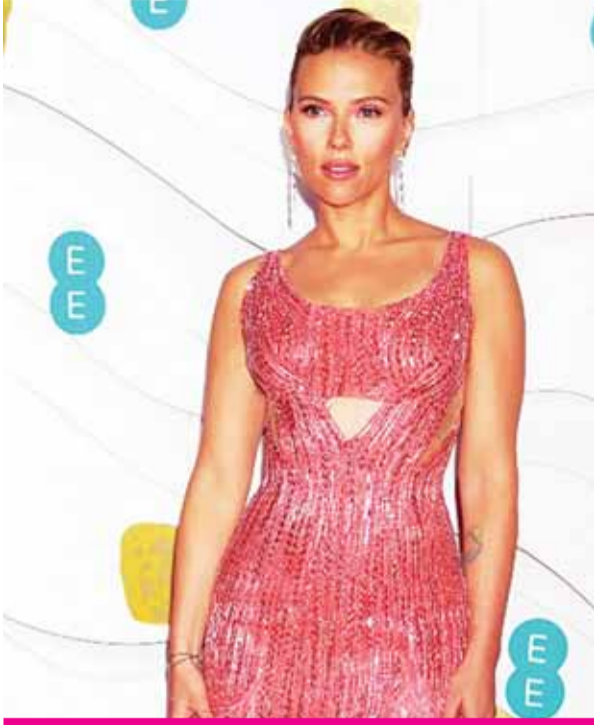
## Impala to make tour eco-friendly



**T**ame Impala are working to "reduce the environmental footprint" of their tours. The 'Feels Like We Only Go Backwards' hitmakers are set to embark on a world tour later this year in support of their fourth studio album 'The Slow Rush', and they've been looking at ways to make their shows more eco-friendly. The band have teamed up with non-profit environmental organization Reverb to "help fight climate change", and have encouraged their fans to "take action for people and the planet". In a message on Facebook, the Kevin Parker-fronted band wrote: "Tame Impala have teamed up with Reverb to reduce the environmental footprint of touring and help fight climate change. If you're going to a show, visit the REVERB Eco-Village to take action for people and the planet. Learn more: <https://bit.ly/2TuFoD2> (sic)" According to Reverb's website, Tame Impala have committed to neutralize their carbon emissions by "funding projects around the world that directly eliminate greenhouse gases". The band will also be donating unused food from catering, as well as unused toiletries, to local shelters, and making sure all crew are using reusable water bottles and insulated mugs. There will be recycling backstage and on all tour buses, whilst environmentally friendly cleaning products will also be in use. Every Tame Impala show will have a Reverb Eco-Village in place for fans, where they can donate money to the cause in exchange for a custom #RockNRefill bottle, which can be filled up at the free filtered water refill station. Those who visit the Eco-Village will also be given a one-of-a-kind Tame Impala eco-friendly guitar pick and can enter to win a signed Fender Guitar.



Lifestyle | Gossip



# Johansson feels Black Widow is being released at the right time

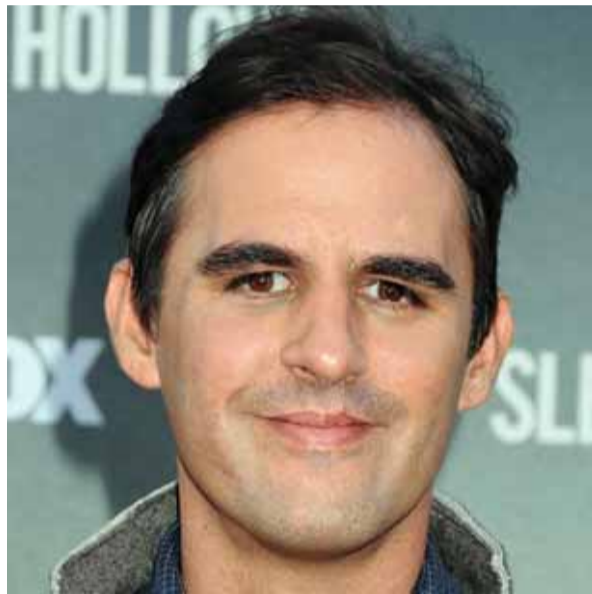
**S**carlett Johansson believes that 'Black Widow' is being released at the perfect time. The character made her debut in 'Iron Man 2' in 2010 and is now set to get a standalone film a decade later. Scarlett has dismissed claims that the film should have been released earlier as the success of film such as 'Captain Marvel' has created a trend for female superheroes to have their own stories. In an interview with Entertainment Weekly, she said: "For anyone who said to me, 'Oh this ('Black Widow' film) should've happened five or 10 years ago,' I'm like, it would not have been as substantial. We just would not have been able to do it. The film is happening now as a result of what's

going on in the zeitgeist, and I think it's pretty cool." Scarlett believes that the character of Natasha Romanoff/Black Widow has "inherently female" which is beneficial to the story. The 35-year-old actress said: "I think this character's strength really lies in her vulnerability and her acceptance of that. She has emotional intelligence that has allowed her to survive without any real superpowers. She's someone who is a problem-solver. She's a pragmatic person. I think a lot of those qualities are inherently female." 'Black Widow' marks the conclusion of a decade-long effort to give the character her own story, and Scarlett feels that both she and her character have changed during the period. Scarlett explained:

"This film is very much a result of this journey, my own personal journey. I feel that I probably wasn't as willing or able to go to the kind of uncomfortable, embarrassing, ugly places before. I think it's just as you get older, you trust yourself more." She also feels that it is better to delve deeper into a character as her career has progressed. The 'Jojo Rabbit' star said: "Maybe I wouldn't even have been as curious about that part of (Natasha) before. Maybe I would've been more interested in wearing all these masks, and now I'm more interested in what's behind them."

## Harrelson to replace Statham in The Man From Toronto

**W**oody Harrelson will replace Jason Statham in 'The Man From Toronto'. The 58-year-old actor has signed a deal with Columbia Pictures to replace Jason in the upcoming action-comedy movie, after the actor dropped out of the project following a dispute about the film's planned rating. Jason was believed to have wanted the movie - which would see him reunited with Kevin Hart after they briefly shared scenes in the 'Fast & Furious' spin-off 'Hobbs & Shaw' - to be an R-rated story, while studio executives wanted were aiming for a PG-13 classification to attract a bigger audience to the cinema. So now, it will be Woody who takes to the screen alongside Kevin in the project which is just weeks away from shooting. According to The Hollywood Reporter, Woody was brought in thanks in part to the success of both 'Zombieland' movies, which were made by Columbia Pictures, as well as recently wrapping a turn in its upcoming 'Venom 2'. Woody will star as the "world's deadliest assassin", known as the titular Man from Toronto, whilst Kevin is on board to play Teddy, a New York City native who is mistaken for the professional killer in a rented Airbnb. 'The Man From Toronto' is being directed by 'The Hitman's Bodyguard' helmer Patrick Hughes from a script by Robbie Fox, who worked alongside producer Jason Blumenthal on the story. Blumenthal is producing the movie with Todd Black and Steve Tisch under their Escape Artists banner. After finding a replacement for Jason in record time, Sony and Columbia Pictures are still hoping the project will be ready for a November release.



## Orci to write Marvel film for Sony

**R**oberto Orci has been tapped to write a new Marvel comics film for Sony. The 46-year-old previously penned 'The Amazing Spider-Man 2' and according to The Wrap, he will now be writing this project for Sony's branch of the Marvel universe. Details about the film or which specific character will be used are currently being kept under wraps, although the Orci project would be part of Sony's Marvel universe, which includes characters such as Silk, Venom and Morbius the Living Vampire. Initial indications suggested that the character would be related to films "that are connected to Spider-Man" but it has been reported the property will come from a different corner of the Marvel universe that Sony has access to. Sony's Executive Vice President Palak Patel will oversee the new movie, alongside the rest of Sony's Spider-Man output. Beyond 'The Amazing Spider-Man 2', Roberto has written or co-written 'Mission: Impossible III', the rebooted 'Star Trek' trilogy and the first two 'Transformers' films. He has also enjoyed success on television projects such as 'Hawaii Five-O' and 'Scorpion'. Tom Holland has played Spider-Man since 2016 and recently admitted that he has finally been trusted with spoilers after becoming known for giving away for plot details. He said: "I know everything now. I had my big pitch meeting with Marvel and Sony for about two weeks, and I know all the secrets. I've done about a thousand interviews, so I know how to not spoil a movie anymore." He previously took to social media to burn his 'Avengers: Infinity War' script to keep details of the movie being leaked. In a video, he shared: "Rule number one ... hand in your script ... Marvel like to keep everything a secret. So, to all the producers who are probably freaking out because I forgot to hand in my script, here is evidence that I am destroying it."



## Kusama to direct Dracula film for Blumhouse Productions

**A** new 'Dracula' movie is in the works at Blumhouse Productions. According to The Hollywood Reporter, Karyn Kusama is attached to direct the project for Jason Blum's studio, which has recently worked on a reimagining of 'The Invisible Man'. It is expected to be distributed by Universal Pictures. Blumhouse Productions is in the midst of setting up the vampire thriller and is producing. The film isn't housed at Universal yet and technically could be made by another studio, but that is highly unlikely given that Blumhouse has a first-look deal with Universal. Sources suggest that 'Dracula' film would take place in modern times, in a similar manner to Blumhouse's adaptation of 'The Invisible Man'. Karyn - whose previous credits include 'The Invitation' and 'Destroyer' - will direct from a script penned by her husband Phil Hay and Matt Manfredi. Universal Studios are now taking a filmmaker-driven approach to horror flicks following the failure of its 'Dark Universe' of monster movie reboots, which was scrapped after 2017's 'The Mummy', starring Tom Cruise, was a critical flop and directors are reportedly being told that storytelling is more important than big-name cast members. One producer said: "It's a best idea wins approach and they are having the filmmakers find the individual stories." It also suggested that Universal are working with moviemakers such as Paul Feig, Elizabeth Banks and John Krasinski and are even developing multiple takes on one character. An agent said: "They have multiple irons in the fire, but not all will become real." The 'Dracula' plans follow the recent news that James Wan is working on a film with Universal. He is not directing the movie, but is producing through his Atomic Monster banner. Little is known about the untitled project as of the time of writing, but sources have told the publication the story takes its cues from Universal's classic monster legacy, but through a modern prism. It is believed the film will focus on a group of teens who discover that a neighbor is building a monster in his basement.



## Anderson cast in Peter Pan

**E**ver Anderson has been cast as Wendy in Disney live-action 'Peter Pan' remake. The newcomer - who is the daughter of Milla Jovovich and Paul W.S. Anderson - will be joined by Alexander Molony, who will play the boy who never grew up in 'Peter Pan & Wendy'. David Lowery is on board to direct the film and has also penned the script with Toby Halbrooks. Jim Whitaker is attached to produce. There had been rumors of the film debuting on Disney+ like the 'Lady and The Tramp' live-action adaptation but sources say the release is expected to be theatrical. Disney's 1953 animated classic is still the most successful adaptation of J.M. Barrie's novel about the boy who wouldn't age and the children who he whisks away to the magical world of Neverland. Many studios have made their own versions of the story, including 'Hook' in 1991, which starred Robin Williams as Peter Pan and was helmed by Steven Spielberg, which disappointed at the box office. Ever, 12, has only one screen credit so far during her career in 'Resident Evil: Final Chapter', where she played a younger version of her real-life mother. Alexander's previous credits include the Sky One comedy 'The Reluctant Landlord' and the Disney junior series 'Claude'. Disney has enjoyed recent success with live-action adaptations in the form of 'Aladdin' and 'The Lion King' both grossing \$1 billion at the global box office. The latest live-action movie, 'Mulan', will be released later this month and 'Aladdin' sequel is in the works. The company is also working on a prequel series to 'Beauty and the Beast', in which Luke Evans and Josh Gad will reprise their roles as Gaston and LeFou from the 2017 film.



