

Govt mulls locking down expat-dominated areas

11 new coronavirus cases in Kuwait, including 8 Indians

Private schools continue e-learning despite directive

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Cabinet's decision to suspend all public and private schools until the fall is not being fully applied in many private schools. Teachers continue teaching online and students are supposed to attend online classes and complete assigned work. Parents are left confused and uncertain. Will children in private schools graduate in June and start a new year in the fall? Will all the work being done now via e-learning be repeated? Will parents still be required to pay tuition for the spring semester and again in the fall?

The Cabinet directive made it clear that the academic year will be suspended and continue in August/October, so why e-learning is keeping on when students will relearn it all in August/October? There are many outstanding questions and no answers from the ministry of education or the private education department within the ministry.

Continued on Page 16

- Kuwaiti banks offer 6-month loan repayment relief (Page 3)
- Oil prices at 17-yr lows as virus ravages world (Page 9)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Authorities are seriously considering the possibility of imposing a lockdown on a number of residential areas dominated by expatriates amid a rise in the number of expatriate coronavirus cases and calls by MPs to isolate those areas, lawmakers said yesterday. Although the number of expats infected with COVID-19 remains a small portion of the cases announced, it has been on the rise for the past few days and the source of infection of a number of them is still under investigation, according to the health ministry.

MP Mohammad Al-Dallal said yesterday all options like a total curfew or lockdown of a number of residential areas are on the table of the Cabinet for a decision. Expanding restrictions has become a necessity, Dallal said, because of practices by some that clearly undermine the effectiveness of the partial curfew in place for the past several days. He said the focus is on

heavily populated expat areas like Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Shuwaikh Industrial Area, over fears they could become centers of spreading the deadly disease. The lawmaker said he will not blame the government for expanding its measures aimed at containing the spread of the virus.

Meanwhile, parliamentary sources said that a mini-Cabinet meeting was held late Sunday that studied recommendations calling to intensify measures to implement the partial curfew and make people stay at home and not venture out unless for extreme necessity. The recommendations called for searching for alternatives to force people to stay at home most of the time.

A number of MPs called for imposing a lockdown on several expat residential areas to prevent the spread of coronavirus. MP Safa Al-Hashem called for a lockdown on Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Shuwaikh Industrial Area, Mahboula and Khaitan, where at least

Continued on Page 16

MoI details amnesty procedures

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The interior ministry's PR and security media department announced that Deputy PM and Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh has issued an amnesty decision allowing residency violators to leave the country without paying any fines or airfare with a chance to return to Kuwait later. The ministry added that this amnesty was issued in view of the circumstances the country is currently going through and as part of the precautionary measures taken to fight COVID-19, especially since fines had been accumulating against violators.

The decision explained that individuals desiring to procure valid residencies in Kuwait and are willing to pay the fines without being subjected to investigations will be allowed to pay the fines and legalize their status if they meet the required conditions. The decision explained that this exemption includes Kuwaiti citizens' spouses,

parents and children, widowed or divorced women who were married to Kuwaiti citizens with custody of children and domestic helpers who have been in Kuwait since March 1, 2020.

In addition, the decision explained that special sites have been allocated to accommodate violators who finalize their papers pending departure, and these sites will be provided with all living comforts and free means of sustenance. The decision notes that violators desiring to leave during the amnesty will be received in special centers in Farwaniya to file and register their applications in the period of April 1 to 30 as follows:

- Male violators will be received at Al-Muthanna primary school for boys, Farwaniya, block 1, street 122
- Female violators will be received at Farwaniya primary school for girls in Farwaniya, block 1, street 76.

• Violators will be received from 8 am till 2 pm according to the following dates and nationalities:

Philippines	April 1-5, 2020
Egypt	April 6-10, 2020
India	April 11-15, 2020
Bangladesh	April 16-20, 2020
Sri Lanka	April 21-25, 2020
Other nationalities	April 26-30, 2020

V O L V O

STAY SAFE STAY HOME



Local

Kuwait reports 11 new cases, five recoveries from COVID-19

Thirteen in intensive care; three in critical condition

Updates on COVID 19

Monday 30/03/2020



Two cases related to travel:

Two cases, one case Kuwaiti national related to travel to United Kingdom and one case of resident related to travel to K.S.A.

8 cases who were in contact with confirmed cases:

One case of Kuwaiti national in contact with confirmed case travelled to Switzerland and France and Seven cases of Indian residents in contact with confirmed case.

One case under investigation:

One Indian resident under investigation

KUWAIT MOH
www.moh.gov.kw

وزارة الصحة
Ministry of Health

مكتب الإعلام الصحي
Health Media Office

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Health announced yesterday that 11 people were infected by the novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, in the last 24 hours. This brings the country's tally of confirmed virus cases up to 266, the ministry's spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said in a daily news briefing. Earlier yesterday, Kuwaiti Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah announced the recovery of five additional people from the novel coronavirus, raising the country's total recoveries to 72. The fresh recoveries include three Kuwaiti women and two female residents, the minister said, adding that necessary lab tests and analyses had shown

the recovery of the five new infections with COVID-19. The already-treated patients will be admitted to a rehabilitation ward before discharging them from hospital within a couple of days' time, the minister added. In addition, 194 virus patients are still receiving necessary treatment, while 13 others are in intensive care units; including three in a critical condition. The spokesman, once again, urged citizens and residents alike to follow the guidelines and instructions of Kuwait health authorities and World Health Organization, primarily maintaining social distancing and home quarantine in order to curb the spread of the virus. — KUNA

Firemen begin home delivery of medicine

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) said it began Sunday nationwide home deliveries of medicines for patients with chronic diseases, a move conducted in cooperation with Ministry of Health amidst spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The objective of home deliveries is preserving safety and wellbeing of patients, KFSD said in a statement, and to lessen crowds in hospitals thus guaranteeing distancing. The MoH announced yesterday launch of home delivery of medicines through KFSD vehicles. — KUNA



Good vs evil

Curfew Diaries



By Jamie Etheridge

etheridge@kuwaittimes.com

Kuwait's banks have announced that all clients - citizens and expats - would have their installment and credit card payments deferred for six months with no interest, fines or penalties. The announcement sent shockwaves through the expatriate community, many of whom have recently lost their jobs, had their salaries cut or otherwise lost the income that provides for themselves and their families.

Unfortunately, almost immediately, criminals saw the announcement as a potential opportunity to exploit and started calling and sending messages randomly to people asking for banking details, including their PIN codes and other information. Thankfully, the Kuwait Banking Association sent an urgent warning to all clients reminding them that banks will never call clients and ask for such information.

The generosity and communal spirit of Kuwait - especially in times of crisis and hardship - is remarkable. Already people and organizations across the country have volunteered or are engaged with charities to help those in financial difficulties. I've personally seen neighbors offer other neighbors without cars rides to the co-op or pharmacy to help them get groceries and needed medicines.

At the same time, we've seen profiteers hiking prices of basic commodities like onions in order to take advantage of temporary shortages and exploit the circumstances.

I like to think that on balance, the good will win out. That profiteers and criminals may exist and try to exploit the situation, but that enough good people will come together to help those in need, and that it is the working together, the selfless contribution of the many over the selfish exploits of the few that will define this pandemic and our future survival.

Mr Rogers, the famous American children's TV show host, said that during bad times, always look for the helpers. I used to think he meant only the doctors and firemen, the police officers and paramedics, the frontline heroes fighting this pandemic daily. We should look to the helpers - they are role models and worthy of our thanks.

We can also look to ourselves and each other because we are also all capable of helping someone, of doing something positive and uplifting. We can overcome the 'evildoers' by valuing and emulating the good we see in our community, by doing good deeds ourselves.

Youth Authority places resources under 'health' disposal

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Youth (PAY) is placing its resources and capabilities under the disposal of health authorities to help them contain spread of coronavirus, Minister of Information Mohammad Al-Jabri said Sunday. PAY set up a call center to facilitate the mission of the volunteering committee which consists of government and non-government agencies, Jabri, also Minister of State for Youth, said in a statement after chairing a board meeting of PAY. He said the call center classified the volunteers according to their specialties and ages be-



KUWAIT: Minister of Information Mohammad Al-Jabri speaks during a Public Authority for Youth meeting. — KUNA

fore distributing them on appropriate places. PAY, said Jabri, was carrying out awareness campaigns on its social media platforms to urge the public to abide by the regulations of health authorities. PAY Director

General Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi called on importance of compliance with all preventive measures of the government and health ministry to guarantee safety of volunteers. — KUNA

Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has so far recorded 266 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). With the exception of thirteen cases in intensive care including three in critical condition, all cases are in stable condition and are recovering in quarantined locations designated by the government for this purpose, while 910 have been discharged from quarantine after exhibiting no symptoms during their 14-day quarantine period, the Ministry of Health confirmed. Meanwhile, 72 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, the ministry said. There are 194 people receiving treatment as of yesterday, and 1,231 quarantined as of yesterday. Kuwait is taking measures to test Kuwaitis coming from infected areas for potential infection, as it has already tested thousands of people. Meanwhile, Kuwait requires all expatriates who arrived from travel on March 1 and beyond to visit Kuwait International Fairground where the Ministry of Health has set up a center at Hall 6 to test people for possible infection.

Curfew

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

Operating businesses

The following activities are allowed to operate outside of the curfew period between 5:00 am and 4:00 pm:

- 1- Various types of foodstuff and supplies stores and markets.
- 2- Laundromats.
- 3- Various type of repair shops.

- 4- Automobile repair, maintenance and spare parts.
- 5- Money exchangers.
- 6- Pharmacies.
- 7- Various types of restaurants.
- 8- Optical shops.
- 9- Administrative offices.
- 10- Cooking gas branches.
- 11- Co-ops' family needs branches.
- 12- Feed shops.

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

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

Precautions

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

State departments have been on high alert to take precautions against the potential spread of the virus. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has taken measures to make sure that facial masks, hand sanitizers and other goods remain accessible to the public. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education has suspended classes for March at all public and private schools (for both students and teaching staffs): first from March 1 to March 12, and later extended it until March 29, before eventually suspending schools until August for grade 12 and October for other stages. Kuwait suspended issuing entry permits and visas unless those issued through diplomatic missions.

Hotlines

The Ministry of Health has set the following hotlines to receive inquiries about the coronavirus 24/7: 24970967 - 96049698 - 99048619.

The Education Ministry set the following hotlines to receive inquiries on school closures related to the anti-coronavirus measures:

- 24970967 (24/7 hotline)
- 51575591 (Capital Educational Zone)
- 51576117 (Hawally Educational Zone)
- 51576576 (Farwaniya Educational Zone)
- 51577055 (Jahra Educational Zone)
- 51577655 (Ahmadi Educational Zone)
- 51577951 (Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Zone)
- 51578171 (Religious Studies Department)
- 51588599 (Private Education Department)
- 51592515 (Services Department)
- 51594544 (Public Relations Department)

Medicine delivery

Kuwait's Ministry of Health (MOH) launched a new medicine delivery service for people in Kuwait, which they can use to order medications to be delivered during curfew hours. The medications will be delivered within 72 hours after the order is submitted. To place an order, patients should send a WhatsApp to the numbers for the hospitals and medical centers as listed below. The patient should include their name, Civil ID number, hospital or clinic file number, mobile phone number and the medicine needed to the following numbers:

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

Local

First phase of Kuwaitis' repatriation from COVID-19-hit countries concludes

Amir followed up repatriation on daily basis: FM



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah. — KUNA photo



KUWAIT: Health ministry workers, wearing protective outfits, wait on the tarmac of the Kuwait international Airport to receive Kuwaitis returning from Frankfurt on March 26, 2020, to be taken to a hospital for novel coronavirus checkups. — AFP photo

KUWAIT: A plane carrying Kuwaiti citizens from London arrived in Kuwait International Airport Sunday, the last aircraft of the first phase of a plan to repatriate nationals from countries hit by the coronavirus (COVID-19). The repatriation is part of an operation conducted jointly by the foreign, health and interior ministries, custom and fire departments and in coordination with Kuwait Airways, Directorate General for Civil Aviation said on its Twitter account. Three planes - two from Tehran and one from Paris - returned home earlier Sunday. Two planes returned Saturday; one from New York and another from London. Three aircrafts from Spain,

Britain and Italy repatriated citizens on Friday; a day after nationals were brought back from Frankfurt, London and Abu Dhabi. The first repatriation day started last Wednesday when Kuwait Airways operated flights from Lebanon, Egypt and Bahrain. The first phase of the repatriation plan, which meets criteria of the health authorities and the World Health Organization (WHO), ended Sunday.

Daily follow up

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah said that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah followed up the repatriation of Kuwaiti citizens on a daily basis. He made the remarks after a meeting with parliament speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and more than 20 MPs at the speaker's office, to discuss latest developments related to coron-

avirus. "I conveyed to the speaker and members of parliament that His Highness the Amir was closely and daily following up the conditions of our sons abroad, as well as follow up of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah," Sheikh Ahmad said in a statement. He said they discussed conditions of Kuwaiti citizens and the repatriation process, as well as explaining the short and medium-term repatriation plans. Sheikh Dr Ahmad commended the "national and responsible" role of the speaker and members of parliament in supporting the government's measures to confront spread of coronavirus as well as ensuring safety of the citizens. — KUNA

In line with WHO criteria



...ce, to discuss latest developments related to coron-

\$30 million raised to back efforts against COVID-19

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Social Affairs said that a campaign launched by 41 Kuwaiti charities has raised a total of KD 9.169 million (about \$30 million) in one day with a view to supporting the government efforts and help people who were affected by the novel coronavirus outbreak. In a press statement on Sunday, Assistant Undersecretary for Social Development Hanaa Al-Hajri said the campaign was conducted under the supervision of the ministry and through a digital link it had created for this purpose. She estimated the number of peoples who contributed to the campaign, which lasted only one day, at 198,227.