## Vin Diesel teases 'big surprise' for F9

**V**in Diesel has teased a "big surprise" for 'Fast & Furious' fans. The 52-year-old actor has been hard at work on 'F9' - which will see the likes of John Cena and Dame Helen Mirren join the cast - and he teased the possibility of another huge name coming into the action blockbuster franchise. He told 'Entertainment Tonight': "There's a big surprise coming... I can't tell anyone. [But] it is so awesome! "It's a testament to the franchise, it's a testament to all the work that everyone has done and it's a testament to the integrity. "As a thespian, as someone who started acting when I was seven years old, it's wonderful to dance with other acclaimed thespians and try to make magic." Former professional wrestler turned Hollywood star Cena makes his first appearance in the movie series for the upcoming ninth installment, and he previously opened up on how much "expectation" there is for him to "deliver" for the loyal fan base the popular films have acquired over the years. He explained: "The global connection the franchise has with its fans and the respect that the franchise has for its fans is like nothing I've ever seen before. "It allowed me to really look at the absolute analytics of the project through the people who have been working some 20 years on this. "It really is a family atmosphere, there's a lot of respect for the franchise, there is that expectation to deliver for the fan base, and it's been like no other experience I've been on. "You kind of have to earn your respect in so many ways, but once you do you are absolutely, unexpectedly welcomed into the family. It's been really, really special, and I'm very fortunate."



## Pregnant Perry already has baby names in mind for her first child

**K**aty Perry already has baby names in mind. The 35-year-old singer - who is pregnant with her first child with fiancé Orlando Bloom - admitted she has given plenty of thought to what the loved up couple will call their bundle of joy. She told Australia's 'Fifi, Fev & Byron' radio show: "Yeah, of course, I've strategized a record before, and my life and my career. "There's been some thoughts in some of these things... We make [Orlando] think he does [have a say]. That's how you do it. "No, of course he does! He's incredible. That's why we're on this journey." The 'Roar' hitmaker revealed she has always wanted to have kids, but it's only after the last couple of years that she's finally feeling "ready" to be a mum for the first time. She added: "I was that girl, or am still that girl, that had that box, the baby clothes before there was the thought, or even an Orlando Bloom. "I'm excited about that and like I said, I have two nieces and one nephew that I'm obsessed with. I think, definitely, everything's changing. "I wasn't ready a couple years ago, and I did the work to get ready and now I'm really ready. I see a baby and I'm like [makes gaga face]. It's just time for me and it's the right time." Katy shared her exciting pregnancy news last week when she dropped the music video for new single 'Never Worn White', which at the end showed her cradling her baby bump. Katy then confirmed the news in a subsequent Instagram video, admitting it is "the longest secret" she has "ever had to keep". She said: "I'm late ... but you already knew that. There's a lot that will be happening this summer, not only will I be giving

birth - literally - but also figuratively to something you guys have been waiting for. "So let's call it a double whammy, a two fore. I'm excited, we're excited and we're happy - and it's probably the longest secret I've ever had to keep. I knew I would tell you in the best way, which is through a piece of music because that's how I speak to you." — Bang Showbiz





In this file photo 'Overview Effect' Astronaut sculpture by Poetic Kinetics, founded by artist Patrick Shearn, is unleashed at Coachella Music Festival in Indio, California.



In this file photo "Overview effect" sculpture by Poetic Kinetics travels in the field at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio, California.



In this file photo fans cheer as Petit Biscuit performs at the Coachella Music and Arts Festival in Indio.

— AFP photos

## As coronavirus concerns bloom, performing arts world fears major hit

Coronavirus angst has the world washing its hands with newfound vigor—but the performing arts world wringing them, as directives to scrap mass events threaten the entertainment world with economic chaos. The past week has seen major events including Miami's Ultra electronic dance music fest and Austin's famed South By Southwest culture and tech 10-day event cancelled, and the spring's premier Coachella festival postponed until October.

Pearl Jam, Madonna and Santana are among the A-list artists who've dropped or postponed concert dates at home and abroad over virus fears, with fine arts venues like the Boston Symphony Orchestra and New York's American Ballet Theater also cancelling tours in Asia and the Middle East. Elvan Sahin, a 32-year-old Manhattan resident, decided against attending a classical music concert this week at New York's Lincoln Center over the coronavirus, saying: "I think I'm going to be more comfortable sitting this out." "I'm used to tuning out the hype and exaggeration around hurricanes and snowstorms, but this whole

contagious virus thing is new to me," she told AFP. "I know I sound crazy—but I'm not handling it very calmly."

### 'Already on fire'

Kevin Lyman, founder of the Warped Tour—a traveling rock tour that ran from 1995-2019—said the last time he witnessed such entertainment industry chaos was post-September 11. Amid that shock, he recalls the first reaction was "to keep the show going." "And of course it didn't," he told AFP. "The music business shut down for awhile." But Lyman called the current coronavirus panic "unprecedented." Adam Siegel, the entertainment manager at American Agents & Brokers—an insurance company whose clients include Ultra—said that massive events like Coachella might have four to five different insurance policies.

Terrorism insurance has been commonplace since 9/11, and many American events now buy active shooter insurance, he said—but the average contract doesn't have a clause for communicable disease threats. Now it's too

late: "You can't get insurance on a building when it's already on fire." "If they have a policy that's going to respond, in most cases we need a government entity of some sort to pull the plug," Siegel said. That requirement is likely why California's Coachella festival—which has been sold out for months, and expects 125,000 fans daily over the two April weekends—waited until Riverside County declared a public health emergency, and ordered the rescheduling.

### 'Uncharted territory'

A mandate from Riverside County—the municipal authority where the desert music festival takes place—to cancel or move the show would trigger any protective insurance policy promoters have, Siegel said. It could also allow events to exercise a "force majeure" clause in performance contracts, which waive financial liability between promoters and artists in the case of extreme, unpredictable emergencies. Coachella nets between \$75 million and \$100 million in profits each year, according to the LA Times.

For now, it's just postponed, but in the event of cancellation an insurance payout due to force majeure could hover between \$150 and 200 million. Depending on individual contracts, artists would likely keep whatever payouts they've already received—but might be out money already spent on set production. In the end, "it always is going to come back to what the actual cause of loss was and if that was a covered peril in your policy," Siegel said. "It's not black and white. It's open to interpretation." "It's really uncharted territory."

### 'Devastating'

The economic consequences of pushing back or cancelling major festivals and events reach far beyond promoters and artists, Siegel said. "There's a lot at stake," he said. "There's a lot more people that are in this food chain that are going to be affected—vendors, crew, local businesses." "In a gig economy, many people who have been booked to work Coachella, for example, could be out a lot of money." Just under 400,000 people live in the

Coachella Valley, with a population that skews older—the very people coronavirus could hit hardest.

But it's also a zone where tourism reigns: the Palm Springs-area visitors bureau says the \$7 billion-industry supports one in four jobs. Fear in the festival circuit extends to concert venues worldwide, Lyman said. Large entertainment companies like AEG—the parent company of GoldenVoice, which puts on Coachella—or Live Nation will "take a hit," he said, but it's the independent club owners facing serious financial threats.

"Those small people that depend on the weekly business that don't have big reserve funds—it could be devastating," he said. "Every day that goes longer, it'll hit them to a greater degree." But as the world reels from cancellations, it appears venues can count on at least one artist to stick it out. Bob Dylan, 78, on Monday announced a summer North American tour—on top of April's schedule that has him playing 14 dates in Japan.—AFP



Billie Eilish

### Eilish's 'Bad Guy' named top global song of 2019

US singer-songwriter Billie Eilish racked up another record on Tuesday after her hit "Bad Guy" was named the best-selling global single of 2019. The International Federation of the Phonographic Industry said the teenager's track notched up the equivalent of 19.5 million sales from permanent downloads and video and audio streaming. It also topped the charts in 15 countries, the London-based organization added. "Bad Guy" was the fifth single released from her breakthrough album "When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?"

She beat Lil Nas X, Ed Sheeran and Justin Bieber for the top spot in the annual IFPI Global Top Digital Singles Chart. "Billie Eilish has taken the world by storm with her incredible voice and genre-defying sound," said IFPI chief executive Frances Moore. "She is also an artist who addresses important issues like mental health in her lyrics that clearly resonate with her fans all over the world." The single, released a year ago, scooped the award for Song of the Year at the Grammys.

The 18-year-old continued her winning streak last month when her new track enjoyed the biggest opening week of all time for a James Bond theme song in the British charts. "No Time To Die" landed straight in at number one, becoming her first British chart-topper. The single, co-written and produced by the US star and her brother Finneas, generated 90,000 chart sales and 10.6 million streams. Other artists who scored singles in the IFPI's top-10 list include Ariana Grande, Lewis Capaldi and Lady Gaga.—AFP

### 'Exorcist' star, Swedish screen legend Max von Sydow dies at 90

Swedish-born actor Max von Sydow, whose seven-decade career saw him go from starring in iconic art-house movies by Ingmar Bergman to appearing in English-language hits including "The Exorcist" and "Game of Thrones", has died in France aged 90, his family said. "It is with a broken heart and with infinite sadness that we have the extreme pain of announcing the departure of Max von Sydow" on Sunday, said a statement sent to AFP. Von Sydow took French citizenship in 2002 and renounced his Swedish nationality, but remains fondly remembered in his homeland.

With chiseled features and piercing blue eyes, von Sydow became a recognizable face during a career that mixed genres and languages and saw him play vulnerable heroes and evil villains. "He was one of the world's greatest actors," said the former president of the Cannes film festival Gilles Jacob. "He could play troubling roles but Max had a delicacy and a humanity that were so moving." In 1973, he became part of horror movie history in "The Exorcist" where he portrayed a priest trying to rid a possessed young girl of her literal demons, shouting the iconic line: "The power of Christ compels you." More recently, von Sydow appeared in blockbusters such as "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" and the hit television HBO series "Game of Thrones" making him a familiar face to millions in the later part of his life.

### Chess with death

His career began more humbly in the early 1950s on the theatre stages of Stockholm and then Malmo, where he met the man who would help forge his career—Swedish director Ingmar Bergman. It is von Sydow's collaboration with Bergman in art-house films often laden with existential angst—now seen as all-time classics—that are likely to be his best-remembered roles. In one of the most memorable scenes in the history of cinema, von Sydow played the knight who has a chess game with death on a lonely beach in "The Seventh Seal" from 1957.



Swedish-born actor Max von Sydow poses for a picture in front of the cathedral of Rouen, western France on March 5, 1989.—AFP

He appeared in numerous other Bergman movies, notably "The Virgin Spring" and "Through a Glass Darkly" as well as the English-language "The Touch" in which he starred alongside American actor Elliott Gould. He also worked with fellow Scandinavian acting great Liv Ullmann on Jan Troell's 1971 masterpiece "The Emigrants" about a group of impoverished Swedes moving to the United States. It received several Oscar nominations. Von Sydow was twice nominated for Academy Awards, first in 1989 for his role in "Pelle the Conqueror" and then in 2012 for "Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close," about an 11-year-old boy whose father dies in the September 11, 2001 attacks.