Hajri indicated that the campaign was launched by the ministry to allow charities to contribute to the government efforts to combat the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The diversity of the participating charities has given an opportunity to all segments of the society to donate for the campaign aiming to help in the logistical support to health centers and quarantine facilities as well as to support those affected outbreak ramifications especially low-income people and workers. Separately, the ministry denied news about allocating a specific online link to coronavirus outbreak affected people to register for aid.

Banks offer 6-month loan repayment relief



KUWAIT: Major banks in Kuwait announced that they are postponing repayment of loan and credit card installments for six months of all clients due to the current circumstances in Kuwait in light of the exceptional government procedures to curb the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). Interest and fees accrued during this period will also be waived, a number of banks including Gulf Bank, the National Bank of Kuwait, Kuwait Finance House, Warba Bank and others said in statements posted on their social media accounts.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Banks Association (KBA) urged all bank clients to ignore calls or text messages asking them to reveal any information or data related to their personal bank accounts, such as the account number, pin code, OTP, etc. This comes after many clients reportedly received scam calls from people asking them for their personal information to allegedly process transactions for postponement of installment payments. Banks have not made any such calls or sent similar messages to clients, nor do they plan to do so, KBA said in a statement.

Barcodes replace ID cards for curfew waiving

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry announced Sunday that tomorrow will be last day for accepting the recently issued cards for moving during curfew time for eligible people, a move aimed at preventing misuse. Instead, the ministry will use a digital barcode system to grant waivers to those meeting the conditions, it clarified in a press statement. It stated that a barcode will be sent to mobile phones of the eligible people to use during the

curfew time as of Thursday. The ministry said the move aims to stop rigging and misuse of the permits. On March 21, the Kuwaiti government imposed an indefinite curfew from 5:00 pm until 4:00 am as part of the efforts to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus (Covid-19). It has also warned that anyone caught breaching the curfew will be jailed for up to three years and fined KD 10,000 in pursuant to Civil Defense Law. — KUNA

Ready for the Beach ??

Kuwait Times
Established 1961

Subscribe or renew your subscription
& get K.D 50

1 Coupon FREE

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

Local

Volunteers organize co-op shoppers' entrance



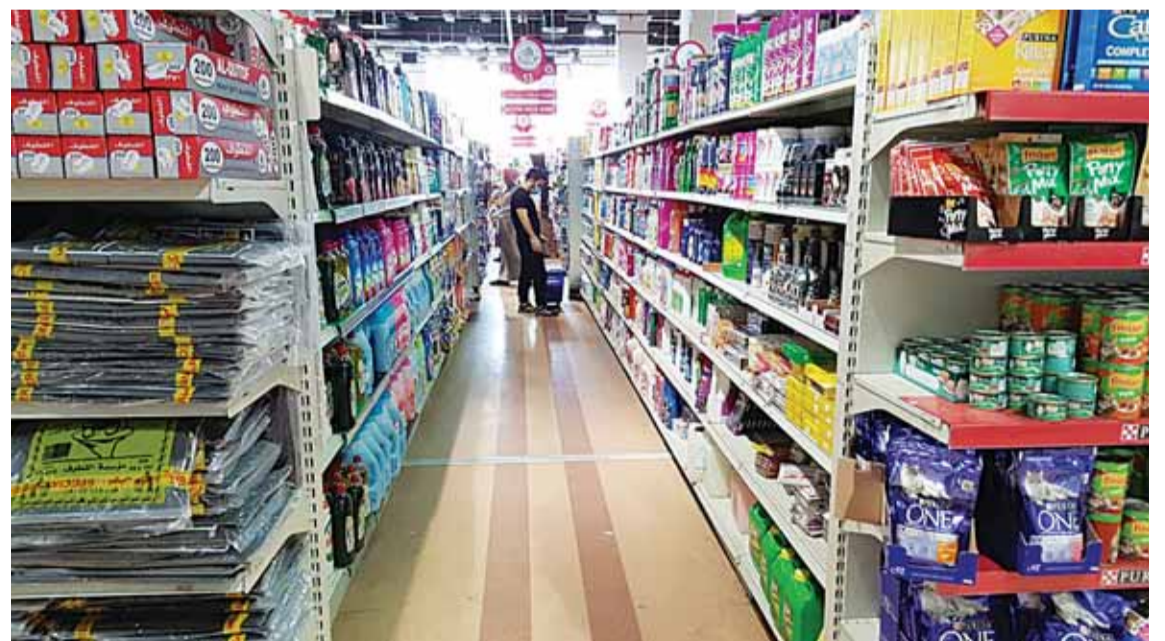
KUWAIT: Volunteers helped organize the process of customers' entry to a Salmiya Co-operative Society branch yesterday, which largely helped limit crowding. Kuwait announced that clients are only allowed to shop in co-op society branches located in their respective areas of residence. Shoppers are asked to show their Civil IDs before entering co-ops for address verification. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

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



Local

Amiri Hospital unit to host suspected COVID-19 cases

Patient transferred to specialized hospital once tested positive

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Capital health zone director Dr Afrah Al-Sarraf announced allocating the gastrointestinal unit building at Amiri Hospital for cases suspected to be infected by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Speaking on sidelines of touring the building used for suspected COVID-19 cases, Sarraf said the building includes 80 beds including 30 for recovery and 10 for in-

tensive care, adding that the building had been provided with all the needed medical, nursing, technical and administrative staff.

Amiri Hospital Manager Dr Ali Al-Alandah said a special service has been provided to categorize hospitalized cases and transfer those suspected to be infected with COVID-19 to the specified building. Alandah added that in case of suspecting a case to be infected with COVID-19, all internationally-approved

protocols are applied, and once the infection is confirmed, the case is transferred to the specialized hospital.

Court hearings

The criminal court set a special hearing to be held on Thursday to review four state security cases, including one filed against an Egyptian who had posted a video slandering Kuwaiti people. The second is filed against a Kuwaiti who slandered HH the Amir, the third

against a Kuwaiti accused of circulating fake news about digging 50 isolated graves for COVID-19 victims and the fourth filed against a Kuwaiti who had accused Egypt of deliberately transferring the virus to Kuwait by sending thousands of Egyptians to Kuwait without subjecting them to medical tests.

Meanwhile, the court of appeal acquitted defendants involved in a state security case filed against a blogger known as 'Ateej Al-Mesayyan', and fined

them by KD 5,000 each for operating unlicensed news accounts. The case goes back to arresting a bedoon - the main suspect - for slandering Kuwait in relation to its handling of the bedoon issue, slandering officials in the central apparatuses for illegal residents and calling to assault the apparatus' chairman Saleh Al-Fadhlah. Notably, the blogger was in contact with other accounts outside the country dedicated to slandering Kuwait.

Motorist dead in King Fahd Road crash



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A woman in her 30s was killed in a hor-

rific accident on King Fahd Road on Sunday, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) said. The accident involved three vehicles and a truck near Adan Hospi-

tal. Mangaf and Technical Rescue teams responded and handed the body to paramedics. An investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the accident.

Two warehouses closed in Hawally

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality said Hawally inspectors toured various shops in the governorate to make sure its decisions made in view of the precautionary measures ordered by the Cabinet to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are fully in practice. Hawally emergency team leader Ibrahim Al-Saban said the tour resulted in closing two unlicensed building basements used to store shoes, accessories and cosmetics.

Separately, the ministry of social affairs strongly denied any connections to a social media campaign launched under the title "Kuwaitis without Salaries." The ministry refuted allegations that it had called on people affected by the coronavirus outbreak to register through a certain link, noting that it has nothing to do with such calls. The ministry urged citizens to refer to official news sources and ignore fake reports circulated to create chaos. "Such news is usually announced by reliable government sources," the ministry underlined.

Firemen battle Farwaniya building blaze

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

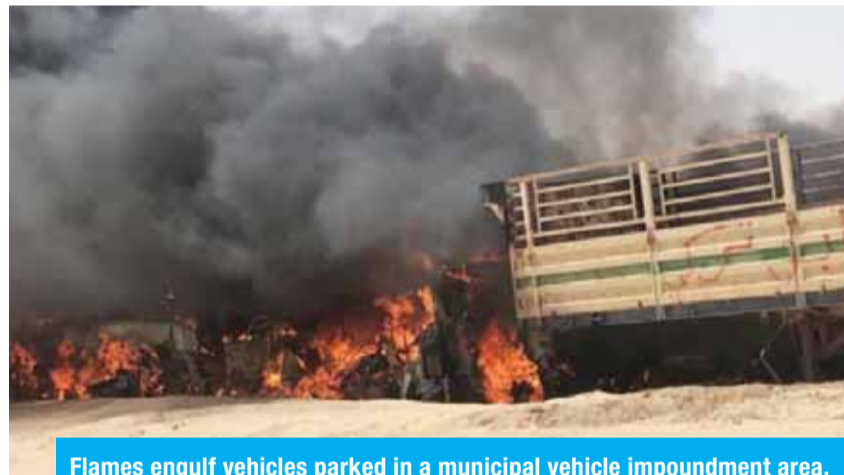
KUWAIT: Firemen from the Farwaniya and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh fire stations responded to a fire in a fifth-floor flat in a Farwaniya building. The fire spread to a sixth-floor flat. The building was evacuated and the fire put out before spreading further. No injuries were reported. Separately, Shaqaya fire station men put out a blaze that engulfed 15 vehicles parked in a municipal vehicle impoundment area. No injuries were reported.

Curfew violators

The Interior Ministry said 14 people were arrested for breaking the partial curfew on Sunday. The cases include one in the Capital governorate, five in Hawally, four in Jahra, three in Mubarak Al-Kabeer and one in Al-Ahmadi. Among the detainees are 11 Kuwaitis and three expats.

Child abuse

Police arrested a woman for child abuse after she was seen assaulting her child physically and verbally in a video that went viral on social media, the Interior Ministry announced Sunday. The arrest happened at the suspect's house where police headed with a warrant in hand after detectives identified her. She was taken to the police station where a misdemeanor case and investigation was opened. Meanwhile, her children were taken to the health ministry's child protection office for medical checkups, the Interior Ministry said.



Flames engulf vehicles parked in a municipal vehicle impoundment area.



A fireman extinguishes flames in cars parked in a municipal vehicle impoundment area.



KUWAIT: Fire engines seen outside a Farwaniya building where a fire was reported.



Firemen extinguishes flames in vehicles parked in a municipal vehicle impoundment area.



A fire engine parked outside a Farwaniya building where a fire was reported.



Heavy damage left by a fire inside the Farwaniya building flat.

Kuwait-based fund approves Jordan grant

AMMAN: Kuwait-based Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) approved a \$3.2 million grant to help Jordan cover huge expenses of fighting spread of coronavirus, the Jordanian government said Sunday. The Jordanian government has been holding video-conference meetings with donor countries to seek urgent funding to forestall spread of the virus in health, educational and transport sectors, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Wessam Rabadhi said in a statement. He thanked AFESD for its "constructive" support of development in Jordan. Meanwhile, Jordan's Central Bank said it would allow banks and currency exchange bureaus to reopen during curfew hours as of yesterday. The bank's governor Ziad Fraiz said banks and currency exchange bureaus could open between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm but they should allow the minimum amount of employees. The government imposed a full curfew on March 21, but reduce it to between 10:00 am and 6:00 pm to allow people buy necessary needs. — KUNA

CONDOLENCES

The Owners, Management and Staff of



Al-Rashed International Shipping CO.

express their heartfelt

condolences to

Mr. Sahyan Appukuttan (Sai)

Country manager- OOCL

on the sad demise of his Father

P.N.Appukuttan

Retired flight engineer (Kuwait Airways)

who passed away on

28th March 2020

May his soul rest in Peace



Trump ditches hopes of quick virus bounce-back

Mafia primed to feast on Italy's virus devastation



WUHAN: Staff members spray disinfectant at a shopping mall as it prepares to reopen to the public after closing due to the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province. — AFP

China's Hubei cremates coronavirus dead

'No farewells, no ceremonies'

JINGZHOU: Ten unclaimed urns sit in the crematorium in Jingzhou, a city in central China's Hubei province hard-hit by coronavirus. Not only are funerals banned across China, in places like Jingzhou bereaved relatives who are stuck in their homes must wait even to retrieve the remains of their loved ones. The ashes of the dead "are under our care for now because their family members are in quarantine, or they're away and can't come back yet," said the director of the Jingzhou crematorium, who gave only his surname, Sheng, as he was not permitted to speak to the media.

"No farewells, no ceremonies are allowed," Sheng told Reuters matter-of-factly in his office in the bare, off-white building. The coronavirus has infected more than half a million people and killed some 25,000 in more than 200 countries. In China, where it began, the virus has upended not only daily life but also how the dead are given a send-off, due to its highly contagious nature.

Whatever the cause of death, China's bereaved families have not been able to hold funerals since Feb. 1, even as the nation's outbreak eases, including in Hubei where the virus erupted in December. For the families, none of the complex and comforting rituals, full of filial piety, to ensure a peaceful journey to the

afterlife: all-night vigils, white mourning clothes, visitors paying their last respects around the carefully dressed body in the coffin, perhaps Taoist or Buddhist prayers.

A funeral home in Jingzhou was quiet. Hazmat suits hung outside a room where workers who carry bodies from the hospital to the crematorium were napping. For families in quarantine, it is lonelier still, as they cannot even honor the ashes of the dead. "What did we do to deserve such punishment?" Wang Wenjun in Hubei's provincial capital Wuhan told Reuters last month, after her family had to wait 15 days for the ashes of her uncle, who died from COVID-19, the pneumonia-like disease caused by the new coronavirus.