One of his final roles was as a stern Russian admiral in Thomas Vinterberg's 2018 English-language film about the 2000 Kursk Russian submarine disaster. Von Sydow had two sons with his first wife Christina Olin. He married his second wife, French documentary filmmaker Catherine Brelet, in 1997, and the couple lived together in France. He had to renounce his Swedish citizenship in 2002 when he acquired French nationality.—AFP

### Italy rock legend to stream concert against virus 'loneliness'

An Italian rock star promised Tuesday to stream her next concert from home to break through the "loneliness" imposed by the government's social distancing measures to curb the new coronavirus. Gianna Nannini, now 65 and a local celebrity who has around 30 albums to her name, took to Instagram to lament about life in the time of the deadly epidemic. "The terrible thing about this virus is the loneliness," she wrote shortly after the government imposed nationwide restrictions on travel and public gatherings. "I am in Milan and I want to play some acoustic rock songs online so that we can all feel a bit closer to each other and still be safe," she wrote.

Nannini's raspy voice is known to a generation of Italians thanks to a prolific career spanning four decades. Her more recent concerts have provided a blend of melodic pop and more hard-hitting rock that sells out stadiums to this day. She promised to livestream her concert today at 1500 GMT. "We will do our best to overcome this terrible moment together," Nannini wrote.



Gianna Nannini

Italy's has suffered the brunt in Europe of a virus that developed in China before killing 463 people in the Mediterranean country in slightly over two weeks. Italy on Tuesday imposed travel restrictions and a ban on public gatherings to help fight the spread of the disease. Livestreaming is turning into a social phenomenon in Italy as the government's restrictions become more severe.

### Europe's top series festival called off over coronavirus

A leading European festival, Series Mania, offering the cream of upcoming streaming and television series, was cancelled Wednesday because of the coronavirus epidemic. The gathering, which draws more than 80,000 people to the northern French city of Lille was to have begun on March 20. Festival president Rodolphe Belmer said the "difficult decision" had to be made after the Paris government banned gatherings of more than 1,000 people amid international travel restrictions. A rival festival, Canneseries, fell victim to the virus last week and was postponed until autumn.

The world's second biggest television and entertainment market, MIPTV, which was to run alongside it later this month in Cannes, was also cancelled. A slew of concerts, operas and ballets have been pulled or postponed across France in an attempt to slow the spread of the virus. The Musee d'Orsay in Paris—which holds the world's biggest collection of Impressionist paintings—also began restricting access to 1,000 visitors at a time Wednesday, two days after the Louvre imposed a similar bar.—AFP

# Classifieds

Thursday, March 12, 2020

**Kuwait Times**  
 Now you can browse  
[www.kuwaittimes.net](http://www.kuwaittimes.net)  
 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 66819 - 66817  
 Fax: (+965) 24348714  
[www.met.gov.kw](http://www.met.gov.kw)

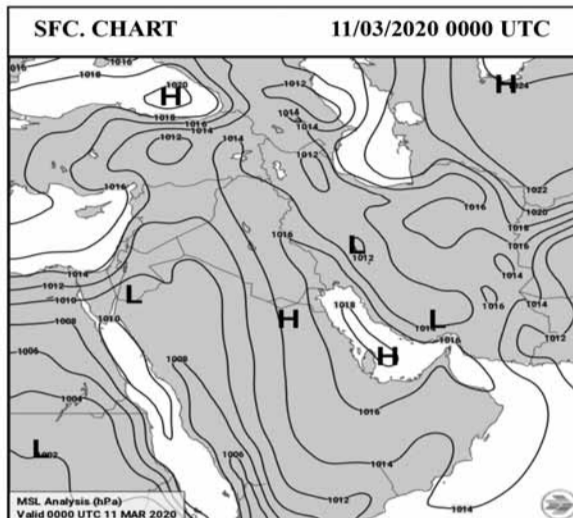
## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Relatively hot with light variable wind to light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

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

**WEATHER WARNING** No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	29 °C	17 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	31 °C	11 °C
ABDALY	33 °C	10 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	31 °C	14 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	28 °C	14 °C
SALMIYAH	26 °C	18 °C
AHMADI	25 °C	18 °C
NUWAISIB	29 °C	13 °C
WAFRA	32 °C	11 °C
SALMY	31 °C	13 °C



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	03/12	Rather hot and Partly cloudy	31 °C	12 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 28 km/h
Friday	03/13	Rather hot + Partly cloudy + causing rising dust over open areas with a chance for scattered rain	32 °C	13 °C	SE	15 - 45 km/h
Saturday	03/14	Rather hot + Cloudy + causing rising dust over open areas with a chance for rain that might be	33 °C	15 °C	SE	20 - 50 km/h
Sunday	03/15	Rather hot + Partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times with a chance for	30 °C	18 °C	SE-NW	15 - 40 km/h

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.	30 °C
MIN. Temp.	12 °C
MAX. RH	56 %
MIN. RH	14 %
MAX. Wind	S 28 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

## 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

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

**EMERGENCY ☎ 112**

### REQUIRED

## Filipino nanny for Kuwaiti family

Please call : **97554010**

**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

dealing and documents, I will be known by name of HUSSAINI BAMBORA. (C 5704)

**I, Jumana** Kaizar Shakir holder of Indian Passport No. Z1886250 residing at 2401 Montreal Shastri 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: Shakir 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)

## Flight Schedule

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 Thursday 12/3/2020				Departure Flights on Thursday 12/3/2020			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JZR	306	Istanbul	18:55	KAC	101	London	09:45
RJA	640	Amman	19:10	KAC	157	Istanbul	09:50
KAC	156	Istanbul	19:20	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	09:55
ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25	QTR	8512	Doha	10:00
GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30	KAC	155	Istanbul	10:20
JZR	104	Bahrain	19:55	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
FDB	057	Dubai	20:00	KAC	617	Doha	10:35
OMS	225	Muscat	20:05	QTR	1071	Doha	11:00
OMA	647	Muscat	20:20	JZR	305	Istanbul	11:10
KAC	616	Bahrain	20:25	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
QTR	1088	Doha	20:30	JZR	115	Doha	13:00
DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:55	QTR	1075	Doha	13:00
ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20	GFA	210	Bahrain	13:05
UAE	859	Dubai	21:30	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:50	FDB	8066	Dubai	15:40
KAC	620	Doha	22:00	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KAC	168	Paris	22:00	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
QTR	1082	Doha	22:05	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:35
ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15	JZR	103	Bahrain	16:50
KAC	676	Dubai	23:20	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:55
FDB	071	Dubai	23:45	DHX	871	Bahrain	17:20
KAC	564	Amman	23:55	KAC	619	Doha	17:35
UAE	858	Dubai	17:45	FDB	052	Dubai	17:45
JZR	539	KTM	17:50	JZR	539	KTM	17:50
KAC	563	Amman	17:55	KAC	563	Amman	17:55
QTR	1073	Doha	18:00	QTR	1073	Doha	18:00
KAC	675	Dubai	18:10	KAC	675	Dubai	18:10
GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
JZR	253	Amman	19:20	JZR	253	Amman	19:20
FDB	064	Dubai	19:25	FDB	064	Dubai	19:25
QTR	1081	Doha	19:55	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
RJA	641	Amman	20:10	RJA	641	Amman	20:10
GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
FDB	058	Dubai	20:45	FDB	058	Dubai	20:45
OMS	226	Muscat	20:45	OMS	226	Muscat	20:45
OMA	648	Muscat	21:20	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
DLH	624	Bahrain	21:45	DLH	624	Bahrain	21:45
DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
QTR	1089	Doha	21:55	QTR	1089	Doha	21:55
KAC	203	Lahore	22:15	KAC	203	Lahore	22:15
ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:25	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:25
GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50
UAE	860	Dubai	22:55	UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
QTR	1083	Doha	23:25	QTR	1083	Doha	23:25

## 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
Khaldiya	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

# Biden says fighting for US 'soul' after big primary wins

PHILADELPHIA: Joe Biden moved a giant step closer to a November showdown with Donald Trump after notching up big primary wins Tuesday over Bernie Sanders, his sole remaining challenger for the Democratic presidential nomination. Biden, 77, the centrist former vice president, scored a resounding win in Michigan, where Sanders, 78, the leftist senator from Vermont, had hoped to make a stand. He also cruised to victory in Missouri, Idaho and Mississippi, three of the other five states to vote on Tuesday.

Addressing supporters in Philadelphia as his victory took shape, Biden struck a presidential tone as he declared on national television that he would lead "a comeback for the soul of this nation". "Tonight we're a step closer to restoring decency, dignity and honor to the White House," he said. Biden reached out to his sometimes bitter rival Sanders and his supporters, telling them "we share a common goal". "Together we'll defeat Donald Trump," he said.

Biden's huge victory in Mississippi, where he won around 80 percent of the vote, reflected his popularity among strategically vital African-American voters. He defeated Sanders by 25 points in Missouri. His win in Michigan, the Midwestern industrial state which could be a key battleground in November, was a major setback for Sanders, who narrowly beat Hillary Clinton there four years ago.

Sanders led the count by less than 2,000 votes in Washington state, the other major prize of Tuesday's primaries, with around 70 percent of the vote counted on Wednesday morning. He was also leading by six points in North Dakota. Barring surprises, Biden now has a clear path to becoming the Democratic standard bearer in a potentially bruising and deeply divisive matchup with Trump.

The main question remaining is whether Sanders, a self-declared democratic socialist, will fight to the bitter end, as he did four years ago against Clinton, or bow out early. Many Democrats accuse the firebrand Sanders and his devoted supporters of damaging Clinton just as she was struggling - ultimately unsuccessfully - against the Trump insurgency.

Sanders yesterday dashed speculation over an immediate end to the Democratic primary contest, saying he remains in the fight against Biden, despite pressure to withdraw for the sake of party unity. But in a brief, passionate speech carried on live television, Sanders also made clear that his main priority was to see the defeat of "dangerous" Trump. And he acknowledged that many Democrats see him as less electable than Biden.

Sanders had been holed up in his home state of Vermont overnight after suffering heavy defeats in primaries across the country Tuesday. Speculation had been growing that he might respond to pleas from Democratic activists to step aside, giving Biden a chance to focus fully on campaigning against Trump.

But the fiery leftist broke his silence to say that despite his performance, he was still in the fight and preparing for his first one-on-one televised debate Sunday "with my friend Joe Biden". While he remained defiant, Sanders did make a number of unusual statements accepting his losses during the primary race and that he was "losing the debate over electability".

Sanders then listed questions he wanted Biden to answer on how to deal with far-reaching inequality and other structural issues that he believes can only be addressed by radical economic change or "revolution". Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, the charismatic New York congresswoman who is one of Sanders' most high-profile supporters, said there was no "sugarcoating" the results, however. "Tonight's a tough night," she said.

Adding to nerves in a country on edge after three tumultuous years under Trump, fears of the coronavirus epidemic prompted both campaigns to cancel rallies planned in Cleveland, Ohio. Organizers of the upcoming television debate between Sanders and Biden likewise said they would take the extraordinary step of not allowing the usual live audience. Their caution was at odds with Trump, who has vowed to keep holding his typically raucous rallies despite the concerns about large gatherings.