Without funerals Sheng's staff, like crematorium workers across much of China, get right to work, some in full surgical outfits with blue coveralls and hair covers like blue shower caps. "In the past, before the epidemic, there would be a vigil of up to three

days and we would carry out our work after," said Sheng, a red China flag pin in the lapel of his white lab coat. "But now when the person dies, the hospital will carry out the disinfection and the cremation will happen right after."

Staff at the facility where Sheng has worked for 29 years now take shifts around the clock, in case a call comes from the hospital in the middle of the night to collect the body of a coronavirus victim, he said. Previously, they cremated bodies in the morning. "The hospital workers are working very hard but so are the funeral workers," he said. Easing the burden somewhat of late has been the slowdown in domestic virus cases and a drop in traffic deaths as harsh restrictions on movement curtail driving.

Of the crematorium's eight furnaces, one is dedicated to coronavirus victims, whose families may not see the body before it is cremated. For people who die of the disease at home, staff in full protective gear

are asked to do a quick pickup, he said. "Maybe it's something to do with the air, we don't know why." China has reported more than 81,000 coronavirus infections and 3,300 deaths, mostly in Wuhan, where the virus is thought to have first infected people at a seafood market.

Jingzhou, a transportation and tourism hub of 6 million people 220 km west of Wuhan, is Hubei's sixth-worst-hit city, with 1,580 infections and 52 deaths - half of those bodies were cremated at Sheng's facility, he says. Recently, China's locally transmitted infections have fallen sharply, the government says - Wuhan has reported only one new coronavirus case in the last 10 days. The United States now has more cases than China, and Italy and Spain higher death tolls.

The sharp slowdown has given Beijing confidence to start easing the draconian lockdowns and travel restrictions put in place to curb the virus. Hubei began letting residents leave the province on Tuesday, although people are not yet allowed in. Sheng has yet to receive official notice when life might return to normal at the Jingzhou crematorium. Possibly by the end of April, he says. For now, quarantines remain in place and the simple, state-supplied urns sit. — Reuters

Arab, Jewish medics together on frontline of Israel's virus fight

JERUSALEM: In Israel, Jewish and Arab doctors have worked side by side on the frontlines of the novel coronavirus fight, also battling entrenched schisms between their communities and stressing their unity in the face of the crisis. Israel's Sheba Medical Center, near the city of Tel Aviv, is ranked among the best in the world and its directors say its standing is thanks to a team of Arab and Jewish caregivers working together in a society otherwise marked by divisions.

"We work together with Arab medical staff everywhere and not just in the time of coronavirus. There is no difference between us," Sheba deputy director emeritus, Rafi Walden said. "Without them, the Israeli medical system would collapse." Israel's Arab minority are the descendants of Palestinians who stayed on their land after the creation of Israel in 1948. They make up around 20 percent of the population, but slightly more of the country's health care workers.

The community regularly says it faces social discrimination and denounces a law that enshrines the Jewish character of Israel. But as the Jewish state struggles against the deadly novel coronavirus, the crisis is highlighting the collaborative nature of its health service. A photo shared widely on social media this week showed two medics pausing to pray in front of their ambulance. One was Jewish - standing and praying in the direction of Jerusalem - and the other a Muslim, who laid out his prayer rug and knelt facing towards Mecca.

Some internet users praised the image published by Israel's equivalent of the Red Cross,



BEERSHEBA: Two paramedics pray outside an ambulance of the American Friends of Magen David Adom (AFMDA); a Jew from Beersheba facing Jerusalem, and an Arab from Rahat facing Makkah. — AFP

the Magen David Adom, as "inspiring" and underscored the need for unity in a crisis. Others took the opportunity to highlight the inequalities faced by the Arab minority. According to a 2017 study by the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel, poverty rates are far higher in Arab neighborhoods, where the average life expectancy is also four years lower than among Jewish Israelis.

'In the trenches together'

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has long faced accusations of racism towards the Arab minority and of inciting hatred against members of Arab political parties. He has described them as a "threat" to the country and one of his ministers has called them "terrorists in suits".

"Netanyahu knows the role of Arabs in the health service and in other sectors and he continues to spread hatred against Arabs and to lie

unabashedly," Walden said. Recently, nearly 700 Israeli medical professionals, roughly half of them Arab and half Jewish, signed a petition calling on Netanyahu to stop sowing division during a public health crisis. More than 3,800 cases of the novel coronavirus have been reported by Israel as of Sunday, and 12 people have died.

After more than a year of political turmoil marked by three inconclusive general elections, Netanyahu is expected to remain in power and form an "emergency government" to manage the virus outbreak after a surprise agreement by his rival Benny Gantz to work with the premier. "Our goal, both Arabs and Jews, is to protect humanity, and we call for an end to incitement to hatred. We're in the trenches together working to stop the coronavirus epidemic," said Shukri Awawda, a senior doctor in the Arab city of Nazareth and one of those who spearheaded the petition. — AFP



Bereaved relatives stuck in their homes

Virus lockdowns give Europe cities cleaner air

BRUSSELS: Air pollution has decreased in urban areas across Europe during lockdowns to combat the coronavirus, new satellite images showed yesterday, but campaigners warned city-dwellers were still more vulnerable to the epidemic. Cities including Brussels, Paris, Madrid, Milan and Frankfurt showed a reduction in average levels of noxious nitrogen dioxide over March 5-25, compared with the same period last year, according to the Sentinel-5 satellite images.

That coincides with lockdowns in many European countries which have curbed road transport - the largest source of nitrogen oxides - and slowed output at gas-emitting factories. The new images, released by the European Space Agency (ESA) and analysed by the non-profit European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), show the changing density of nitrogen dioxide, which can cause respiratory problems and cancer, like heat maps.

Daily weather events can influence atmospheric pollution, so the satellite pictures took a 20-day average and excluded readings where cloud cover reduced the quality of the data. Data from the European Environment Agency (EEA) showed a similar trend over March 16-22. In Madrid, average nitrogen dioxide levels decreased by 56% week-on-week after the Spanish government banned non-essential travel on March 14.

The EPHA said people living in polluted cities may be more at risk from COVID-19, because prolonged exposure to bad air can weaken the immune system, making it harder to fight infection. "That connection is very likely," Zoltan Massay-Kosubek, policy manager for clean air at EPHA, told Reuters. "But because the disease is new, it still has to be demonstrated." Air pollution can cause or exacerbate lung cancer, pulmonary disease and strokes.

China also recorded a drop in nitrogen dioxide pollution in cities during February, when the government imposed draconian lockdown measures to contain the raging epidemic. In some regions of Poland, however, nitrogen dioxide levels remained relatively high during the period despite its lockdown, perhaps due to the prevalence of coal-based heating. Countries that went into lockdown later - such as Britain, which did so on March 23 - look set for a pollution reprieve in coming weeks, EPHA said. Air pollution causes around 400,000 premature deaths each year in Europe, EEA data show. — Reuters

International

UAE opens drive-through coronavirus 'testing site'

Couple to run Dubai balcony marathon to beat virus blues

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates said it has launched a drive-through coronavirus testing facility as part of the Gulf state's efforts to fight the disease. The facility, inaugurated by Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, will provide screenings within five minutes, using state-of-the-art equipment and a medical team, the Abu Dhabi government's media office said.

"A new drive-through testing facility for COVID-19 has launched ... to offer safe testing procedures," the office said Saturday on Twitter. According to official state news agency WAM, the facility can serve 600 people a day, with priority given to senior citizens, pregnant women and those with chronic illnesses. The media office said people should book an appointment in advance. Tests "for the wider community for reassurance only" would cost 370 dirhams (\$100), according to government advice on Twitter.

The UAE, which on Sunday had 570 officially declared COVID-19 cases, including three deaths, has imposed restrictions on night movements and taken steps to sanitize outdoor areas and public transport. The Gulf state has halted passenger

flights, closed its borders to foreigners and asked people to go outdoors only if necessary. UAE Attorney General Hamad Saif Al-Shamsi has issued a list of fines ranging from \$272 to \$13,600 for those violating regulations imposed to contain the virus.

Dubai balcony marathon

In another development, a South African couple are to run a marathon on their Dubai balcony to be streamed online as an example of how to beat the coronavirus blues under lockdown. Collin Allin, 41, and wife Hilda aim to cover the 42.2-kilometre (26-mile) distance on their 19-metre (yard) long balcony from 6:00 am on Saturday, a challenge they expect to take between seven and eight hours. "This is about giving people something else to think about," he told AFP. "It's about getting people to connect, as everyone is worried about the impact of coronavirus."

Their 10-year-old daughter Geena will be in charge of providing her parents with water and snacks as well as music to drive the runners. The United Arab Emirates, of which Dubai is a member, has imposed a Thursday to Sunday nighttime

“For the wider community for reassurance only”

At standstill over virus, Damascus dreads new foe

DAMASCUS: On a deserted street in the old city of Damascus, the new coronavirus has forced salesmen like Ahmad to close up shop indefinitely for the first time in Syria's war. "We've lived through some tough times during the war," says the 59-year-old, sitting on a chair on the pavement outside his textiles shop. But "never in my life have I seen the markets and shops close for days on end like now". All around him, businesses have pulled down their metal blinds or covered up their stands.

The scene is the same across much of the Syrian capital, with squares and markets once thronging with people even during the war now almost entirely empty. In the century-old covered bazaar of Hamidiya, workers in orange jumpsuits and face masks spray down wooden doors bolted shut with padlocks. Five cases of COVID-19 have been reported in the country since Sunday, and the authorities have ordered all non-essential businesses closed.

Ahmad this week called in his employees to give them their monthly wages and ask them all to go home. The shopkeeper says he's never known any-

thing like it. Even as rockets rained down during the conflict, the shops would not remain shut for long, he says. "I don't know how we're going to live without work," lamented the tradesman, who supports a family of four including himself.

Eighty percent of Syrians already live under the poverty line, according to the United Nations. Syria's conflict has killed more than 380,000 people and displaced millions from their homes since starting in 2011 with anti-government protests. It has also ravaged the economy and laid waste to much of the country's infrastructure, including the health sector.

'War of a different kind'

Even with just a handful of cases so far, Damascus has been increasingly taking precautions across the 70 percent of Syria that it controls. It has closed the border with Lebanon, issued the first night-time curfew ever in the conflict, and suspended transport between provinces. Schools and universities have closed, as have parks, restaurants, coffee shops and other non-essential businesses.

"At the end of 2011, I felt we were heading into the unknown," Ahmad says. The guns largely fell silent around Damascus in 2018, after government forces expelled rebels and jihadists from its edges. But today, "we might be heading into a war of a different kind," Ahmad says, against a "hidden enemy". In another neighborhood, the city's world-renowned Omayyad Mosque has for the first time in years

who breached his mandatory quarantine period, the latest example of the city-state's strict enforcement of social distancing measures. The 53-year-old man had been ordered to stay at home for 14 days after returning to Singapore from neighboring Indonesia, a rule he then broke by making a further trip over the border. Singapore, which has imposed tough measures to slow the spread of the virus - including the threat of six months in jail for people who intentionally stand close to someone else - reported its third COVID-19 death on Sunday.

Australia limits gatherings

Gatherings were restricted to just two people in Australia from yesterday - down from the current limit of 10 - and playgrounds, outdoor gyms and skateparks will be closed across the country. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said all over-70s as well as indigenous people over 50, who are more susceptible to diseases, are now being strongly advised to self-isolate at home. This came as hundreds of cruise ship passengers were due to board flights for Germany after spending days stranded at sea off the Western Australian coast in a stand-off with authorities. Australia has recorded almost 4,000 cases of COVID-19, with the death toll reaching 16 on Sunday. Meanwhile New Zealand reported its first novel coronavirus death.

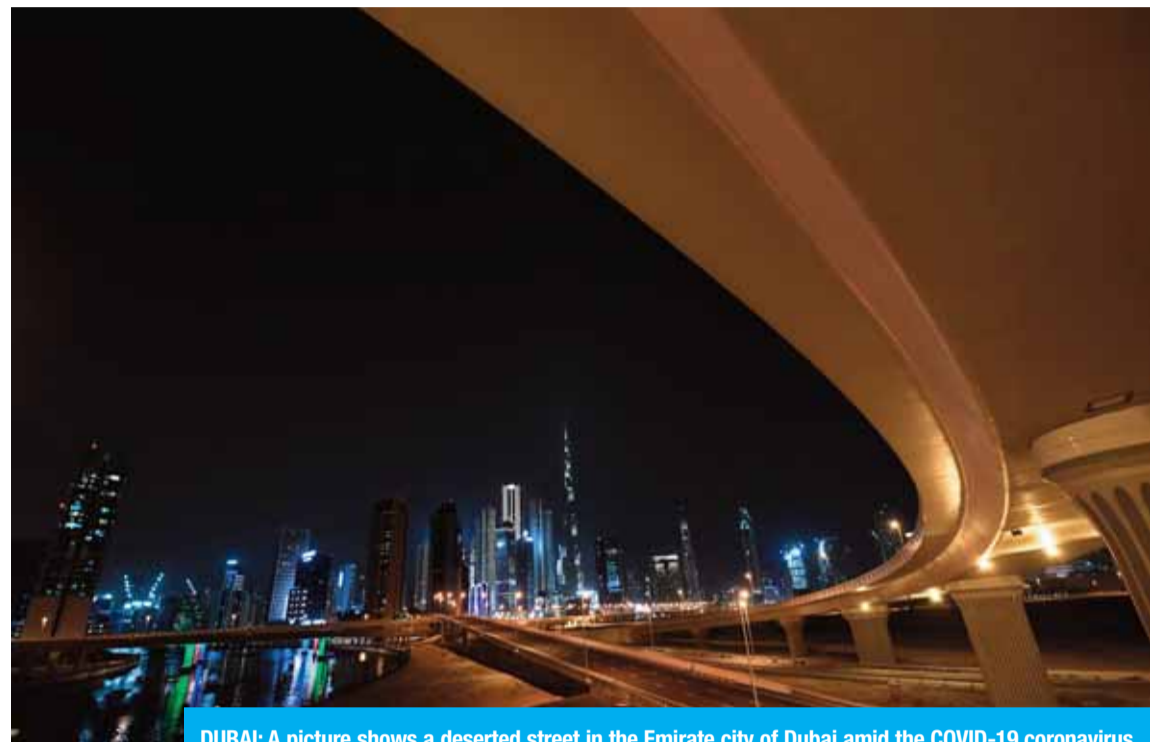
Australia domestic violence

Australia announced a nearly US\$100 million boost in funding to tackle domestic violence after support services reported a spike in coronavirus-related family abuse. Associations around the world that help victims of domestic violence have

official, who asked to remain anonymous, told AFP that Islamic State members in the prison had revolted.