Trump's campaign manager dismissed Tuesday's results, saying "it has never



COLUMBUS, Ohio: Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden speaks during a campaign stop at Driving Park Community Center on Tuesday. — AFP

mattered who the Democratic nominee turned out to be". Both are "running on a big government socialist agenda" and Trump "is on an unstoppable drive toward re-election," campaign manager Brad Parscale said. Tuesday's six-state contest, coming a week after his strong Super Tuesday performance, demonstrated that Biden's once shambolic campaign is gathering strength and is now ready to face Trump. Sanders had accused Biden of selling out to corporate interests and ignoring a passionate leftist base. But the former vice president has insisted on steering a centrist line that he says can bring the divided country back together.

## 'Traditional coalition'

Banking on his credibility as Obama's vice president, he has managed to get out an enthusiastic black vote. With stories of a hard-knock childhood frequently featuring in his speeches, Biden also wants to recapture the blue collar white voters that Trump successfully poached from the Democrats in 2016. "Biden is putting together the traditional Democratic coalition, and that's still a very powerful one," said Julian Zelizer, a professor of political history at Princeton University.

In another boost, Andrew Yang became the latest of a string of former rivals for the Democratic nomination to endorse Biden.

Biden still faces an intensely polarized landscape, as illustrated during a campaign stop early Tuesday. He was speaking at an under-construction automobile plant in Detroit, when he was confronted by a worker who accused him of planning to take away Americans' firearms.

In the startling exchange, Biden struck back, telling the worker he was "full of shit" and insisting that he supports the constitutional right to bear arms. "I'm not taking your gun away," he said in the encounter, which Trump backers pointed to as evidence of Biden's inability to stand pressure - but his own supporters saw as a show of mettle. — AFP

## Hollywood rapist Harvey Weinstein jailed for 23 years

NEW YORK: Disgraced movie mogul Harvey Weinstein was sentenced to 23 years in prison for rape and sexual assault yesterday, capping a sensational downfall for the once-powerful producer in a landmark case for the #MeToo movement. Weinstein, who turns 68 next week, faces spending the rest of his life behind bars after New York Justice James Burke rebuffed his pleas for the minimum five-year sentence. The judge, issuing a heavy term close to the maximum 29 years allowed, was unmoved by a rambling statement Weinstein made to the court in which he failed to express any remorse for his actions or apologize to victims.

"I'm totally confused," Weinstein said, before blaming the #MeToo global reckoning against men abusing positions of power for his predicament. "I was the first example and now there are of thousands of men being accused. I'm worried about this country," he added. The

sentencing completed a dramatic fall from grace for the titan-turned-pariah, who lost much of his \$150 million fortune fighting allegations that surfaced in Oct 2017.

Nearly 90 women, including Angelina Jolie and Salma Hayek, have come forward alleging 40 years of vile predatory behavior by the Oscar-winning producer of "Shakespeare in Love" and numerous other critical and box office hits. The Silence Breakers - a group of 24 Weinstein accusers that includes Ashley Judd, Rosanna Arquette and Rose McGowan - said Weinstein's legacy would always be his rape conviction.

"He is going to jail - but no amount of jail time will repair the lives he ruined, the careers he destroyed, or the damage he has caused," they said in a statement. Weinstein was taken away from the Manhattan criminal court in a wheelchair as the six accusers who testified at his trial, including actress Annabella Sciorra of "The Sopranos," hugged in the front row. Members of the public clapped as the accusers and prosecutors walked out of the courtroom.

Weinstein was found guilty of a criminal sexual act in the first degree and rape in the third degree on Feb 24. His lawyers have appealed. Seven men and five women convicted him of raping ex-actress Jessica Mann in 2013 and of forcibly performing oral sex on former production

assistant Mimi Haley in 2006. Mann, 34, and Haley, 42, delivered powerful victim impact statements yesterday. Haley said being attacked by Weinstein had "diminished my confidence and faith in people".

Mann said his conviction had given her the strength to rebuild her life. "My monsters are no longer hiding in my closet," she told the court. The producer - famous for his hard-nosed approach to work and Oscars campaigns - was cleared of the most serious charges of predatory sexual assault, as well as rape in the first degree. But prosecutors called on Burke to issue a lengthy jail term, saying Weinstein engaged in a "lifetime of abuse" and had shown "a total lack of remorse" for his actions.

In a pre-sentencing letter, the prosecution asked the judge to consider 36 other sexual abuse and harassment allegations against Weinstein dating back to the 1970s that were not part of the trial. "He held all cards and played them at his will," lead prosecutor Joan Illuzzi-Orban said in court. Weinstein's team suggested Burke should take into account the achievements of a man whose films received more than 300 Oscar nominations and 81 statuettes.

"His life story, his accomplishments, and struggles are simply remarkable and should not be disregarded in total because of the jury's verdict," the lawyers wrote in a

record, with frequent plane and helicopter crashes over the years.

Yesterday's incident comes just months after a fighter jet crashed during a training mission near Mianwali in Punjab province, killing both pilots. In July last year at least 18 people were killed when a small army plane crashed in Rawalpindi. And in 2016, a Pakistan International Airlines plane burst into flames after one of its two turboprop engines failed while flying from remote northern Pakistan to Islamabad, killing more than 40 people. — AFP



Harvey Weinstein

pre-sentencing memo. Weinstein also pleaded with Burke that he may never see his five children again, the youngest two of whom are under ten years old. Weinstein's counsel regularly clashed with Burke during the trial, even claiming at one point that he was biased against their client. — AFP

## 238 cases in Qatar; 77 in Bahrain; 63...

Continued from Page 1

A meeting of agriculture and water ministers of the Group of 20 major economies in Saudi Arabia, set from March 17 to March 19, has been postponed until further notice because of virus concerns, organizers said in an email seen by Reuters. A G20 working group meeting scheduled for next week was also postponed, two sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The kingdom holds the G20 presidency this year and hosts the annual summit in November. It recorded one new virus infection in an Egyptian transiting through Jeddah airport on his way to Cairo, state media said yesterday, taking its tally to 21. Riyadh's preventive measures include locking down its eastern Qatif region, suspending the umrah pilgrimage and travel bans on 14 countries. The causeway linking Saudi Arabia to Bahrain was closed on Saturday. In the United Arab Emirates, the central bank said it was prepared to support the banking system in mitigating against the downside risk of the coronavirus outbreak.

Iran yesterday reported 63 new deaths from the novel coronavirus, the highest single-day toll in the three weeks since the Islamic republic announced the first deaths from the outbreak. The outbreak of the coronavirus in Iran is one of the deadliest outside China, where the disease originated. "Based on new lab results, we have identified 958 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection in the country, bringing the total number of cases to 9,000," health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said in a televised news conference.

"Unfortunately in the past 24 hours, we have had reports of 63 deaths and overall 354 have lost their lives" to the virus, he added. The capital Tehran had the most new infections with 256 cases. The central province of Isfahan followed with 170, and Semnan, to

the east of Tehran, had 63. Bushehr as well as Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad in the southwest had no new cases. Iran announced its first coronavirus deaths, in the Shiite holy city of Qom, on Feb 19.

It is yet to officially impose quarantines but authorities have repeatedly called on people to refrain from travelling. They have closed schools and universities and resorted to shutting hotels and other tourist accommodation to discourage travel. Jahanpour said the number of infections was still on the rise and that Iran would not be "celebrating the end of coronavirus" during the country's new year holidays, which start on March 20.

President Hassan Rouhani also called on people to limit their movements in order to contain the virus. "Movements must be reduced to the possible minimum, unless it is absolutely necessary," Rouhani said during a cabinet meeting, flanked by ministers wearing masks. "Everyone must pay attention to protocols and be careful so the virus's spread can be contained," he added. Rouhani also warned against "exaggerating" the number of dead through non-official tolls and causing "fear and anxiety" among the public.

Apart from direct fatalities, 84 people have died from methanol poisoning in Iran after rumors circulated that drinking alcohol can help cure or protect from the virus. In some provinces such as Khuzestan in the southwest, the death toll from poisoning is higher than that from the coronavirus. Separately, Iran's foreign ministry expressed concern over the health of Iranian prisoners in the United States because of what it called President Donald Trump's mismanagement of the coronavirus outbreak there.

Spokesman Abbas Mousavi made the remarks after the United States demanded the release of American prisoners from virus-hit Iran. "We're worried about the health of some Iranian prisoners taken hostage" in the US, he told a news conference that was held online because of the outbreak. Mousavi criticized the US over what he called its "imaginary projects like a wall, a care-free president, and needless and illegal presence in other countries" and urged Washington to use its resources better to ensure the health of its citizens. — Agencies

## Pakistan fighter jet crashes in capital during rehearsal

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani F-16 fighter jet crashed in Islamabad yesterday, killing the pilot, during a rehearsal for a national day military parade, officials said. Footage on social media showed a plume of smoke billowing into the sky after the plane hit the ground having apparently attempted a loop. A Pakistani Air Force spokesman said the pilot, Wing Commander Nauman Akram, died in the crash. "Pakistan Air Force reports with regret that a PAF F-16 aircraft crashed near Shakarparian, Islamabad during the rehearsals of 23rd March parade," the air force said in a statement.

The rehearsals were for the annual military parade in Islamabad this month to celebrate Pakistan Day. The F-16 jets are among the most valuable hardware in the Pakistani military's arsenal and the country has a fleet of about 50 - each worth at least \$40 million. Pakistan has a chequered military and civilian aviation safety



ISLAMABAD: A plume of smoke and fire are seen coming from an area after a Pakistani F-16 crashed. — AFP

## WHO: Coronavirus outbreak a...

Continued from Page 1

died, Tedros said, with the numbers expected to climb. The WHO no longer has a category for declaring a pandemic, except for influenza.

WHO officials have signaled for weeks that they may use the word "pandemic" as an descriptive term but stressed that it does not carry legal significance. The novel coronavirus is not the flu. Under its previous system, the Geneva-based agency declared the 2009 H1N1

swine flu outbreak a pandemic. It turned out to be mild, leading to some criticism after pharmaceutical companies rushed development of vaccines and drugs.

Ryan said the experience with influenza led many people to the false conclusion that a pandemic is uncontrollable once it starts. The experience of South Korea, Singapore, and China in combating the new virus showed this was not true, he said. "We have observation that tells us that there is a strong element of controllability in this disease," he told the news conference. "That doesn't mean we will completely stop it but what it does mean is there is a real chance to blunt the curve, there is a real chance to bend the curve and reduce the number of cases that our health system has to cope with and give the health system a chance to save more lives," he said. — Reuters



Sports

# Formula One team staff tested for virus at Australian Grand Prix

## Chinese Grand Prix is the only race to be postponed so far

MELBOURNE: Three Formula One team staff members have been isolated at the Australian Grand Prix while tests are conducted for the new coronavirus, officials said yesterday, casting a shadow over the opening race of the year.

Two were from the Haas F1 team and one from McLaren. "Two personnel were showing some symptoms so they got themselves checked out and have put themselves into self-isolation, as they should, while they await results," a Haas official told AFP.

A McLaren official added: "We can confirm that one team member has self-isolated in the hotel as a precaution, in line with our policy, after showing symptoms similar to coronavirus. "We expect to receive the results overnight. The team is operating as per our normal schedule."

They were tested at the Albert Park circuit in Melbourne as the teams prepare for the race on Sunday. It is not clear what it might mean for the grand prix if the results are positive. Victorian state Premier Daniel Andrews on Tuesday said it was only a matter of time before large sporting and cultural events were cancelled, but that that stage had not been reached yet.

Earlier this week, Australian Grand Prix Corporation boss Andrew Westacott ruled out the race following the lead of Bahrain by barring spectators, with hundreds of

thousands expected over the weekend.