"Some of them managed to get out into the prison courtyard," the source added. "Security forces are on high alert. International coalition planes are flying over the prison and the region." Coalition military spokesman Colonel Myles Caggins III said: "The Coalition is assisting our Syrian Democratic Forces partners with aerial surveillance as they quell an insurrection" at the prison. But only low-level prisoners were kept at the jail, he added.

The London-based Observatory, which has an extensive network of contacts inside Syria, said at least four people had escaped from the prison. Members of the Islamic State had led the uprising and a search has start-



DUBAI: A picture shows a deserted street in the Emirate city of Dubai amid the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak. —AFP

lockdown to allow for outdoors and public transport sanitation operations. With more than 330 declared cases of the novel coronavirus and two

deaths, it has also been promoting a "stay home" campaign, a message lit up on top of Dubai's Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest tower. —Agencies



DAMASCUS: An old market in Syria's capital Damascus stands deserted after measures were taken by the authorities to fight the novel coronavirus pandemic. —AFP

closed its gates. Nearby, shops have also slammed their wooden shutters closed in Hamidiya market. Apart from the men in jumpsuits spraying shutters with watered-down disinfectant, barely a handful of people walk through. Among them, engineering student Mustafa is on his way to a pharmacy to stock up on supplies. Wearing a pale blue surgical mask and plastic gloves, the 24-year-old surveys the empty street. For years, "Damascus bustled on energetically - despite the death, the shelling and the stray bullets," he says. —AFP



MUMBAI: Vegetable vendors set up their stalls maintaining social distance in an open field during a government-imposed nationwide lockdown as a preventive measure against the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus in Mumbai yesterday. —AFP

sounded the alarm over fears of an increase in cases, as the stress caused by social isolation exacerbates tensions.

China reports imported cases

China reported 45 new coronavirus infections on Sunday, all but one of them imported from abroad. That compares with 54 cases the previous day, all imported. After taking draconian steps to bring the virus spread under control domestically, China is now doing the same to prevent imported infections. It announced this week it would drastically reduce the number of international flights into the country and banned foreigners from entering beginning Saturday. —AFP

Japan to ban Europe, China, US travelers as coronavirus spread

TOKYO: Japan will step up its efforts to stop the spread of coronavirus by banning the entry of foreign citizens travelling from the United States, China, South Korea and most of Europe, the Asahi newspaper reported yesterday. Non-Japanese citizens who have been in any of these areas in the past two weeks will be barred, the paper said. Tokyo may also ban travel to and from some countries in Southeast Asia and Africa, it said, citing unidentified government sources.

At present, Japan only bans entry of citizens from some parts of South Korea, China as well as numerous European nations, with a request for a two-week self-quarantine for those entering from the United States, China and South Korea. Government officials weren't immediately available to comment. While Japanese nationals would not be affected, the travel ban would come as a surge in the number of infections in Japan stokes fears that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe may shift from considering to declaring a national state of emergency - a step that could pave the way for a lockdown of its capital Tokyo.

"We're in a critical stage" on state of emergency deliberations, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a news conference on Monday. Any lockdown in Japan would look different to mandatory measures imposed in some parts of Europe and the United States: By law, local authorities are only permitted to issue requests for people to stay home that are not legally binding.

But analysts said such a move would inflict huge damage to an economy already on the cusp of recession due to the widening fallout from the pandemic, which has derailed Tokyo's plans to stage Olympic Games this summer, disrupted supply chains and cooled consumption via event cancellations and shop shut-downs. "I think the possibility of a lockdown of the Tokyo metropolitan area is rising," said Hideo Kumano, chief economist at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute. —Reuters

Virus fears spark Thai prison riot

BANGKOK: Dozens of prisoners broke furniture and torched buildings during a riot in a Thai jail on Sunday sparked by fears of a coronavirus outbreak in the facility. During the violence some convicts escaped from the Buriram prison where more than 2,000 are held, the justice ministry said. Seven have been arrested.

Local media showed footage of black smoke billowing from the prison's multiple blocks in the country's northeast, and a Corrections Department official said drones were deployed to investigate what weapons the prisoners were using. "There was a group of prisoners trying to escape and were creating chaos... which included burning down some facilities inside," said Narat Sawetana, director general of the Corrections Department.

He added later that six prisoners had been injured in the melee by broken glass. More than 1,500 prisoners had to be evacuated before the rioting could be stopped. Justice Minister Somsak Thepsutin confirmed that a group of inmates sentenced to life had started "agitating" other prisoners with rumors of a virus outbreak. "The fact is that none of the prisoners in Buriram were infected-they only started this rumor to find some supporters," the minister said, adding that the cafeteria and visiting areas were among the facilities torched. —AFP

Asia virus latest: Modi apologizes, Australia limits gatherings

HONG KONG: Here are the latest developments from Asia related to the novel coronavirus pandemic:

Modi asks Indians for forgiveness

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi apologized to citizens for the sweeping 21-day lockdown that has brought the country of 1.3 billion people to a halt, leaving many migrant workers jobless and penniless. "I believe that you will forgive me... I had to take some decisions which have inconvenienced you in various ways, especially my poor brothers and sisters," he said Sunday in a weekly radio address, arguing there was "no other way" to fight the virus.

Meanwhile Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal appealed to rural migrants not to go home after a massive exodus began from cities, with many workers making the long journeys on foot. "Stay where you are. Because there is a risk of corona spreading in such a big crowd," he tweeted. The government ordered all of India's states and territories to seal their borders to reduce the movement of people, and said funds were available within each state to arrange food and shelter for migrants at their places of work.

Singapore cancels man's passport

Singapore cancelled the passport of a citizen

Riot, break-out at Syria jail holding Jihadists

BEIRUT: Prisoners at a Syrian jail run by Kurdish forces holding suspected Islamic State members rioted and some escaped Sunday, said Kurdish sources and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. A senior member of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) running Ghouran prison in the northeast Syria city of Hassakeh acknowledged that an uprising had taken place. The

International

Trump ditches hopes of quick virus bounce-back

Spain announces record 838 virus deaths in 24 hours

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump has extended emergency coronavirus restrictions for the United States, where his top scientist warned up to 200,000 people could die, as the Russian capital and Africa's biggest city readied to go into lockdown yesterday. The reassessment by Trump, who had previously said he wanted the country back to work in mid-April, came as Britain and hard-hit Italy warned measures to prevent the spread of the disease would be in place for months to come.

COVID-19 has already killed more than 33,000 people worldwide, with the number of confirmed cases nearing 700,000. As of Sunday, more than 3.38 billion people were asked or ordered to follow confinement measures, according to an AFP database, as the virus infects every sphere of life—wiping out millions of jobs, postponing elections and clearing the sporting calendar. Trump warned that the US crisis, which has seen a doubling of infections in only two days, would continue to get worse.

"The modelling estimates that the peak in death rate is likely to hit in two weeks," he said, announcing an extension of social distancing guidelines until April 30. "Nothing would be worse than declaring victory before the victory is won."

The president was speaking after Anthony Fauci, who leads research into infectious diseases at the National Institutes of Health, said he believed 100,000 to 200,000 Americans could die from the disease, and millions could be infected.

The US health system is groaning under the weight of new cases. On Sunday a charity began setting up a field hospital in New York's Central Park to help take some of the strain off the city's overwhelmed institutions. "There's lots of cases here in New York and a lot of people that need help," said Elliott Tenpenny, a doctor and team leader for Samaritan's Purse COVID-19 Response Team.

"The hospitals all over the city are filling up and they need as much help as they can get. That's why we're here." The human consequences of a shutdown that has seen

huge chunks of the US economy grind to a halt were playing out at food banks, where organizers say demand has exploded. "Before, there were 1.2 million people in New York who needed help for food. Now, there are three times as many," said Eric Ripert of City Harvest, a food rescue organization.

Six months

Trump's re-evaluation of a back-to-normal timeline came as Europe's situation continued to worsen. Spain logged 838 deaths in a 24-hour period, the third consecutive day it has seen a rise. "My ICU (intensive care unit) is completely full," said Eduardo Fernandez, a nurse at Infanta Sofia hospital in Madrid, where authorities have set up a 5,500-bed field hospital and transformed an ice rink into a morgue. "If it is not a complete collapse, we are on the verge," he added. British officials said life may not return to usual for six months, with Deputy Chief Medical Officer Jenny Harries saying it would be several weeks before doctors could tell if the current lockdown had slowed the spread of the disease. Measures would be reviewed every three weeks, "probably over the next six months" or even longer, she said.

In Italy, which has logged a third of global deaths, the government warned citizens should be ready for a lengthy lockdown that would only be lifted gradually. "We are in a very long battle," said government medical adviser Luca Richeldi. "Through our behavior, we save lives." Yet the strains on Italian society imposed by measures that might have seemed unimaginable just weeks ago are gradually starting to show. The starkest example came when armed police began guarding entrances to supermarkets in Sicily after reports of looting by people who could no longer afford food.

Global divide

Moscow became the latest European city to tell people to stay indoors. Citizens will only be allowed to

leave their homes in a medical emergency, to travel to jobs judged essential by the authorities, and to shop for food or medicines. They will, however, be allowed to walk their dogs within a 100-metre radius of their homes. Africa's biggest city, Lagos, was due to join the global stay-at-home from yesterday, with Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari ordering a two-week lockdown for its 20 million people.

The measures also apply to the capital Abuja. Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation with some 190 million people, has so far registered just 97 confirmed infections and one death from COVID-19, but testing has been limited. Officials have warned that the country risks seeing an "exponential" rise in cases unless contacts of suspected carriers are tracked down faster.

mafias, to see how much they can earn from this pandemic," Italian anti-mafia author Roberto Saviano said in an interview in the Repubblica daily this week. "Where have they invested the last few decades? Multi-service companies (canteens, cleaning, disinfection), waste recycling, transportation, funeral homes, oil and food distribution. That's how they'll make money. "The mafias know what you have, and will need, and they give it, and will give it, on their own terms."

Saviano pointed to the last big epidemic in Italy, the 1884 Cholera outbreak in Naples, which killed more than half of the city's inhabitants. The government paid out vast sums for a clean-up - which went straight into the pockets of the Camorra. The mafia "is already carefully planning ahead to when the economy will start to be rebuilt," said Saviano, who heads up Italy's anti-mafia investigation directorate (DIA). "There will be a lot of money going around."

The 62-year old Sicilian said his team was preparing a plan to combat mafia infiltration. "They will be looking for loopholes in the system. We'll have to keep our eyes open for... suspicious operations, the creation of new companies, dummy corporations." Giuseppe Pignatone, a former mafia-hunter in Reggio Calabria, said the epidemic would "inevitably make the judiciary's job more difficult over the coming weeks and years". The trials of hundreds of defendants have ground to a halt.



NEW YORK: An elderly man is transported from Lenox Health Medical Pavilion to an ambulance in New York City. A senior US scientist issued a cautious prediction that the novel coronavirus could claim 100,000 to 200,000 lives in the United States. —AFP

Up to 200,000 people could die, scientist warns



Mafia primed to feast on Italy's virus devastation

ROME: As Italy mourns thousands of coronavirus dead, and survivors brace for life in an economic wasteland, one rung of society looks to win big: organized crime. "The Italian mafia can turn threats into opportunities," top government anti-mafia investigator Giuseppe Governale said. Over 10,000 people have died in Italy of the flu-like disease, which has forced the country into a lockdown that is devastating the eurozone's third largest economy.

From the historic Cosa Nostra in Sicily, to the immensely powerful 'Ndrangheta in Calabria and trigger-happy Camorra in Naples, Italy's mafias were "caught on the back foot (by the virus), but are now organising themselves," Governale said. The Economist Intelligence Unit said Thursday it expected Italy's GDP to contract by a colossal seven percent for the year. Italian experts say some 65 percent of Italian small and medium businesses are at risk of bankruptcy. That is music to the ears of the country's mobs, who use extortion and usury to feast on ailing businesses.

'On their terms'

"Just look at the portfolio of the

Demand explodes for New York food banks

NEW YORK: New York food banks have become inundated with newcomers deprived of income since the near-total halt of business in the United States' economic capital. Sacks of oranges, sweet potatoes and onions are spread over three tables at an open-air market in Washington Heights, a neighborhood in the north of Manhattan. Sterilized milk and cans of tuna and salmon cover three others.

Hundreds of people came over the weekend to restock at the distribution center, one of many run by City Harvest, a major New York-based charity. There are no long lines reminiscent of the soup kitchens of the 1930s. Instead, people trickle in, often wearing masks for protection and keeping their distance from each other under the direction of market volunteers.

Among the customers is Lina Alba, 40, a single mother with five children aged between 11 and 23. She worked as a maid in a Manhattan hotel until it closed two weeks ago. Her two oldest children also lost their jobs. "It is my first time," she said. "We need the help now. This is crazy. So we don't know what's gonna happen in a few weeks." She's trying

to stay positive, though. "At least I'm spending time with my kids... I am the teacher, I am the mom - I am everything." "We are alive, we are healthy, we just need to pray."

It took the single mother a week to register for unemployment — the service flooded, pointing to much worse unemployment numbers than those announced by the federal government on Thursday. But on Friday, "I did it, finally," Alba said, relieved. The benefits should start arriving in three weeks. Alba also hopes to receive soon at least \$1,200 from the federal government, thanks to a historic aid package passed last week by Congress. "It's not gonna be enough," but "you're gonna appreciate anything right now," she said, noting that "a lot of people" need help. "It is the whole entire city."

Millions need help

Jose Neri, 51, is one of many Hispanic employees who worked in now-closed New York restaurants. He also came to a food bank for the first time. There are five people in his family. "We're using our savings to survive," he said in Spanish, wearing a mask and gloves in an effort to prevent himself from catching the virus. "We've got what we need to hold it together for now," he said. He is also counting on the federal government's promised assistance to low-income workers. Jhordana Ramirez, 39, has to keep working, despite the high risk of infection in a city that has recorded tens of thousands of cases.

She's a home caregiver for senior citizens, who "depend 100 percent" on her, she explained in



VERDUNO: Nurses work to prepare the intensive care unit in the new Covid-19 Hospital in Verduno, near Alba, Northwestern Italy on the eve of its official opening, as part of the measures taken to fight against the spread of the novel coronavirus. The hospital has seven beds of intensive care and fifty beds for patients infected by the COVID-19. —AFP

'Real danger'

The redirection of police resources over the crisis could also contribute to the mafia blossoming, as officers "already weighed down by new roles may have to face public order problems," he said. According to the Stampa daily, Italy's secret service has warned the government of potential riots in southern Italy - fomented by organized crime groups - should the virus epicenter move from north to south.

Mobsters were believed by some crime experts to have orchestrated revolts in jails across the country early

ly on in the epidemic, with prisoners fearful of catching the disease in overcrowded facilities demanding early release. "Very worryingly, some with lighter sentences are being allowed out," Nicola Gratteri, a leading prosecutor in the 'Ndrangheta stronghold of Calabria said. Rights group Antigone said over 2,500 prisoners had been released since February 29 to ease overcrowding. "People linked to the 'Ndrangheta have already been released and put under house arrest," he said. "That presents a real danger". —AFP

Spanish. The pandemic has had an "enormous" effect on her household, she said. Her husband and oldest daughter lost their jobs. Her youngest daughter, just eight years old, is "anxious" and can't keep still. "I try to save as much as possible, especially for the rent, bills like electricity, cable, food and all those things," she said. She is also impatiently waiting for her federal check.

City Harvest employee Geraldine Fermin has heard stories like this a lot since most New York City business closed down two weeks ago. "It's heartbreaking that it has to be like that for a lot of people," she said. "People that were poor are now poorer, and people that had decent jobs, that could get by, now are poor too." "Before, there were 1.2 million people in New York who needed help for food. Now, there are three times as many, that's more than three million New Yorkers," said City Harvest vice president Eric Ripert.

Ripert also owns the famous restaurant Le Bernardin, closed due to the coronavirus. Speaking in French, Ripert said that City Harvest, which in addition to its markets also supplies food to some 400 homeless shelters, does not currently have any supply problems. But it needs funds to buy more food, and so it is teaming up with other organizations to create a united front against "a situation that will get worse." "We got through September 11, the great recession of 2008-2009, we got through a lot of things, but none of that is comparable to this catastrophe that we're living through," Ripert said. —AFP

News in brief

Saudi seizes hoarded masks

RIYADH: Saudi authorities have seized more than five million medical masks that were illegally stockpiled amid the coronavirus outbreak, state media reported Sunday, as the death toll in the kingdom doubled. The commerce ministry seized 1.17 million masks from a private store in Hail, northwest of the capital, after authorities Wednesday confiscated more than four million masks stored in a facility in the western city of Jeddah in violation of commercial regulations, the official Saudi Press Agency reported. The ministry said people behind such activities would be prosecuted, and that the confiscated masks would be redistributed to the open market. Pharmacies in the oil-rich kingdom have reported shortages of masks amid panic buying, as authorities warned against hoarding and price hikes. Saudi Arabia is scrambling to limit the spread of the deadly disease at home. —AFP

Mass prison break in Iran

TEHRAN: Iranian security forces are searching for 54 escaped inmates following a prison break over which four guards were arrested, Iran's state news agency reported yesterday. "Some prison guards were summoned and four of them were arrested and others released on bail," Mojtaba Shirouzbazorgi, a judicial official in Kurdistan province, told IRNA. According to the agency, 74 inmates escaped from Saqqez city's prison on Friday, 20 of whom have so far either turned themselves in or been captured. On March 19, 23 prisoners escaped from another jail in the western city of Khorramabad, the capital of Lorestan province, hours before the start of Iran's New Year celebrations, IRNA said. They reportedly escaped during the night while guards were making preparations for a New Year amnesty. The escapees had been serving a maximum of one-year sentences, the agency said, denying that dangerous criminals were at large. —AFP

Egypt shuts several hospitals

CAIRO: Egypt has shuttered several hospitals and quarantined villages in an attempt to halt the rising infection rate of new coronavirus in the most populous Arab state. A Cairo hospital was closed for sterilization late Saturday after two COVID-19 cases were confirmed. An official at Al-Salam hospital told AFP on Sunday: "We are currently disinfecting the hospital for the safety of everyone concerned. One patient had come in tested positive and a member of our staff was infected after". He said no date was yet set for re-opening the facility. Other hospitals have also been closed in the last week after recording cases of the virus, including the Alexandria University Hospital and Al-Shorouk hospital in Cairo. Health ministry spokesperson Khaled Megahed also announced that villages in up to 10 governorates have been quarantined. —AFP

Libya frees over 450 inmates

TRIPOLI: Libya's justice ministry announced Sunday over 450 prisoners were being freed in a bid to protect against the spread of coronavirus in the wake of the war-torn country's first declared infections. Judicial officials decided to "free 466 detainees from correctional facilities" in Tripoli, according to a statement by the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord's justice ministry. The detainees were in pretrial detention or had qualified for conditional release, the statement added. Authorities announced five new coronavirus cases in the western city of Misrata on Sunday, bringing the tally of infections confirmed in Libya to eight. —Reuters

Business

TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2020

10 Red-tapes and shattered hopes:
Uganda still waiting for oil riches**11** Jazeera Airways agrees new measures to
protect airline from COVID-19 challenges**11** Global shares suffer virus
chills, CBs offer cold comfort

LOUIS VUITTON



WUHAN: People wearing face masks walk past a mall in Wuhan, in China's central Hubei province yesterday. — AFP

China unexpectedly cuts reverse repo rate

Easing steps come as analysts predict steep Q1 GDP contraction

SHANGHAI: China's central bank unexpectedly cut the rate on reverse repurchase agreements by 20 basis points yesterday, the largest in nearly five years, as authorities ramped up steps to relieve pressure on an economy ravaged by the coronavirus pandemic.

The People's Bank of China (PBOC) announced on its website that it was lowering the 7-day reverse repo rate to 2.20 percent from 2.40 percent, but it did not give a reason for the move. Ma Jun, a central bank adviser told state media that China still has ample room for monetary policy adjustment and the rate decision took into consideration the return of Chinese companies to work, the global virus situation and a deterioration in the external economic environment.

It was the third cut in the 7-day rate since November, and comes as the coronavirus infections in China - where the outbreak originated late last year - has slowed from a peak in February. The country has so far reported 3,304 deaths from 81,470 infections. In a note to clients, Capital Economics said "a lot more easing will be needed, especially on the fiscal front, to help the economy return to its pre-virus trend."

Global policymakers have rolled out unprecedented stimulus measures in the past few weeks, cutting rates sharply and injecting trillions of dollars to backstop their economies as many countries have been put under tight lockdowns to contain the pandemic.

Yan Se, chief economist at Founder Securities in Beijing, said the rate cut was China's commitment to a pledge it made during the Group of 20 major economies meeting last week to combat the coronavirus and stabilize financial markets. "China was the only major economy that had not yet implemented large-scale easing measures" Yan said, noting that many other nations have implemented more drastic steps such as quantitative easing and deeper cuts to benchmark rates.

Leaders of the G20 pledged on Thursday to inject

over \$5 trillion into the global economy to limit job and income losses from the coronavirus, which has so far infected more than 700,000 people and killed nearly 34,000 worldwide.

Earlier in the day, the PBOC injected 50 billion yuan (\$7 billion) into money markets through seven-day reverse repos, breaking a hiatus of 29 trading days with no fresh fund injections. Chinese 10-year government bond futures initially responded positively to the cut, with the most-traded contract for June delivery rising as much as 0.23 percent, before pulling back to last trade

down 0.1 percent. Xing Zhaopeng, markets economist at ANZ in Shanghai, said the latest cut follows the ruling Communist Party's Politburo meeting last Friday.

"The medium-term lending facility (MLF) rate and

Loan Prime Rate (LPR) will be cut at the same pace this month. We believe this cut is a signal to urge all loans to refer LPR as the benchmark so that the PBOC can improve the effectiveness of monetary policy transmission," he said.

At Friday's meeting, the politburo said the government will step up policy measures and tighten enforcement in a bid to achieve full-year economic and social development targets. The coronavirus hit the Chinese economy just as it was starting to show some signs of stabilizing after growth cooled last year to its slowest pace in nearly 30 years amid a trade war with the United States. Analysts expect China's economy to contract sharply in the first quarter due to widespread disruptions to business and consumer activity caused by the virus as authorities put in place tough public measures to contain the pandemic. Nomura has lowered its annual GDP growth forecast for China to 1.0 percent this year, from 1.5 percent previously, and adjusted quarterly GDP forecasts to a 9.0 percent annual contraction, from an earlier prediction of 0.9 percent contraction. — Reuters



**Seven-day
reverse repo
at 2.20% vs
2.40% previously**

Singapore eases monetary policy

SINGAPORE: Singapore's central bank eased monetary policy yesterday as the city-state, seen as a bellwether for the health of global trade, heads for a deep recession due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The easing echoes moves made by other countries and comes after data last week showed the city-state suffered its sharpest contraction in the first quarter since the global financial crisis.

The Monetary Authority of Singapore said it had flattened the slope of the band at which the local dollar is allowed to move against a basket of currencies of its major trading partners—effectively weakening the local unit. Instead of using interest rates, trade-reliant Singapore manages monetary policy by letting the local dollar rise or fall against a currency basket of its trading partners.

"Major uncertainty remains. The recovery in the global economy will depend on the epidemiological course of the pandemic and the efficacy of policy responses," the central bank said.

MAS was supposed to issue its next policy statement in April but brought it forward as the country reels from the economic impact of the virus.



SINGAPORE: People buying vegetables at a market in Singapore. —AFP

The financial hub is one of the world's most open economies, and is usually hit hardest and earliest during any global shock. Gross domestic product (GDP) shrank by 2.2 percent in the first quarter compared with the previous year—the worst decline since the 2009 financial crisis, according to advance estimates released last week by the trade ministry.

The ministry has downgraded its growth forecast, projecting GDP will fall by up to

four percent this year. With global demand hammered by business closures, a halt in air travel and other measures to contain the virus, Singapore's easing is more to reflect the current economic climate than to support exports, said CIMB Private Banking regional economist Song Seng Wun.

"You cannot have a strong Singapore dollar when regional economies and the global economy are in deep recession," he said. —AFP

Oil prices at 17-yr lows as virus ravages

SINGAPORE: Oil prices extended losses in Asian trade yesterday and languished at 17-year lows, with the coronavirus crisis escalating around the world and no end in sight to a vicious price war. US benchmark West Texas Intermediate fell 5.3 percent to trade at \$20 a barrel, while international benchmark Brent crude was off 6.5 percent at \$23. The falls came after the death toll from the pandemic surged past 30,000 at the weekend as cases in hard-hit Europe and the United States showed no sign of letting up.

Senior US scientist Anthony Fauci estimated the virus could possibly result in 100,000 to 200,000 deaths in the United States, while President Donald Trump extended "social distancing" guidelines until April 30. The president also said he expected the country to "be well on our way to recovery" by June 1 — dropping his previous target of mid-April.

The virus has infected more than 140,000 in the world's top economy and left more than 2,400 dead.

Oil markets have been plunging for

weeks as lockdowns and travel restrictions imposed by governments worldwide to fight the virus strangle demand. Even as demand falls, supply has increased dramatically after top producers Saudi Arabia and Russia engage in a price war following a row about whether to cut output to support prices.

At the end of last week, Riyadh said it had not been in touch with Moscow about potential output cuts while Russia's deputy energy minister said oil at \$25 a barrel was not a catastrophe for the country's producers—signalling the two sides are still far apart. "Demand concerns are critical but well known, what really took the market down were the signals we got from Saudi Arabia and Russia that they intend to continue their current path," Vivek Dhar, a commodities analyst at Commonwealth Bank of Australia, told Bloomberg News.

"Market hopes of a deal have come undone." There are fears the commodity could fall further as storage tanks around the globe approach full capacity. "When the storage capacity is filled, we should probably expect a response from Saudi Arabia, Russia, and other essential oil producers," Axi-Corp's Stephen Innes said, though he warned "the longer their response takes, the higher the risk of another steep decline in oil prices". — AFP

Business

Red-tapes and shattered hopes: Uganda still waiting for oil riches

14 years after oil discovery, country could not extract a drop

BULIISA, Uganda: It was the promise of oil-billions of barrels of black gold, discovered locked beneath Lake Albert—and the riches to follow that brought electricity to Buliisa. Roads, piped water, and other unthinkable luxuries came next, as the poor farming village on the great lake's northern shores transformed into a booming frontier town, and Uganda braced for newfound prosperity as an African oil giant.