The Chinese Grand Prix is the only race to be postponed so far, although the first three stops on the MotoGP calendar, in Qatar, Thailand and the United States, have been either delayed or cancelled.

### SELFIE BAN

All Formula One teams are in Australia, including powerhouse Ferrari and AlphaTauri from their bases in Italy, which is now in lockdown to halt the spread of the disease.

Australia banned travel from Italy Wednesday and opened a US\$1.6 billion healthcare war chest in a bid to slow the spread of coronavirus, as locally detected infections hit 124. Three people have died. Victoria state, where the race is being held, has 21 infections.

With concerns growing, race chiefs said drivers would not take part in autograph sessions or pose for selfies, while Renault's Daniel Ricciardo and Esteban Ocon pulled out of scheduled press conference Wednesday.

"Our drivers were supposed to be with us for this event but due to the situation we've excused them for the occasion... I hope you understand why we are taking such measures," team principal Cyril Abiteboul said.

Over the weekend, Formula One's governing body,



MELBOURNE: Ferrari's German driver Sebastian Vettel (C) walks down pit lane with team members at the Albert Park circuit ahead of the Formula One Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

the International Automobile Federation, said it was establishing what it called a "crisis cell" to meet every two days to monitor the rapidly increasing global threat posed by the virus.

"The FIA will evaluate the calendar of its forthcom-

ing competitions and take any action required to help protect the global motor sport community and the wider public, including the postponement of competitions where necessary," it said. It had no immediate comment yesterday's developments. — AFP



### All F1 teams are in Australia

## Shiffrin confirms return to World Cup skiing

PARIS: Mikaela Shiffrin confirmed yesterday her return to World Cup alpine skiing for the season's final event in Sweden this week after a lengthy absence following the death of her father.

The three-times overall World Cup winner, who will turn 25 on Friday and last competed in Bansko, Bulgaria, in late January, said that she would be back in Are for what are the last races of the season after the finals in Italy were shelved.

"Are has held a special place in my heart since the beginning of my career, and it feels like the right place to rejoin my World Cup family and try to race again," she tweeted. Shiffrin's father Jeff died aged 65 after an accident at home in Vail, Colorado on February 2.

At the top of the overall World Cup standings at the end of January, Shiffrin has since been leapfrogged by Italian Federica Brignone, who has a 153-point lead over the American.

Only the three races in Are remain this season following the cancellation of this month's World Cup finals in Cortina d'Ampezzo because of the coronavirus outbreak that has killed 631 people in Italy.



Mikaela Shiffrin

A rusty Shiffrin will be hard pressed to overtake the Italian although she will always be a threat in Thursday's parallel slalom, Friday's giant slalom and the slalom on Saturday.

Shiffrin herself cautioned against high expectations. "I still have no real goals or expectations," she said. "I just would like to try and race again before the end of the season." — AFP

## What would an Oly cancellation cost Japan?

TOKYO: Japan and Olympic organisers are at pains to insist this summer's Games in Tokyo are on, despite the new coronavirus outbreak, but what would a cancellation cost the world's third-biggest economic powerhouse?

With a dearth of reliable figures, opinions vary, yet experts all agree on one point: Games or no, the main risk to the Japanese economy this year is a prolonged global coronavirus epidemic.

### WHAT HAS THE GAMES COST JAPAN?

At the end of 2019, organisers estimated the total cost of the Games at around 1.35 trillion yen (\$12.6 billion). That is divided between the city of Tokyo, which is paying 597 billion yen, the Japanese organising committee, which contributes 603 billion yen and the central government, which is paying 150 billion yen.

But the actual costs for the country have been hotly debated, with a widely publicised audit report estimating national government spending from the bid in 2013 until 2018 at 1.06 trillion yen, nearly 10 times the budget. Japanese businesses have also poured money into the event in sponsorships, paying out a record 348 billion yen (\$3.3 billion).

And that figure doesn't include the partnerships signed between major companies and the International Olympic Committee for rights to sponsor several Games. Among those are giants including Japan's Toyota, Bridgestone and Panasonic.

### WHICH SECTORS WOULD BE AFFECTED?

According to analysts at Capital

Economics, one key factor to consider in terms of how a cancellation might hit Japan's economy is that most of the spending has already happened. That means the effects of outlays, most notably on construction of new sporting venues, has already been factored into GDP in recent years.

But a cancellation would be a drag on tourism, as well as general consumption in the country, already under pressure after a controversial sales tax hike last year.

Tourism in Japan was already hit before the virus, amid a diplomatic spat with South Korea that prompted boycott calls. Visitors from South Korea previously made up the second largest contingent of tourists to Japan, behind only China.

And with the virus outbreak, Japan has seen a further fall in South Korean numbers, as well as a plunge in travellers from China, which together accounted for nearly half the 31.9 million foreign visitors to the country in 2019.

Japan has an industrialised and diversified economy not heavily reliant on tourism, with foreign visitor expenditures making up just 0.9 percent of GDP in 2018, according to economic research organisation CEIC. But with domestic spending already weak, the hit from a cancellation could ripple through and further depress local purchasing.

### WHAT WOULD THE IMPACT ON GDP BE?

Economists at research firm Nomura already predict a 0.7-percent contraction in GDP for the 2020 calendar year, but warn that could be up to 1.5 percent if the Games are cancelled.

Takashi Miwa, an economist at the firm, told AFP the main impact would be on domestic spending, because a cancellation of the Games "would badly affect Japanese consumer confidence".

It could also deprive the country of 240 billion yen (\$2.28 billion) in spending from foreign spectators expected to attend the Games, he added. — AFP

## Nine Qatar W Cup workers die in 2019

DOHA: Nine labourers on World Cup 2022 projects died in the past year, Qatari organisers said yesterday, stressing that none of the deaths were a result of accidents at tournament projects.

All but one of the dead who suffered health issues had yet to undergo a new comprehensive medical screening intended to detect underlying risks, the supreme committee organising the tournament said.

The checks, along with newly launched electronic medical records and mental health supervision for workers, were introduced following criticism by human rights groups of Qatar's past labour practices.

"With each death, regardless of what NGOs may think, we've always taken a lot of attention and concern," the committee's executive director for worker welfare, Mahmoud Qutub, told AFP.

"The comprehensive medical screening, as a preventative measure, has probably been one of the most effective programmes we have launched."

In 2018, by contrast, one worker died as a result of a workplace accident after falling from a height at the Al-Janoub stadium. Ten non-work related deaths were reported in the same period.

Most of Qatar's 2.75 million residents, 90 percent of whom are foreigners, are from poor developing countries working on projects linked to the 2022 World Cup. Of that number only around 26,000 are directly employed on committee-run projects. Three workers were killed and 11 injured in a bus crash in November in what was the single deadliest incident in 2019, according to a committee welfare report.

It added a Turkish carpenter died of

heart failure in February 2019, a Nepalese 27-year-old died of cardio-respiratory failure in June, while a 20 year-old Nepalese man killed himself in October 2019 — five days after arriving in Qatar.

A study published by Cardiology Journal in July probed the relationship between the cardiovascular linked deaths of more than 1,300 Nepali workers in Qatar between 2009 and 2017 and heartstroke.

In October 2019 an Indian electrician, 54, died of heart failure while the following month a 35-year-old Nepali died of tuberculosis and in December a 21-year-old Indian worker was found dead in his lodgings. An investigation into the cause of his death is ongoing.

### 'IT'S GOING TO IMPROVE'

"We could sit back and say 'people die — they didn't die on the site, it's not our responsibility'. But we wanted to be as transparent as possible," Qutub said.

"We have taken a lot of measures to become more preventative, and this is more important than a cure. How can we protect the workers being exposed to an environment that may exacerbate a pre-existing condition." The committee has also intensified efforts to identify and reimburse workers wrongly charged recruitment fees, Qutub added.

Under the committee's rules, contractors are responsible for covering recruitment costs. But in many cases, the charges — sometimes as much as \$1,000 — are passed on to recruits, many of whom are from India, Nepal and Bangladesh.

"The reimbursement scheme is pure negotiation," said Qutub. "Workers are always going to tell you they paid, we've turned it over and the burden of proof is now on the contractors to show evidence they've hired ethically." Projects run by the organising committee are acknowledged by human rights groups to generally offer their workers better protection and rights than schemes not under the committee's supervision. — AFP

## Hamilton chases Schumacher as virus overshadows F1 start

MELBOURNE: Lewis Hamilton believes his all-conquering Mercedes is even better than last year as he begins his bid to equal Michael Schumacher's record seven world titles at an Australian Grand Prix given the green light despite rising coronavirus fears.

The British driver has been the dominant force in recent times, winning five of the last six drivers' championships, including in 2019 when he passed legendary five-time Argentine champion Juan Manuel Fangio on the all-time list.

"It's been intense, with a huge amount of work from everybody at the track and back home at the factories," the 35-year-old said of preparations overshadowed by concerns about the virus and its impact on the sport.

"The car's feeling like a step forward from last year," Hamilton added after pre-season testing.

"But it's clear we've still got a few issues we need to iron out," said the driver who won 11 of last season's 21 grands prix.

There were fears the Melbourne race may be ditched due to travel restrictions affecting team personnel, particularly from Italy-based Ferrari.

On Wednesday, two Haas team staff and one from McLaren were isolated while tests are conducted to see if they have coronavirus after they showed symptoms at the track.

"We expect to receive the results overnight. The team is operating as per our normal schedule," a McLaren official said. It is not clear what it might mean for the grand prix if the test results come back positive.

F1, like many other sports, is already reeling from COVID-19 with next week's Bahrain Grand Prix set to be held behind closed doors, and the Chinese Grand Prix in April postponed.

### 'I CAN BEAT ANYONE'

Mercedes head into the race with a new dual-axis steering system (DAS), which has inevitably sparked complaints from other teams over whether it is legal. While Hamilton has taken every pole at Albert Park since 2014, he has won just once in that time, and it was teammate Valtteri Bottas who sizzled at pre-season testing.

The Finn will be looking for a second successive win in Australia after sweeping to an emphatic victory last year, a massive 20.9 seconds ahead of Hamilton. "On a good day, when I get 100 percent out of myself, I feel I can beat anyone. But how to be there at every race weekend — that's the tricky thing," Bottas said.

So dominant were Mercedes in 2019 that Ferrari had to wait until the 13th race at Belgium in September for their first win, courtesy of new boy Charles Leclerc.

Team principal Mattia Binotto said after testing that Ferrari's new engine was "not as strong" as last year, bad news for the Scuderia as they chase a first drivers' title since 2007.

But with Italy one of the countries worst-hit by the coronavirus, he wants Ferrari to "put a smile on people's faces" this weekend.

"We know that the opposition is strong, but we also know that it is the start of a long season where development rate, reliability, and our operational effectiveness will be key," he said.

Ferrari have a revamped engine after rivals last year expressed suspicions about their straight-line speed superiority, though a probe by governing body FIA was unable to prove the Maranello team had cheated. — AFP

## Sports

# Deslauriers scores Ducks' first fastest hat trick

## Demko leads Canucks to shootout win over Isles

ANAHEIM: Nicolas Deslauriers' first NHL hat trick was also the fastest hat trick in Ducks history, and Anaheim earned a 5-2 win over the visiting Ottawa Senators on Tuesday. Known more for his toughness than his offensive prowess over his seven NHL seasons, Deslauriers had only 12 goals in 211 games heading into Tuesday's play. Against Ottawa, however, the forward scored three consecutive goals within a span of 9:04 in the first period. His third goal came 11:49 into the game, breaking the Anaheim record for quickest hat trick set by Teemu Selanne, who had three goals in the first 12:58 on Nov. 10, 1997, against the visiting San Jose Sharks. Jakob Silfverberg and Rickard Rakell scored the Ducks' other two goals, both on power plays. Rakell also had an assist, giving him seven points (two goals, five assists) over his last four games. Brady Tkachuk and Colin White each had a goal and an assist for the Senators.