But those fortunes never transpired. The wells were never dug at Buliisa, the refineries never built and taps never turned. Fourteen years after the discovery of sub-Saharan Africa's fourth-largest oil reserves, not a drop has been extracted.

Bureaucratic delays and contract disputes have ground progress to a halt. And allegations of environmental damage and human rights abuses surrounding the oil fields have raised questions about resource exploration in one of Africa's great wildernesses.



Total official remains optimistic

"The beginning was bad, and we foresee that the oil will come, and make matters worse," said Mpingire Blasio Korokoni, who was evicted from his land at Kasenyi, a village near Buliisa, to make way for the oil project. But Uganda is not giving up on its oil dreams, and the country is still banking on production starting by 2023.

High hopes

The discovery at Lake Albert in 2006 sparked high hopes in Uganda, where one in five of the country's 42 million people live in abject poverty. Beneath the lake waters fed by the White Nile are an estimated 6.5 billion barrels of crude, about 1.4 billion of which were extractable.

The reserves are expected to last up to 30 years, with production peaking at 230,000 barrels a day. The government forecasts earnings of \$1.5 billion a year, a windfall that could have driven GDP per capita from \$630 a year to more than \$1,000. However plans to tap the oil at Lake Albert, a vast, 160-kilo-

metre (99-mile) long body of water separating Uganda from the Democratic Republic of Congo, have yet to materialize.

The planned projects are co-managed by French oil company Total, British outfit Tullow and China's CNOOC. But optimism ebbed as the ambitious projects ran again and again into obstacles and, almost a decade and at least \$3 billion later, progress has ground to a halt.

"When you discover reserves, you hope to start production seven to 10 years later," says Pierre Jessua, managing director of E&P Total Uganda, a subsidiary of Total.

"So we have encountered a number of delays." Uganda has been slow to acquire technical expertise and legislate the necessary regulations. Initially it said it would build a pipeline through Kenya, before changing its mind and deciding on a 1,443-km pipeline from Uganda to the Tanzanian port of Tanga for export. Most recently, in August, Tullow abandoned plans to sell part of its stake in the fields and projects to CNOOC and Total due to a tax dispute with the Ugandan government.

"A lot of preparatory work has been done. The projects are technically ready. But some of the commercial negotiations are still ongoing," said Gloria Sebikari, an official of the Uganda Petroleum Authority.

Uganda is now aiming for the remaining hurdles to be resolved allowing for the crucial Final Investment Decision (FID) to be struck with partners this year, paving the way for production to start by 2023. "There's a real desire, a real commitment on both sides. I'm quite optimistic that these discussions will be fruitful," Jessua, of Total, said.

"Now, on the timetable, I think we have to be cautious," he added however. Uganda is relying on oil revenue to repay state debt that stood equivalent to 42 percent of GDP in 2018 — a share that could rise to 50 percent of GDP by early 2021.

Living in fear

The oil projects have proven controversial beyond the boardroom. Some 7,000 people were forced from their land in 2012 in Kabaale, about 150 km south of Buliisa, to make way for a refinery and international airport related to one of the projects. The airport is the only site where construction has begun and is due for completion in 2023.

Some of those expelled opted for land in return, but waited six years for lots they still don't have title deeds for. "We don't own this land legally," said Innocent Tumwebaze, 30, one of those dispossessed.



A boy stands next to a globe statue of the world at the Murchison Falls National Park in northwest Uganda. When exploitable crude oil deposits were discovered in 2006 in the Lake Albert region, Uganda began to imagine itself as a new oil Eldorado. — AFP

"We are cultivating it, but with that fear. Because at any time, you don't know what could happen."

Total and its subcontractor Atacama Consulting have been accused by civil rights groups of making late or below-value compensation payments to 600 people who were tossed from their homes around Kasenyi, where the company plans to build a plant for processing crude.

Total denies the allegations, saying it is "limiting relocations and providing support to those concerned". Six Ugandan and French non-governmental organisations have filed a lawsuit in France against Total, accusing it of not undertaking a "duty of vigilance" when considering the impact on local people. A court near Paris declared on January 30 that it could not try the case, referring it instead to a commercial tribunal.

Wilderness fears

The lawsuit also raised apprehensions about the long-term ecological consequences of mining for oil

in a basin ecosystem home to half of Africa's bird species and more than a third of its mammals.

The impact on Murchison Falls National Park, in particular, has caused grave concern. This green jewel is home to a wide array of species and the spectacular waterfalls of the same name, as well as protected wetlands and the White Nile, under which an oil pipeline will pass. Isaac Ntujju, from Uganda's national environment authority NEMA, said the companies involved "do recognise that... the environment is very sensitive" and the need to be careful.

The government is expected to grant exploration licenses to five further oil blocks in Uganda, including one which crosses into Queen Elizabeth National Park, a UNESCO listed biosphere. "You are going to destroy a lot of biodiversity, a lot of wetlands, a lot of forests... These are impacts we haven't seen yet," warned Frank Muramuzi, executive director of the Uganda-based activist group Nape, one of the signatories to the French lawsuit. — AFP



PITTSBURGH, PA: Jets are parked on runway 28 at the Pittsburgh International Airport in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. — AFP

US could take equity shares in virus-hit airlines

WASHINGTON: The US government could take equity shares in airlines and other troubled but vital American corporations as it moves to stabilize an economy amid the new coronavirus pandemic, top US officials said Sunday. White House economics adviser Larry Kudlow said the government should get a stake in companies that receive direct cash grants from the federal government.

"I think in return for direct cash grants, which is what the airlines have asked for, I see no reason why the American taxpayer shouldn't get a piece," he said on "Fox News Sunday."

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, speaking on CBS's "Face the Nation" talk show, also said the government could take equity positions in return for infusions of taxpayer money.

"As the president said, we'll look at each one of these situations," he said. "Some of them are very good companies that just need liquidity and will get loans.

Some of these companies may need more significant help and we may be taking warrants or equity as well as that.

"The president wants to make sure the American taxpayers are compensated. This is not a bailout."

Mnuchin said any such transactions would take the form of warrants, a type of security that gives its holder the right to buy or sell an asset at a certain price up to a certain date determined when it is emitted. Warrants can thus be converted into shares. The massive financial rescue plan passed by the US Congress designates \$50 billion for the airline industry. Half that sum would take the form of loan guarantees, and the rest direct cash payments. Invoking their importance to the economy and the social risks if they fail, Boeing and the US airlines have demanded an unprecedented government bailout. Air transportation has been one of the hardest hit sectors by the COVID-19 epidemic. Most transatlantic flights by US airlines have been suspended, as have 40 to 70 percent of domestic flights. Bailouts using taxpayer money in the form of direct financial infusions or loans guaranteed by the federal government would follow a decade of growth in which the airlines made billions of dollars. — AFP

Australia to offer wage subsidies

SYDNEY: The Australian government will promise to subsidize employee wages for up to six months, two sources familiar with the plan said, as it seeks to shelter the country's economy from the impact of the global coronavirus pandemic. Australia has ramped up social distancing measures in recent days, restricting public gatherings to just two people and shutting down clubs, gyms, beaches and parks, as it seeks to

capitalize on a slowdown in the growth rate of new infections nationally. Officials in several states will bring in penalties from midnight including fines of up to A\$1,600 and the potential of a six month jail term for anybody found breaching the new rules.

"That stabilization of numbers is what we are looking to do, that flattening of the curve so that we can have enough hospital and intensive care resources to use over the coming weeks if indeed we need those," Deputy Chief Medical Officer Paul Kelly said. "But this is not a time to take the foot off the brake." While the social distancing measures appear to have helped slow the spread of the virus, the shutdown of businesses across the country has led to swiftly rising unemployment and sharply falling consumer spending.

Outrage in Germany as Adidas, H&M stop rent payments

FRANKFURT: Global retailers including Adidas and H&M sparked outrage in Germany on Sunday after announcing they planned to stop paying rent on stores that have been forced to close over the coronavirus outbreak.

Finance Minister Olaf Scholz urged leading companies to refrain from taking rash action that could hurt property owners. "It's irritating when large companies simply announce a halt on paying rent," Scholz told the Bild daily, urging retailers to reach out to landlords to find solutions.

"Now is the time to work together," he said. The move comes after the German government unveiled a major rescue package to protect companies and jobs from the economic impact of the pandemic. It includes a provision that temporarily shields tenants from being kicked out of their homes or business premises if they experience financial hardship over the coronavirus measures. But Justice Minister Christine Lambrecht warned company bosses not to take advantage of the measure. "It is indecent and unacceptable if

financially strong firms now just stop paying their rents," she said in Berlin on Saturday. German sportswear maker Adidas, which made a net profit of nearly two billion euros (\$2.2 billion) in 2019, has been hard hit by a slump in Chinese sales and massive store closures. The company, one of Germany's best-known brands, told DPA news agency that it was "temporarily suspending rental payments, just like many other companies". German Transport Minister Andreas Scheuer said he was "disappointed by Adidas", pointing out that many small landlords would be left out of pocket.

German MEP Katarina Barley tweeted that she had bought her last pair of Adidas trainers, in a post that received over 9,000 likes. But the Bavarian giant hit back, with CEO Kasper Rorsted telling the Monday edition of the Frankfurter Allgemeine daily that the bulk of Adidas's German landlords were "large real estate companies and insurance firms" who had "mostly shown understanding" for the rent freeze decision. — AFP



BERLIN: One of German sporting goods company Adidas outlets is pictured in Berlin on Sunday. Major retailers in Germany say they plan to stop paying rent for stores that were told to close in order to slow the pandemic. — AFP

Economists expect the country's A\$2 trillion (\$1.23 trillion) economy to slip into its first recession in almost three decades because of the pandemic. Two sources with knowledge of the package to be announced yesterday said it would provide funds for six months. Australian Treasurer Josh Frydenberg declined to provide specifics ahead of the official announcement but said it would accelerate the country's economic rebound. "It is about providing additional income support and keeping employees connected to their employer, because once we get to the other side of this we want the recovery as speedy as possible," Frydenberg told the Australian Broadcasting Corp, which reported the package will pay businesses A\$1,500 every fortnight per employee. — Reuters

US package is biggest ever, but may not be enough

BOSTON/WASHINGTON: The Federal Reserve has offered more than \$3 trillion in loans and asset purchases in recent weeks to stop the US financial system from seizing up, but it has not yet directly helped large swaths of the real economy: companies, municipalities and other borrowers with less than perfect credit.

That is partly because America's central bank is not allowed to take much credit risk itself, and loans to lower-rated borrowers have a higher chance of losses. The risk is exacerbated by efforts to stop the spread of coronavirus which have brought economic activity to a screeching halt.

To alleviate that constraint, the US Treasury - whose job is to manage the government's finances and help the Fed keep the economy steady - has taken on some of the risk that Fed loans will not be paid back. It has contributed about \$50 billion from a pool of money called the Exchange Stabilization Fund. That money will be used to absorb losses from Fed loans that go bad. Assuming only a fraction of loans will default, the Treasury contribution has allowed the Fed to lend much more without taking on additional risk.

On Friday, the Treasury got about \$450 billion more from Congress as part of a \$2.2 trillion U.S. stimulus package, greatly increasing its ability to support the economy. Before the bill passed, the stabilization fund had about \$93 billion in assets as of the end of February.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin told Fox News on Sunday he believed the additional funds could help the Fed and Treasury provide about \$4 trillion in loans. But investors and economists said even this additional money may be insufficient, and Congress will likely need to pony up trillions of dollars more before the Fed and Treasury can make a significant dent in the real economy. If it does not, many US companies and local governments are at risk of defaulting on debt or even going under.

That is because of the sheer size of the world's largest economy, the unprecedented scale of economic disruption caused by attempts to contain the virus and higher credit losses if the government has to step in to support weaker borrowers, according to these experts. Scott Miner, chief investment officer of Guggenheim Partners and member of an investor committee that advises the New York Federal Reserve on financial markets, told Reuters he believes the government needs to give the Treasury about \$2 trillion to help prop up the economy. Using expected losses from companies in the lowest tier of investment grade, Miner estimates that the money approved last week might be only enough to absorb losses on loans of about \$900 billion. — Reuters

Business

Jazeera Airways agrees new measures to protect airline from COVID-19 challenges

Airline's medical facility at Kuwait Airport is now equipped for virus screening

KUWAIT: The Board of Directors of Jazeera Airways met virtually on March 19, 2020 to discuss the suspension of flights and present conditions in light of the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic.

The airline's Board agreed to suspend its previous recommendation to distribute dividends to shareholders for the financial year ending December 31, 2019. The suspension comes as part of measures taken by the airline to enable it to weather through current challenges and protect the business in the long-term.



Board of Directors meets virtually

Commenting on the decision taken by the Board of Directors, Chairman Marwan Boodai, said: "On behalf of everyone at Jazeera Airways, I take this opportunity to first extend our deepest gratitude to Kuwait's Government, and in particular the Ministry of Health, for the immediate measures taken to limit a spread of the virus in the State of Kuwait. We are honored to support their efforts in every way possible.

"As a private sector company, we are taking full

responsibility to ensure our business continuity. Therefore, we have implemented decisive measures to safeguard our financial position caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, including the suspension of the 2019 dividend payment and activating the drawdown of bank facilities, that were not previously tapped, to support Jazeera's ongoing liquidity through the coming months. We have always taken prudent and pivotal actions in difficult circumstances. In such times, placing our employees and customers first is our priority by ensuring they are not affected in the long-run. We are committed to our role as a Kuwaiti national carrier and will continue to perform our part to ensure we can support the economy and uphold our national duty."