### PENGUINS 5, DEVILS 2

Evgeni Malkin scored two third-period goals and added an assist as Pittsburgh broke a two-game losing streak by winning in Newark, N.J.

Kris Letang had a goal and an assist, and Evan Rodrigues and Justin Schultz also scored for Pittsburgh, which had lost eight of its previous 10 but hit 40 wins for the 13th consecutive 82-game season. Penguins goaltender Matt Murray made 20 saves. Miles Wood and Nikita Gusev scored for the Devils, who had won two in a row and were 6-1-2 in their previous nine.

### MAPLE LEAFS 2, LIGHTNING 1

Auston Matthews scored on a power play early in the third period, and Toronto held on to defeat visiting Tampa Bay. William Nylander also scored for the Maple Leafs. John Tavares and Mitch Marner each had two assists as the Maple Leafs ended a three-game losing streak. Ondrej Palat scored for the Lightning, losers of two straight.

### HURRICANES 5, RED WINGS 2

Sebastian Aho had two goals and an assist, and

Justin Williams scored for the fifth straight game as Carolina downed host Detroit for its third win in a row. Morgan Geekie scored his third goal in his second NHL game. Williams has six goals during his hot streak. He scored the go-ahead goal in the third period, one of the Hurricanes' four special teams tallies.

Nino Niederreiter also scored for Carolina, which got three assists from Jake Gardiner and two from Teuvo Teravainen. Tyler Bertuzzi and Christoffer Ehn scored for Detroit. Jonathan Bernier stopped 31 shots as the Red Wings saw their two-game winning streak end.

### CANUCKS 5, ISLANDERS 4 (SO)

J.T. Miller scored the lone goal in the shootout as Vancouver defeated visiting New York. Goaltender Thatcher Demko made 45 saves through regulation and overtime and didn't allow a goal on three Islanders shootout attempts as the Canucks won for just the second time in their past seven games (2-5-0). Adam Gaudette, Tyler Toffoli, Zack MacEwen and Bo Horvat scored in regulation for Vancouver. Brock Nelson scored twice, and Andrew

Ladd and Jordan Eberle also tallied for the Islanders, who took their season-high seventh consecutive defeat (0-3-4). Goaltender Semyon Varlamov stopped 30 shots through regulation and overtime.

### BRUINS 2, FLYERS 0

Matt Grzelcyk and Patrice Bergeron scored goals to lift visiting Boston past Philadelphia. Bruins goaltender Tuukka Rask made 36 saves for his 50th career shutout helping to snap the Flyers' nine-game winning streak. The Bruins improved to 44-14-12 for a league-best 100 points. Boston also pushed its road mark to 22-10-3.

### PREDATORS 4, CANADIENS 2

Filip Forsberg had two goals with an assist during Nashville's four-goal second period, and Juuse Saros made 32 saves while his shutout streak ended as the visiting Predators beat Montreal for their third straight



ANAHEIM: Jani Hakanpaa #28 and Ryan Miller #30 of the Anaheim Ducks defend against Anthony Duclair #10 of the Ottawa Senators during the second period of a game at Honda Center in Anaheim, California. — AFP

victory. Coming off back-to-back shutouts over Dallas, Saros went 181:07 without yielding a goal before Montreal's Artturi Lehkonen scored amid heavy pressure at 2:45 into the third period. Forsberg highlighted Nashville's breakout second period, which also featured goals from Ryan Johansen and Calle Jarnkrok. Artturi Lehkonen and Lukas Vejdemo were the Canadiens' goal-scorers, the latter producing his first NHL goal in his seventh game.

### RANGERS 4, STARS 2

Mika Zibanejad reached 40 goals for the first time

in his career, rookie Igor Shesterkin made 31 saves, and New York opened a three-game road trip with the victory over slumping Dallas. Zibanejad scored a goal for the 11th game in a span of 12 games, joining Andy Bathgate (1962-63) as the only players in team history to accomplish that feat, according to NHL Stats and Information. He has 16 goals in the 12-game span. The Rangers got two goals from rookie Kaapo Kakko and a goal and an assist from Andy Fox. Dallas lost its season-high sixth straight game (0-4-2) despite third-period goals from Roope Hintz and Andrew Cogliano. — Reuters

## Australia cricket star Beth Mooney signs up for Hundred

LONDON: Beth Mooney, the player of the tournament at the Women's T20 World Cup, will link up with captain Meg Lanning at Welsh Fire for the inaugural edition of The Hundred. The England and Wales Cricket Board announced Mooney, plus fellow Australians Ashleigh Gardner and Nicola Carey and South Africa all-rounders Marizanne Kapp and Chloe Tryon, as the latest internationals to sign up for the event.

Mooney was a pivotal figure in Australia's charge to a fifth T20 crown, scoring an unbeaten 78 in Sunday's final against India in Melbourne. "I'm really excited to take part in the first season of The Hundred," said Mooney, who is top of the women's T20 international batting rankings. "It looks like it is developing into a high-quality, world-class competition."

Gardner has become Birmingham Phoenix's second overseas signing, joining New Zealand's Sophie Devine. Seam bowler Carey, another member of the triumphant Australia squad, will unite with compatriot Alyssa Healy at Northern Superchargers.

Kapp will join wife and Proteas captain Dane van Niekerk at Oval Invincibles while Tryon, another of the South Africa squad that reached the T20 World Cup semi-finals, is set for a stint at London Spirit.

Beth Barrett-Wild, the head of the Hundred women's competition, said: "It's fantastic to see five more international stars signing up to play in The Hundred this summer. 'We've now confirmed the names of 18 overseas players who will compete in the women's competition.'"

The Hundred is a new tournament consisting of eight city-based franchise



MELBOURNE: File photo shows Australia's Beth Mooney smiles as she trains in the nets ahead of the Twenty20 women's World Cup cricket final, in Melbourne on March 7, 2020. — AFP

sides, breaking away from England's traditional county system. Teams will bat for 100 balls each, with overs lasting for 10 balls and bowlers either bowling five

or 10 balls consecutively. All eight franchises will feature both men's and women's teams, with the two competitions running side by side. — AFP

## Klopp, Guardiola voice concerns over matches behind closed doors

LIVERPOOL: Jurgen Klopp said Tuesday he was unsure whether closing stadiums would help tackle the coronavirus as Pep Guardiola admitted he did not like the idea of matches being played in empty stadiums.

No restrictions have yet been placed on games played in Britain and Liverpool will host Atletico Madrid on Wednesday in front of a capacity crowd of more than 50,000.

Nearly 3,000 Atletico fans are expected to travel for the game even though La Liga has announced that all matches in Spain will be played behind closed doors for the next two weeks. "Some things are more important than football, we realise that in this moment," Liverpool boss Klopp said ahead of his side's Champions League last-16, second-leg match.

"I don't know enough about how much it would help with the football games. The problem with football games is if you are not at the stadium you are in closed rooms watching, maybe together. I'm not sure what is better in this case."

Liverpool are expected to wrap up a first English league title in 30 years in the coming weeks but could do so in an empty stadium if authorities tighten the rules. The Champions League has been severely disrupted by the fast-spreading virus.

### MATTER OF TIME

Paris Saint-Germain and Barcelona will play their second-leg matches behind closed doors, while it remains to be seen if Juventus can host Lyon next week with Italy in lockdown. Manchester City boss Guardiola believes it is only a matter of time before

English clubs face further restrictions.

City play Arsenal at home on Wednesday in a re-arranged Premier League game — when Guardiola will go head to head with his former assistant, Mikel Arteta. Guardiola, whose side are due to host Real Madrid in the Champions League next week, does not want a prolonged period of games without fans.

"We are here for the people. If it's just one or two games, OK, but not longer," he said. "We play for them and if they cannot be there, then there is no sense. I wouldn't love it. 'But if (European governing body) UEFA or the government say we have to play without spectators, we will do it. The health is the most important thing and we have to take care of the situation.'"

Wolves boss Nuno Espirito Santo, whose side are due to face Olympiakos in the Europa League on Thursday in an empty stadium in Greece, said football should stop instead of being played behind closed doors. "If we have to go we will. But we don't agree — we're not happy to go," he told Sky Sports. "Behind closed doors doesn't make sense," he added. "We're pretending to live a normal life when things aren't normal."

### SOMEONE HAPPY TO FACE ANFIELD

On the pitch, Klopp is focused on overturning a 1-0 first-leg deficit against Atletico to maintain his record of never losing a two-legged European tie in five years as Liverpool boss.

Diego Simeone's side frustrated the Reds in Spain three weeks ago and Klopp demanded a higher tempo from his side to unsettle Atletico's famously well-organised defence. "If you play predictable, Atletico defends you for the next six months without a rest," said Klopp. "It is really good what they are doing. (I have the) highest respect, but there are ways and we have to find them tomorrow night." Simeone is looking forward to his first taste of Anfield and believes it would have been unfair on Liverpool to play the game behind closed doors. — AFP

## SA skipper welcomes back predecessor

DHARAMSALA: New South Africa captain Quinton de Kock has welcomed the return to the One Day International squad of his predecessor Faf du Plessis as they prepare to meet India in Dharamsala today.

"Faf plays big role for us from a leadership point of view. He's here to help out a lot of the younger guys in the team, and he still adds a lot of value to us and he also knows he has lot of value to give to this team," De Kock told a news conference on the eve of the match.

"It's still great to have him around. The experience he has picked up over the years will be a great help to us in this series. 'He's been given a chance to have a break. I feel it was important for him to put his feet up for a little bit and regather his thoughts.'"

De Kock replaced Du Plessis as skipper of the ODI team for the three-match series against England, when Du Plessis was surprisingly left out in a clear signal that his tenure was headed to an end.

Du Plessis then quit as South Africa captain across all three formats of cricket, but said he would remain available for selection and after also being left out for the 3-0 home series win against Australia over the last fortnight, was restored to the squad for the three matches in India.

"We understand we have an inexperienced next side in these conditions, so it's important that guys like me and Faf help lead the way," added De Kock. "India have become an unbelievable team but we are also coming here with a lot of confidence."

Thursday's match in Dharamsala is followed by a meeting on Sunday in Lucknow and next Wednesday in Kolkata. — Reuters

## Coronavirus may take shine off Indian cricket's saliva swing tactics

DHARAMSALA: Using saliva to shine the cricket ball could be banned for Indian players in the one-day series clash against South Africa over coronavirus concerns, paceman Bhuvneshwar Kumar said yesterday.

India has insisted the three matches against South Africa will go ahead despite growing fears over the virus. The number of cases in India has doubled to 60 in four days. The disease can be spread when small droplets containing it land on objects that are then touched by a person, who then touches their eyes, nose or mouth, according to the World Health Organization.

Kumar said the Indian cricket team consulted doctors yesterday about whether to use saliva, which bowlers rub on one side of the leather ball to help it swing. A decision will be taken at a team meeting ahead of the first game in Dharamsala today, he said.

"I can't say right now we will not use saliva because if we don't use saliva then how will we shine the ball?" Kumar told reporters. "Then we will get hit and you people will say you are not bowling well."

Kumar said bowlers would follow the doctors' orders: "Whatever instruction we get or whatever is the best option we will do." They have already been told to stay away from fans.

South Africa coach Mark Boucher has said his players should avoid handshakes at matches because of the virus, which has killed more than 4,000 people worldwide. Cricket South Africa approved the India tour after medical and security experts gave it the green light.

Team captain Quinton De Kock said both teams had been tested and were healthy, adding South Africa would continue to use saliva. "We will still shine the ball. Our team doctors and management have made sure we are all fit and don't have coronavirus. We will still attend to that and keep the ball shining," he told reporters.

Kumar insisted all players will take every precaution to tackle the coronavirus, but refused to speculate on whether the Indian Premier League Twenty20 tournament should start on March 29.

"You cannot say anything right now because it (the virus) is taking a dangerous situation in India," said Kumar. The second international is in Lucknow on Sunday and the third in Kolkata on March 18. — AFP

Sports

# Spurs forced back to drawing board after CL collapse

‘Broken team under Mourinho has been broken still further’

LONDON: Tottenham's 4-0 aggregate thrashing by Leipzig added the misery of an early Champions League exit to a season in which the 2019 finalists have been brought crashing back down to earth.

A never-say-die spirit carried Spurs to the club's first-ever final in Europe's top club competition last year after memorable fightbacks at Barcelona, Manchester City and Ajax.

Faced with the same mountain to climb, there was nothing left in the Tottenham tank during a 3-0 defeat in Leipzig on Tuesday.

The comeback against Ajax in the semi-finals was arguably the high point of Mauricio Pochettino's five-and-a-half-year spell in charge that turned his team from Europa League regulars into Champions League contenders. Less than six months after Tottenham's 2-0 defeat to Liverpool in the Madrid final, Pochettino was replaced by Jose Mourinho, and it appears even the Portuguese does not believe their run as a Champions League club will continue next season.

"With the squad we have at the moment it's going to be very, very difficult," said Mourinho, whose side sit eighth in the Premier League, seven points adrift of the top four. "These problems are not going to disappear from today to tomorrow."

A run of six games without a win is the worst of Mourinho's long managerial career. However, there are mitigating circumstances.

The loss of Harry Kane and Son Heung-min to long-term injuries has robbed him of Tottenham's two main goal threats. January signing Steven Bergwijn is also set to miss the rest of the season, while Moussa Sissoko has been a big miss in midfield.

"I think every team in the world would struggle with five or six of their most important players missing, it is as simple as that," said Mourinho. "All the players that were on the Leipzig bench, in my team they would play." Yet, it is hard to see how Mourinho's negativity is helping his squad to do any more than limp towards the end of the season.

"A broken team that under the joyless stewardship of Jose Mourinho has been broken still further," wrote the Guardian. "They looked here exactly what they are: the eighth-best team in the Premier League, exhausted and error-prone, bad in defence and bad in attack, with no discernible long-term strategy and no identifiable short-term plan."

As Leipzig roared into the last eight for the first time in the club's history, Tottenham were offered a mirror image of what they once were in the peak years of Pochettino's reign.

The Germans are a young, hungry, energetic, exciting team led by one most coveted emerging managers in European football in Julian Nagelsmann. Spurs are paying the price for not building on the foundations laid by Pochettino. Not a single player was signed for 18 months between January 2018 and July 2019 that put a huge strain on a stretched squad.

Funds were finally released last summer but the Argentine was sacked just three months into the season after more than £100 million (\$129 million) was spent on Tanguy Ndombele, Ryan Sessegnon and Giovanni Lo Celso. Even as Mourinho has bemoaned his lack of resources, Ndombele and Sessegnon have rarely featured, with the French midfielder receiving stinging public criticism from his coach after Saturday's 1-1

"As a player you always want games to go ahead, but in this case the health and safety of the fans has to be put first as without you guys, we wouldn't have the beautiful game!" he tweeted, and wished Marinakis a "speedy recovery". Olympiakos players, staff and board members have all tested negative, the club said. Nottingham Forest also said none of their players had tested positive.

"The club took swift action to arrange tests for the entire first-team players, staff and officers that came into contact with the owner last week," the club added.

The Premier League called the move a "precautionary measure" and said there were no plans to postpone any other games. Arsenal's opponents on Saturday, relegation-threatened Brighton, said that game was still scheduled to go ahead "following consultation with the Premier League and medical advisors".

The postponement of the Manchester City v Arsenal game means Liverpool's hopes of winning their first Premier League title since 1990 without kicking a ball have been dashed. However, should City lose to Burnley on Saturday Jurgen Klopp's side can secure the title on Monday with the added spice of doing so by beating city rivals Everton. The Football Association, though, could reportedly take a financial hit.

The FA have no insurance covering public health epidemics or what are deemed "acts of God", the Daily Mail said. So if they are forced to cancel matches — which seems the likely scenario for the high-profile friendly with Italy on March 27 — or play them behind closed doors, it will cost them an estimated £3 million (\$3.9 million) a game. The semi-finals and final of Euro 2020 are due to be played at Wembley in July but the FA would not be liable were they cancelled as that would fall under UEFA's remit.

The spread of coronavirus has already had a dramatic impact on sport elsewhere in Europe. Serie A football and all other sports have been put on hold in Italy, while the top two divisions in Spain and France will be played in empty stadiums for at least the next two weeks. Champions



LEIPZIG: Leipzig's Austrian midfielder Konrad Laimer (3L) heads the ball during the UEFA Champions League round of 16 second leg football match between RB Leipzig and Tottenham Hotspur in Leipzig, eastern Germany. — AFP

draw at Burnley. Mourinho was keen to stress he does not foresee a summer overhaul in the transfer market.

"When we start (next season) we will have Sissoko, Kane, Son, Bergwijn and Ben Davies, so that is massive," he said. But if they do not have Champions League football to look forward to, holding onto some of those stars and starting the cycle all over again will

be a tougher task.

"Tottenham's current travails merely underline what a stunning job Pochettino did for those few magical seasons," added the Guardian.

That is little consolation for Spurs, who appear back where they started when Pochettino was appointed nearly six years ago. — AFP

## EPL postpones game as Arsenal players quarantined

LONDON: Arsenal's game at Manchester City yesterday has been postponed after players from the London club were put into quarantine, making it the first Premier League football fixture to be called off because of coronavirus. Arsenal said players and four staff had been isolated at their homes after coming into contact with the owner of Greek club Olympiakos, Vangelis Marinakis, who has since tested positive for COVID-19.

"We are strictly following the government guidelines which recommend that anyone coming into close contact with someone with the virus should self-isolate at home for 14 days from the last time they had contact," an Arsenal statement said.

"As a result, the players are unavailable for tonight's (Wednesday's) match against Manchester City and the Premier League has decided the game should be postponed." The first postponement in the Premier League, which has a global following, follows widespread disruption to football and other sports across the world.

Arsenal were knocked out of the Europa League by Olympiakos on February 27. Marinakis, owner of the Greek club and English side Nottingham Forest, announced on Tuesday that he had tested positive for the coronavirus. But Arsenal said the players and staff, who met Marinakis after the game at the Emirates Stadium, will return to work on Friday ahead of Saturday's trip to Brighton. Manchester City's England full-back Kyle Walker said it was the sensible decision to postpone the game at City's Etihad Stadium.

## Four-goal Ilicic lifts stricken Bergamo

MILAN: Josip Ilicic scored four times in a 4-3 win over Valencia to power the Champions League newcomers into the quarter-finals for a welcome boost back home in Bergamo, at the centre of Italy's escalating coronavirus drama. "We are very happy to have represented a region that in this period suffers so much," said coach Gianpiero Gaspari the team from the foothills of the Italian Alps became the first debutants to reach the last eight of the elite European competition.

"We will all celebrate together in June," Gasperini promised the housebound fans. "Everyone united, we will beat this virus."

Going through 8-4 on aggregate Atalanta players held up a t-shirt to the TV camera after the game in an empty Mestalla Stadium, urging: "Bergamo, it's for you. Don't give up!" The Lombardy region in northern Italy has been hardest-hit by coronavirus epidemic which has killed 631 people in the country, where over 10,000 have been infected. Over 40,000 Atalanta fans — one in three of Bergamo residents — had travelled to the San Siro to see the team win the first leg 4-1 on February 19 before the virus swept through Italy.

But they were forced to watch on the TV on Tuesday night, with fans heeding the club's appeal not to gather at the airport, or in downtown Bergamo.

Fans opted to forego their reimbursements for the game in Spain, asking that the money, estimated at 60,000 euros (\$68,000), be donated to a local hospital. The party, however, went ahead on social networks, with fans cheering behind closed doors with the team's colours flying from windows. "It was the only thing we could do, win and give a smile in such a difficult moment for Italy and for my city," wrote defender Mattia Caldara on Instagram.

"We are in the quarter-finals of the Champions League, congratulations to all." "Thanks you, Dea (Goddess),"



VALENCIA: This handout photograph released by the UEFA shows Josip Atalanta's Slovenian midfielder Josip Ilicic celebrating after scoring a goal during the UEFA Champions League round of 16 second leg match between Valencia CF and Atalanta at Estadio Mestalla in Valencia. — AFP

wrote daily Gazzetta Dello Sports, using the club's nickname. "Historic joy for Bergamo in the darkest hours."

It was stunning individual display by Ilicic, nicknamed 'granny', who has had the best season of his career aged 32 years, after a decade in Serie A since his arrival in 2010 in Palermo, joining Atalanta in 2017 from Fiorentina.

"The older I get, the better I play it's true," said the Slovenian international who overtakes Zlatan Ibrahimovic as the oldest player to score a Champions League hat-trick away.

Ilicic has scored 21 goals in 29 appearances in all competitions this season. And having also scored in the first leg he joins Ballon D'Or winners Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo as the only players to score five or more goals

League and Europa League games have been forced behind closed doors as the epidemic spreads. However, Liverpool's last 16 second leg match against Atletico Madrid at Anfield yesterday will be played with a crowd. But when Olympiakos host Wolves in Athens in the Europa League today, it will be in an empty stadium in common with many other last-16 games in that competition. Wolves manager Nuno Espirito Santo has joined a number of managers in voicing disquiet at being asked to play without fans. "If we have to go we will. But we don't agree — we're not happy to go," he told Sky Sports. "Behind closed doors doesn't make sense," he added. "We're pretending to live a normal life when things aren't normal." —AFP

Live		Matches on TV	
		(Local Timings)	
UEFA Europa League			
Istanbul Basaksehir v FC Copenhagen	20:55		
beIN Sports			
Sevilla FC v AS Roma	20:55		
beIN Sports HD 3			
LASK Linz v Manchester United	20:55		
beIN Sports			
Eintracht Frankfurt v FC Basel 1893	20:55		
beIN Sports			
Olympiacos CF v Wolverhampton Wanderers FC	23:00		
beIN Sports			
Glasgow Rangers FC v Bayer 04 Leverkusen	23:00		
beIN Sports HD 3			
VfL Wolfsburg v Shakhtar Donetsk	23:00		
beIN Sports			
Internazionale Milano v Getafe CF	23:00		
beIN Sports HD 1			

over two legs of a Champions League knockout tie.

"Already after the match in Milan I said that Atalanta is no longer a surprise," said Ilicic. "We want to continue like this. Our goal is to show that we deserve where we are now." The team's stunning run comes despite losing their opening three Champions League group games, including 4-0 away to Dinamo Zagreb before a 5-1 loss at Manchester City.