In a statement, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), said that over 16,000 passenger flights have been cancelled in the Middle East and the number is expected to increase exponentially with the additional measures in different countries. International bookings in the Middle East are down 40 percent year-over-year in March and April, as of March 19, 2020. IATA's statement revealed that Middle East airlines had lost \$7.2 billion in revenue as at March 11, 2020, while ticket refunds have increased by 75 percent in 2020 compared to the same period in 2019 (February 1 to March 11).

In Kuwait alone, IATA added that consistent with the 'Extensive Spread' Scenario published on March 5, the disruptions from COVID-19 could result in 2.9 million loss in passenger volumes and \$547 million loss in base revenues.

Jazeera Airways is building a dedicated auxiliary



special medical facility - Kuwait Passenger Reception Centre (KPRC) - in coordination with the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the Ministry of Health at Kuwait International Airport, to screen all inbound passengers and test them for Coronavirus before entering the arrival hall. The new facility is a remote extension of the Jazeera Terminal 5 (T5) and will be ready when the Kuwaiti Government plans the reopening of Kuwait International Airport to passenger traffic.

The airline had announced placing its fleet of 14 aircraft at the disposal of the State of Kuwait to support its efforts to return Kuwaiti citizens to the country as well as serve for transporting medical products

and equipment needed. The airline has always placed its fleet at the service of Kuwait in times of crisis and continues to do so as part of its national duty.

Boodai concluded: "Jazeera Airways has faced previous challenges in its history and is confident that the underlying position of the airline is capable to successfully manage this current period. We believe the situation is temporary and the aviation market as well as Kuwait economy will stabilize and return to growth, as a result of the joint efforts between the government of the State of Kuwait and the private sector, under the patronage of His Highness the Amir of the country, may God protect him and His Highness the Crown Prince.



TOKYO: Pedestrians wearing face masks walk past a quotation board displaying the share price numbers on the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

Global shares suffer virus chills, CBs offer cold comfort

SYDNEY/HONG KONG: Asian shares slid yesterday as fears mounted that the global coronavirus shutdown could last for months although markets regained some lost ground late in the session with Australia posting a stand-out jump. European stocks slid further in early trading yesterday as coronavirus-fuelled volatility gripped global equities and other financial markets, with oil prices plunging. London slid 1.6 percent, Frankfurt lost 1.0 percent, Paris shed 1.9 percent, Milan tumbled 2.0 percent and Madrid retreated 2.4 percent.

European stock markets had slumped on Friday as investors banked profits from last week's rally sparked by massive government and central bank action to protect economies from the pandemic.

Australia's benchmark ASX200 saw a late surge, closing up 7 percent after Prime Minister Scott Morrison unveiled a \$130 billion (\$79.86 billion) package to help save jobs.

Most other markets were down but trimmed earlier losses. Japan's Nikkei dropped 1.57 percent, Shanghai blue chips were down 0.94 percent, and there were sharper drops in Southeast Asia, with Singapore's benchmark index down 2.95 percent. That left MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan nearly flat.

"Markets in Asia are reacting to concerns about the knock-on economic impact of the coronavirus situation in Europe and North America, rather than Asian case numbers," said Suresh Tantia senior investment strategist at Credit Suisse. JPMorgan now predicts that global GDP could contract at a 10.5 percent annualized rate in the first half of the year.

"We continue to mark down IH20 global GDP forecasts as our assessment of both the global pandemic's reach and the damage related to necessary containment policies has increased," said JPMorgan economist Bruce Kasman. As a result, central banks have mounted an all-out effort to bolster activity with rate cuts and massive asset-buying campaigns, which have at least eased liquidity strains in markets.

China yesterday became the latest to add stimulus with a cut of 20 basis points in a key repo rate, the largest in nearly five years. Singapore also eased as the city-state's bellwether economy braced for a deep recession, while New Zealand's central bank said it would take corporate debt as collateral for loans. Rodrigo Catril, a senior FX strategist at NAB, said the main question for markets was whether all the stimulus would be enough to help the global economy withstand the shock.

"To answer this question, one needs to know the magnitude of the containment measures and for how long they will be implemented," he added. "This is the big unknown and it suggests markets are likely to remain volatile until this uncertainty is resolved."

Dollar not done yet

Bond investors looked to be bracing for a long haul with yields at the very short end of the Treasury curve turning negative and those on 10-year notes dropping a steep 26 basis points last week to last stand at 0.68 percent. That drop has combined with efforts by the Federal Reserve to pump more US dollars into markets, and dragged the currency off recent highs.

Against the yen, the dollar was pinned at 107.74, well off the recent high of 111.71. The euro edged back to \$1.083, after rallying more than 4 percent last week. "Ultimately, we expect the USD will soon reassert itself as one of the strongest currencies," argued analysts at CBA, noting the dollar's role as the world's reserve currency made it a countercyclical hedge for investors.

"This means the dollar can rise because of the deteriorating global economic outlook, irrespective of the high likelihood the US is also in recession." The dollar's retreat had provided a fillip for gold, but fresh selling emerged yesterday as investors were forced to liquidate profitable positions to cover losses elsewhere. The metal was last off 0.23 percent at \$1,613.6 an ounce.

Oil prices were again under water as Saudi Arabia and Russia showed no signs of backing down in their price war even as global transport restrictions hammered demand. — Reuters

How to keep your team focused during uncertain times

By Omer Saleem

Big businesses grow and expand as the market environment changes, and do so even more rapidly now than ever with the accelerating tech growth of today. With this growth and expansion comes a new requirement for corporate positions to evolve with the corporation itself, and it has become critical for the overall success that every position is filled by an employee whose workload is role-based and goal-oriented, the goal being overall success. Today's COVID-19 debacle is a prime example of how well-functioning corporations face surprise twists that can make or break a business, and that goes for every one of your business's departments as much as it goes to your business itself.

Productivity is synonymous with getting things done. Whatever scale your business performs at, a structural understanding of the business and a clear yet fluid job designation must be in place. In a corporate setup, productivity works its way from a departmental direction: is the administrative department managing its daily, weekly, monthly...etc. workload efficiently? Is the marketing department targeting the right audience at the right time? These are all questions that once answered, can determine the level of productivity your business is performing at.

Internal operations must not revolve around one department's work in favor of the other. When managers start to feel like their departments are useless, they will feel the same way about their jobs and their subordinates will get that impression as well. As a business, your number one mission is profit and success, which entails your job

description: goal-setting. Upon setting periodic goals managers can set up strategies that optimize the work of employees within the departments.

For individuals the same goes; how will you approach business as usual? How will your performance lead the business to achieving its annual goals? Tasks will automatically take long-term and short-term forms, and business tools will document these and set timelines and deadlines for them. As a result, the following processes will become key to assessing productivity:

Management

Managers connect the base of the company pyramid to its vertex: they communicate the large-scales goals and transform them into tasks. An open approach will help employees determine these tasks' importance, priority, duration and outcome. It comes down to a simple to-do list, and with every check mark indicating completion, your business comes closer to its goals and your assessment of productivity becomes easier.

Human Resources

Employees are a business's most valuable asset. Working in engaging workspaces affects the well-being of an employee which ultimately equates to the bottom line. Lack of wellness drives up costs of healthcare, leads to more sick-days, and loss of productivity.

Communication

Big businesses incorporate technology to maintain communication, a process that must stay open between any two employees regardless of their positions in the company. Open physical spaces and open virtual channels allow for this communication to happen, and cancel out intimidation and hesitation. It also helps inspire everyone to work efficiently and productively. Email updates regarding various situations must be in place. Today's COVID-19 crisis is an example of this; if it is acknowledged, addressed and updated regularly, employees will sense care and feel reassured.

Technical Support

Your business cannot function without the proper tools. If one employee faces a technical malfunction, be it with the computer mouse or in communicating with a client, this failure must be addressed quickly. These scenarios become structured in your business in the long run, and the reactions to them become automatic. However, these reactions must be updated in the form of policies and regulations. If a policy for working from home is in place, then a virus outbreak becomes easier to deal with as employees can just set up offices at home, update their management boards regularly and stay in contact with their managers for new priority tasks or completed tasks that need adjustment or discussion.

It can take a business years to make a mark. While there are traditional methods to achieving success, maintaining it can take some tailoring to fit every business's unique goals and processes. In all cases, however, employees are a business's most valuable asset, which must be valued. — Omer Saleem is Director and Deputy CEO of Proven

Lloyd's underwriters adapt to home working amid lockdown

LONDON: Thousands of London's underwriters took their stamps and fountain pens home last week, which they use to sign insurance contracts, but they won't need them.

Working at home due to the coronavirus lockdown, they have abandoned the normal tools of their trade and are turning to email and other electronic systems to agree terms with the brokers who put business their way. It's a huge change from a normal day at Lloyd's of London in the heart of the capital's financial district, where underwriters receive queues of brokers at their desks to haggle over terms, before sealing the deals with an old-fashioned company stamp and an ink signature.

Each deal can require up to 20 signatures and stamps. With the closure of the underwriters' floor, the world's leading commercial insurance market, Lloyd's - which started life in Edward Lloyd's coffee house in 1688 - has gone fully online for the first time.

The lockdown could prove a watershed moment. If the shift goes off without any major hitches, it will likely smooth the way for the market to go far more digital, underwriters and brokers said.

So the mass working from home is effectively a test of the business's prospects for long-term survival as it looks to cut costs and modernize in the face of overseas competition.

"Edward Lloyd's coffee shop was a social environment where merchant traders could gather - today you have the internet, you have mobile phones," said Bruce Carman, chief underwriting officer of insurance firm

Hive Aero, who has worked in the Lloyd's market for more than 30 years.

"The speed of trade should be far quicker than someone traipsing around the marketplace in leather shoes."

Goodbye to all that?

Lloyd's runs a market of more than 90 underwriting firms, who price specialist risks from ships to sculptures. Hundreds of broking firms arrange insurance deals between their corporate clients and the Lloyd's underwriters. Lloyd's already had a plan to move to electronic exchanges, but

many brokers and underwriters had resisted, arguing complex transactions were more easily handled face to face.

The shutdown highlights how the coronavirus crisis is putting a brake on centuries-old traditions. Lloyd's was focused on shipping when it started 332 years ago and, until the closure, a bell still rang on the underwriting floor when a ship sank at sea, and marine insurers recorded the shipwrecks in a loss book with quill pens. The bell was rung last week to mark the shutting of the so-called "underwriting room" in response to the pandemic.—Reuters



India women seaweed divers swim against the tide of climate change

Rise in sea temperature and salinity hit seaweed growth

RAMANATHAPURAM: In a blue plastic barrel, Meenakshi Mookupori packed her belongings for a five-day stay on an island in the Indian Ocean, off the Coromandal coast of south India. Besides her clothes, toothbrush and soap, she included her diving gear - a worn-out pair of black socks, a locally made pair of goggles, cheap plastic slippers, cloth gloves, a round metallic plate with straps - and pain killers.

Mookupori, 56, is one of nearly 2,000 women in Tamil Nadu state who dive to collect seaweed used in making agar, a gelatinous substance that becomes a thickener in food and medicines. "I started accompanying my mother and grandmother to sea when I was eight or 10," she said, as she helped load cans of drinking water onto the boat.

"Those days, the seaweed collection was huge. We would bring back bags full. Now the quantity has reduced. The number of days we harvest the seaweed has also reduced. The sea has changed and we also had to." Rising sea levels, hotter temperatures and stronger currents along this coast - considered one of the best for commercial seaweed cultivation - are some of the changes Mookupori is seeing.

Scientists say they are caused by climate change. "With the rise in sea temperature and salinity, seaweed growth has declined in the last decade," said K. Eswaran, a scientist who heads the field research unit of the Central Salt and Marine Chemicals Research Institute in Ramanathapuram district. "Women who harvest seaweed have definitely been impacted, with their incomes coming down by at least 20%," he said.

Down under

Mookupori grew up watching her mother leave

home before dawn, board a boat and go to work harvesting in the Gulf of Mannar. The shallow bay with a 365-kilometre coastline is known for its coral reefs and is home to endangered species such as dugongs, a marine mammal related to the manatee. In 1986, the region was declared a national biodiversity park under India's Wildlife Protection Act and collecting natural resource there was prohibited. A Tamil Nadu government report noted at the time that the major environmental threat to the gulf region was quarrying of coral for production of calcium carbide and lime.

But creation of the marine park meant restrictions on accessing the bay's 21 uninhabited islands to fish - or to collect seaweed - for 125 local villages. "It was like they were declared thieves in their own backyard," said Venugopal, the program head for the non-profit International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) Trust. "The national park excluded them from that space, making it challenging for the women to earn a livelihood, instead of giving them rights to the sea and including them in the conservation program."

However, with few other options to earn a living, the gulf's seaweed collectors have continued to illegally ply their trade. Raniamma, 50, one of the harvesters who works with Mookupori, said she always keeps an eye out for anti-poaching officials when she and other seaweed harvesters sail to the islands for a harvest. Being caught there can carry a fine. "But if we don't camp on the island, we are unable to collect enough seaweed to sell," she said, rolling up her sari and slipping into leggings and socks held up by rubber bands.

For each five kilograms of wet seaweed she collects, Raniamma earns 75 Indian rupees (about \$1). Once the seaweed is dried and cleaned, it is sold by

traders for 400 rupees (\$5) per five kilos to domestic industry buyers. "We only take what we need from the sea, which is seaweed," Raniamma said. "The anti-poaching officers don't understand. We live off the sea and we are also its guardians. What we see down there is precious and we know it," she said.