But a 1-1 draw against Man City in the San Siro sparked the revival who finished seven points behind the Premier League side in second to reach the knockout stage. Fourth in Serie A Atalanta will now have to wait before returning to the pitch with all sport in Italy suspended until April 3 in an attempt to halt the spread of the virus. —AFP

## Virus wreak havoc as Man United go behind closed doors

PARIS: Manchester United's Europa League last 16, first leg away to LASK Linz in Austria is one of five matches in the competition set to be played behind closed doors today as the coronavirus continues to wreak havoc with football on the continent.

United confirmed on Tuesday that the decision had been made "following guidance from the Austrian government", with the Alpine country having recorded 182 cases of COVID-19 by Tuesday.

The news will be a disappointment to supporters of the Austrian club hoping to see their team spring a surprise against Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's in-form side. United's 2-0 derby win over Manchester City on Sunday saw them extend their current unbeaten run to 10 games, with eight clean sheets in that time. They are now hoping to seize the initiative in this tie before a weekend trip to Tottenham Hotspur.

Coached by the French former Bayern Munich and Crystal Palace defender Valerien Ismael, LASK are six points ahead of Salzburg at the top of the Austrian Bundesliga as they chase a first league title since 1965.

They lost to Club Brugge in Champions League qualifying this season. The Belgians then lost to Solskjaer's side in the last round of the Europa League.

UEFA confirmed on Monday that Wolverhampton Wanderers' first leg against Olympiakos in Greece would also be played behind closed doors. That preceded the announcement that Olympiakos owner Vangelis Marinakis — also the owner of English club Nottingham Forest — had tested positive for coronavirus. He said he was taking "all necessary measures" and "feeling well".

"We share the disappointment of all of our supporters who will be affected by this decision," Wolves said. Olympiakos top the Greek league and are hoping to claim a second Premier League scalp after eliminating Arsenal in the previous round. They also held Tottenham at home in the Champions League group stage this season.

With Italy the worst-hit European country by the ongoing crisis, Inter Milan's home game against Getafe will be played out in an empty stadium, while no fans will be allowed into Sevilla's match against Roma in Spain.

In addition, German club Wolfsburg have confirmed their clash with Ukraine's Shakhtar Donetsk will be behind closed doors. However, fellow Bundesliga side Eintracht Frankfurt are set to play FC Basel in front of a crowd while uncertainty surrounds the return leg in Switzerland next week. Basel have said the game will not go ahead in the country, where all football in the top two domestic leagues has already been postponed for the rest of the month.

Fans are also expected to fill Ibrox, where Rangers entertain Bayer Leverkusen hoping to pull off a shock result against opponents on a nine-game unbeaten run and sitting fourth in the Bundesliga. —AFP

**25** Shiffrin confirms return to World Cup skiing

**26** Australia cricket star Beth Mooney signs up for Hundred

**27** Spurs forced back to drawing board after CL collapse



## Nets halt Lakers' win streak



LOS ANGELES: LeBron James #23 of the Los Angeles Lakers shoots the ball against the Brooklyn Nets at STAPLES Center in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

LOS ANGELES: Spencer Dinwiddie scored 23 points and hit the go-ahead basket, and Caris LeVert added 22 points as the Brooklyn Nets surprised the host Los Angeles Lakers 104-102 on Tuesday night. Timothe Luwawu-Cabarrot had 13 points, Joe Harris finished with 12 and Chris Chiozza added 11 for the Nets, who have won four of their past five. Dinwiddie's jumper with 28.8 seconds left was the difference. LeBron James had 29 points, 12 rebounds and nine assists for the Lakers, who had their four-game winning streak snapped. Anthony Davis scored 26 points and grabbed eight rebounds but missed a game-winning 3-point attempt at the buzzer.

**WASHINGTON WIZARDS 122 - NEW YORK KNICKS 115**  
Bradley Beal scored 27 of his 40 points in the second half as host Washington blew an early 14-point lead and then stormed back from an 18-point deficit to record a victory over New York. After his streak of 21 consecutive games scoring at least 25 points ended Sunday, Beal scored 20 points in the third quarter as the Wizards outscored the Knicks 33-17. He scored 16 of Washington's final 23 points in the period and tied the game 87-87 heading into the fourth by hitting a 3-pointer with 37.5 seconds left. Frank Ntilikina posted his second career double-double with a career-high 20 points and 10 assists as the Knicks lost for the ninth time in 12 games. Bobby Portis also scored 20 points, with 16 of those coming in the first half when the Knicks built a 70-54 lead.

**BOSTON CELTICS 114 - INDIANA PACERS 111**  
Jayson Tatum scored 30 points, Gordon Hayward recorded 27 points and 10 rebounds, and Boston recovered after giving up a late lead to beat Indiana in Indianapolis. The Pacers' Victor Oladipo finished with 27 points and seven rebounds, and T.J. Warren added 27 points. Daniel Theis scored 20 points for the Celtics and Kemba Walker added 11, giving all five Boston starters double figures in scoring.

**HOUSTON ROCKETS 117 - MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES 111**  
James Harden scored a game-high 37 points and Russell Westbrook added 27 while keying a decisive stretch late in the third quarter as Houston beat visiting Minnesota. The Rockets snapped a four-game losing skid. Harden and Westbrook combined to shoot 22 of 36, with Harden connecting on half of his 10 3-point

attempts. Both recorded seven assists, with Harden feeding Eric Gordon (16 points) for a pair of decisive 3-pointers in the fourth quarter. D'Angelo Russell paced the Timberwolves with 28 points and five assists while Juancho Hernangomez posted 18 points and 10 rebounds. Rookie Jarrett Culver scored 12 points off the bench for Minnesota, which fell for the fifth time in seven games.

**PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS 121 - PHOENIX SUNS 105**  
Damian Lillard registered 25 points and seven assists to help Portland notch a victory over visiting Phoenix. Trevor Ariza registered season highs of 22 points and five 3-pointers as Portland won for just the fourth time in the past 12 games. CJ McCollum also scored 22 points, and Hassan Whiteside had 16 points and 14 rebounds. Devin Booker recorded 29 points and nine assists for the Suns, Dario Saric contributed 24 points and 11 rebounds while Ricky Rubio had 21 points and nine assists.

### Wizards outscored the Knicks



**LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS 131 - GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS 107**  
Kawhi Leonard scored a game-high-tying 23 points in 25 minutes, helping visiting Los Angeles beat Golden State in San Francisco. The win was the Clippers' seventh in their past eight games, the only loss in the run a 112-103 setback against the rival Los Angeles Lakers on Sunday. Reggie Jackson scored 16 points while Paul George and Patrick Beverley had 14 apiece. Dragan Bender matched Leonard's total with 23 points for the Warriors, who snapped a 10-game home losing streak in their previous game, a 118-114 win over Philadelphia on Saturday. Stephen Curry (flu) sat out his second game in a row.

**CHICAGO BULLS 108 - CLEVELAND CAVALIERS 103**  
Rookie Coby White scored a team-high 20 points in his first career start, and Chicago held on for a win over visiting Cleveland. Wendell Carter Jr. added 17 points on 7-of-9 shooting for the Bulls, who snapped a three-game losing streak. Lauri Markkanen, Otto Porter Jr. and Denzel Valentine finished with 15 points apiece. Collin Sexton scored a game-high 26 points on 12-of-16 shooting for the Cavaliers, whose two-game winning streak ended. Andre Drummond had 21 points and Larry Nance Jr. scored 16, but it was not enough as the Cavaliers fell short several hours after head coach J.B. Bickerstaff signed a multiyear extension.

### SAN ANTONIO SPURS 119 - DALLAS MAVERICKS 109

LaMarcus Aldridge poured in 24 points, nine of them in a pivotal late-game stretch, as San Antonio rallied to beat visiting Dallas and snap a two-game losing streak. Marco Belinelli scored 16 points for the Spurs, with Rudy Gay hitting for 17, Trey Lyles and Derrick White adding 14 points each. DeMar DeRozan scored 13 points and dished out 12 assists, and Patty Mills tallied 12 in the win. Luka Doncic had another brilliant game, scoring 38 points. Tim Hardaway Jr. added 20 points, Dorian Finney-Smith hit for 15 and Maxi Kleber had 12 points for the Mavericks. Porzingis led Dallas, which took its second straight loss, with 12 rebounds.

### ORLANDO MAGIC 120 - MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES 115

Terrence Ross highlighted his 24-point performance with five 3-pointers to lift visiting Orlando over Memphis. Michael Carter-Williams scored 20 points to eclipse his previous season-best total of 17, set during Orlando's win over Minnesota on Friday. Nikola Vucevic recorded 19 points and 11 rebounds for the Magic, who overcame a 17-point deficit to post their third win in a row overall and seventh in their past nine games against Memphis. Jonas Valanciunas led the Grizzlies with 27 points and 16 rebounds while Ja Morant and Dillon Brooks had 21 points apiece. — Reuters

## Paraguayan judge orders Ronaldinho to remain in prison

**ASUNCION:** Brazilian football great Ronaldinho will remain in pre-trial detention in Paraguay after being refused bail or house arrest on accusations of entering the country with a fake passport. A court rejected a request for conditional release for the 39-year-old World Cup winner and his brother, who were spending a fifth day in a police cell in Asuncion, said prosecutor Osmar Legal. Judge Gustavo Amarilla cited the seriousness of the case and the discovery of new evidence, as well as the involvement of public officials and entrepreneurs who helped Ronaldinho get into Paraguay. Amarilla acknowledged the harshness of the measures taken against the brothers but said it was his responsibility to ensure they did not flee the country.

"There are many procedures that need to be done with the presence of both of them," the judge said. Legal said he opposed house arrest because the property offered as a guarantee was only valued at \$750,000 to \$800,000. "It's a tiny amount given the economic solvency of one of the (accused)," he said. The brothers arrived in Asuncion from Brazil on Wednesday and showed their passports to immigration police, who did not immediately notice any problem.

Hours later, when the passports were determined to be fake, investigators raided the football star's hotel room and seized the brothers' identity cards and travel documents.

### 'NO CRIME'

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 Brazilian businessman has also been arrested in connection with the fake travel documents, while two Paraguayan women have been placed under house arrest and the country's migration director has resigned.

Ronaldinho's Brazilian lawyer Sergio Queiroz has said the brothers were carrying Brazilian documents and were given the Paraguayan passports "to facilitate the possibility of doing business" in Paraguay. "Ronaldinho did not commit a crime because he did not know that the passport they gave him was faked," he said.

However, the body overseeing the creation of companies in Paraguay told AFP there was no regulation preventing Brazilians from applying for a business permit. The administrator of the charity that invited Ronaldinho, Dalia Lopez, has admitted requesting the passports but said she didn't know they were forged. A warrant has been issued for her arrest.

### MONEY LAUNDERING

Amarilla said the investigation is looking into possible criminal association and money laundering. He said the brothers' phones needed to be examined, in order to "know the true intention for their presence" in Paraguay. Ronaldinho, considered one of the greatest footballers of all time, was a star of Brazil's 2002 World Cup win and played for European giants Barcelona, Paris Saint-Germain and AC Milan, among others.

There had been rumors he needed to use the Paraguayan document because his real passport had been seized by Brazilian authorities in late 2018 after he failed to pay a \$2.5 million fine for building a pier in a protected lake. But it was returned to him a year later following an agreement with the public prosecutor in Rio Grande do Sul state. As both countries are part of the MERCOSUR trade bloc, travelers between Brazil and Paraguay need only carry an identity document rather than a passport. —AFP