Local knowledge

The women of Bharathinagar in Ramanathapuram district, who have waded into the waters of India's southeast coast for decades, possess a wealth of knowledge about the gulf waters. Now 60-year-old Mariamma Masanam, her fingers gnarled after years of harvests, can see conditions shifting. "We feel the changes. The waters are rougher and we have to spend longer hours underwater to fill our bags. We are also travelling farther from the coast than we did earlier," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Ramanathapuram district wildlife warden AS Marimuthu has also seen the changes, and said he was looking for ways to collaborate with the women. "They have never been a big problem for us but we hope they will play a bigger role in managing the marine reserve with us." Under a United Nations Development Program initiative, for instance, eco-development committees have been set-up in fishing villages, with women educated on conservation and given training for alternative careers to reduce their dependence on the sea.

For now, to deal with the changing conditions and protect their seaweed beds, the women have cut the numbers of days they harvest and discarded the metal scrapers they once used, now gathering the seaweed with their hands instead. To counter charges of over-

harvesting, they ply their trade only about 12 days a month and ensure they rotate between islands. None of them harvest between April and June, the main breeding season for fish. But their biggest push to protect the ecosystem and their livelihoods has been to begin cultivating - as well as harvesting - seaweed.

In addition to wild harvesting, the women now grow seaweed on bamboo rafts, as part of an effort promoted by the Tamil Nadu government. But set-up costs are significant and harvests unpredictable, the women say. Still, "there are more than 600 women who have shifted to cultivating seaweed and that has helped the ecosystem tremendously," said Eswaran. Growing seaweed also has helped the women get a harvest in summer months when wild harvesting is harder as higher temperatures and disease outbreaks cut seaweed growth, he said.

The last generation?

Mookupori and Raniamma, however, consider themselves likely to be the last generation of seaweed harvesters along this coast. All of the six women on the boat with Mookupori are over 50, with deeply tanned skin, greying hair and wrinkled faces. The women talk about the harsh conditions of the sea, the rising tides and the great physical strength required to hold one's breath and go down to the depths. But with every passing year, yields are falling and fines for wild harvesting increasing, they said, making their work an unattractive job option for their children. "Our children would never do this," Mookupori said. "In fact, sometimes we take them to the islands just for a picnic and show them a little of what we do. But when we stop diving, there will be no one else." — Reuters

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY

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

- Advanced Laparoscopic surgery
- Advanced Hysteroscopic surgery
- Genital tract infections
- Diagnosis and treatment of infertility
- Treatment of polycystic ovaries
- Pregnancy antenatal care
- All normal and caesarean deliveries
- Gynaecological Plastic Surgery
- Screening of cervical cancer (Pap smear test)
- Treatment of menopause symptoms
- Various contraceptives
- Urinary problems



مستشفى طبية
TAIBAH HOSPITAL

1808088 taibahospital.com
@taibahospital

OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY



Dr. Maged Gohar
Specialist of Obstetrics & Gynecology



Dr. Ibrahim Aboelmaged
Specialist of Obstetrics & Gynecology



Dr. Fatimah Al-Hadhouh
Specialist of Obstetrics & Gynecology



Dr. Haya Ahmad Alkhdher
Specialist of Obstetrics & Gynecology



Dr. Jonajane Qutain
Obstetrics & Gynecology Doctor



Dr. Nermin Geigis
Obstetrics & Gynecology Doctor

مستشفى طبية
TAIBAH HOSPITAL

1808088 taibahospital.com
@taibahospital

Dr. Rany Essam Mitwally
Senior Registrar

Dr. Ahmed Hosni Abd Elhamid
Consultant

Dr. Abeer Khattab
Specialist

Ophthalmology Services

- Cataract Surgery
- Glaucoma
- Retina
- General Ophthalmology
- Follow-Up All Treatments

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA @hadclinckw

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 Abu Ali
Consultant ENT, Head & Neck, Facial Plastic Surgeon.

Endoscopic Sinus Surgery

Septoplasty and turbinate reduction surgery by laser or RF

Snoring and OSAP Surgery

Rhinoplasty with open and closed techniques

Microscopic Middle Ear Surgery and Tympanoplasty

Salivary gland and parotid surgery

Thyroid and parathyroid surgery

Micro laryngeal surgery

1 888 883
www.qmc-kuwait.com

qmc Kuwait

Our Doctors Provide care For the entire Family

Book your appointments today!

Dr. Kiran Turaka
Ophthalmologist

Dr. Zareena Zahir
Ophthalmologist

Dr. Hasan Khan
Senior Cardiologist

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

50721507
24551555
www.exircenterkw.com

EXIR MEDICAL SUBSPECIALITIES CENTER
Block No.4 Jahra - Kuwait

WE ACCEPT ALL MAJOR INSURANCES

Tel: 24568857 / 24568859 info@exircenterkw.com www.exircenterkw.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 & pediatric
- Minimally Invasive Endoscopic sinus surgery including Balloon sinuplasty
- Minimally Invasive Microscopic & Endoscopic Ear surgery
- Diagnosis & treatment of Otolaryngology (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 Alalber st., Building 04, Floor 13.
Tel.: (+965) 22060777
@Drbuhaimed, @Renovebb, @dardonabb
Email: drbuhaimed@beautybeyond.com.kw
www.beautybeyond.com.kw

Renova
BEAUTY & BEYOND

To advertise on this Page

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

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

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

مستشفى دار الشفاء
Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tele:1802 555

daralshifa

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

Specialized in:

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

alsalam.int.hospital

Dr. Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj
ENT Consultant, Laryngologist

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

Experienced In:

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

2536 0000
www.royalehayat.com

ROYALE HAYAT HOSPITAL

Dr. Hani Haider
General Surgery Consultant

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

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

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

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

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 Fitzaloscope)
- ◆ 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

مستشفى دار الشفاء
Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tele:1802 555

daralshifa
Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com

DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

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

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

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

Academic Certificates – Training

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

Scope of clinical Practice.

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

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

Lifestyle | Gossip



HANKS AND WILSON RETURN TO US AFTER BEING TREATED FOR CORONAVIRUS

Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson will continue "sheltering in place and social distancing" after their return to the United States. The Hollywood couple, both 63, were diagnosed with Covid-19 earlier this month while in Australia and after being treated for the virus there, they flew back to Los Angeles via private jet this week. Tom tweeted: "Hey, Folks... We're home now and, like the rest of America, we carry on with sheltering in place and social distancing. Many, many thanks to everyone in Australia who looked after us. Their care and guidance made possible our return to the USA. And many thanks to all of you who reached out with well wishes. Rita and I so appreciate it. Hanx." The pair spent weeks in iso-

lation in Australia before flying home and Tom was reportedly spotted doing a celebratory dance at the airport after landing. Tom and Rita were in Australia for pre-production of Biz Lurhmann's Elvis Presley biopic, in which Tom will play Colonel Tom Parker, Presley manager, when they discovered they had both tested positive for the virus. Earlier this month, Tom confirmed he and Rita were Covid-19 positive when he took to Instagram to explain their symptoms. The 'Saving Mr. Banks' actor wrote at the time: "Hello, folks. Rita and I are down here in Australia. We felt a bit tired, like we had colds, and some body aches. Rita had some chills that came and went. Slight fevers too. To play things right, as is needed in the world right now, we

were tested for the coronavirus, and were found to be positive." And the following day, Tom gave his fans an update on his health. He wrote: "Hello folks. @ritawilson and I want to thank everyone here Down Under who are taking such good care of us. We have Covid-19 and are in isolation so we do not spread it to anyone else. There are those for whom it could lead to a very serious illness. "We are taking it one-day-at-a-time. There are things we can all do to get through this by following the advice of experts and taking care of ourselves and each other, no? Remember, despite all the current events, there is no crying in baseball. (sic)"

Prince's family claim they have received no money from his estate

The star - who died in April 2016, at the age of 57, from a fentanyl overdose at his Paisley Park estate - left all his assets to his six siblings in his will and now his sisters Sharon and Norrine and brother John Nelson have filed a legal claim seeking "payment for services and efforts provided to the estate". According to court papers obtained by TheBlast.com, the trio say they

have spent "considerable time and investment in business matters related to the Estate. Unlike others, who have performed services for the Prince Estate, SNJ has not received any financial sums for numerous and repeated services they have contributed to the Estate." They also allege that although they have not received any money, others have been paid "millions". The court documents added that they have had to

rely "solely on their pension, social security, personal savings and loans from friends to cover the costs needed to support the Prince Estate despite the millions paid to advisors, attorneys and others approved by the Court." As this Court is aware, the Estate has now been on-going for over three years. In this time, millions have been paid to the Personal Representatives, their accountants, attorneys, and legal advisors." Meanwhile, Prince's sister Tyka Nelson previously revealed that she predicted he was going to pass away as he told her he had "done everything he's come to do" in an emotional chat in 2014. Sharing their conversation, she said: "I was at McDonalds and I got a phone call from an unknown number. He said, 'Is this Tyka? It's Prince here', and I said, 'After all this time I know your voice, I know who you are.' We were just walking and talking and he said, 'I think I've done everything I've come to do', so that was him telling me it was time. "I thought I'm going to buy earrings for his funeral, I'm buying a necklace for his funeral and I'm planning this, I'm telling all my relatives Prince is passing, and so it took an actual three years from the time I got the call at McDonalds. So when I got the call that he had passed, I knew immediately what they meant because I was just kind of waiting for that day. I don't know if it's Native American history - we do sense things as a people."



Lady Gaga's father slammed for asking public to help pay restaurant staff

Lady Gaga's father has been slammed for asking the public for \$50,000 to pay his restaurant staff. Joe Germanotta shared on Twitter that he has had to let 30 employees of his New York business Joanne Trattoria go due to the Covid-19 pandemic and a GoFundMe page seeking donations to pay his staff has been set up. Although his daughter is worth an estimated \$275 million, Joe tweeted: "I'm doing the best I can but we had to close Joanne for the month. Our staff needs some help financial. Any help for our employees will be appreciated." He then shared a link to the GoFundMe, which stated: "In the uncertain time of this pandemic, the Upper West Side favorite local institution - Joanne Trattoria - has had to lay off almost 30 employees until we are able to reopen our doors." "Our amazing staff is made up of primarily hourly workers who depend on our payroll, and who overwhelmingly live paycheck to paycheck." Our goal of \$50,000 would cover our typical payroll for approximately 2 weeks, and 100 per cent of the profits would go to our hourly workers to provide those necessary items like food, childcare, and medical expenses. "We're asking our Joanne Trattoria community of neighbors, friends, family and fans: If you've enjoyed us in the past, have had a friendly encounter with someone on our incredible service staff, or even if you hope to enjoy us in the future, we'd be so appreciative if you would consider donating to our staff to help them through this difficult time (sic)." Many people were horrified that the public was being asked to help, when Gaga has the money to assist the staff. Blogger Perez Hilton tweeted: "Lady GaGa is worth hundreds of millions of dollars AND is part owner in her family's restaurant. "Yet her also wealthy father has just taken to Twitter to ask the public to help financially the workers they have stopped paying." Joe's tweet has since been deleted and the GoFundMe page has been taken down.

Louise Redknapp finding lockdown 'really tough'

Louise Redknapp is struggling to cope with the Covid-19 lockdown. The 45-year-old singer and her family are adhering to the UK government's guidelines on social distancing in a bid to slow the spread of the virus but Louise admitted trying to keep her eldest son Charley, 15, at home is tough. Louise's former husband Jamie Redknapp, 46, recently revealed that while Charley is in lockdown with Louise, their son Beau, 11, is with him. Speaking to Rylan Clark-Neal on his BBC Radio 2 show, she said: "I'm in the same situation as everyone else of course, but actually all good, the family are all good so that's the main thing. "Do you know what, if I'm really honest, I'm really bad at staying in all the time and I've obviously got a teenager and trying to keep a teenager indoors is equally tough, but I'm actually just trying to look at it as time to spend with the family which I don't always get to do if I'm working so I'm trying to make it positive but it's tough, it's really tough." However, Louise acknowledged that there are people who are having a much tougher time than she is and she praised medical personnel for their hard work. She said: "And, you know, I know there are lot of people going through a lot worse. Our NHS staff are doing incredible so I'm just trying to keep up with what's going on and abide by the rules really." Louise also spoke about her album 'Heavy Love', which was released in January, and said she was pleasantly surprised by how it was received. She said: "I loved doing it, I loved making it. It's quite a personal album. I actually had no expectations. I just put it out thinking it would be great if it does ok, but do you know what's been really nice for me, it's had great reviews, and it's been quite critically acclaimed in the pop world and, for me, I've never had an album that's done that before so I'm kind of proud of that because I wrote it. Yes, so I'm really excited about it."

Khloe Kardashian hits back at fan

Khloe Kardashian clapped back at a fan for blasting her treatment of Jordyn Woods. Jordyn was the best friend of Khloe's younger sister Kylie Jenner, 22, until she admitted to sharing a kiss with Khloe's ex Tristan in February 2019 but fans have not been please to see Khloe, 35, forgive Tristan but cut ties with Jordyn. Jordyn, 22, claimed during an episode of Jada Pinkett-Smith's 'Red Table Talk' that Tristan - who is the father of Khloe's 23-month-old daughter True - kissed her without her consent. One fan wrote on Twitter: "So they all forgave tristan for cheating on khloe, so they must forgive jordyn too since he kissed her without her consent! I love all woman's in this family but I can't agree with hypocrisy (sic)." However, Khloe hit back and wrote: "We have forgiven both parties! And the nonconsent thing is near say. The entire story is hearsay but I'll let you guys run with whatever you want to run with. "If you are a true fan then you would have followed my Insta stories

where I have repeatedly stated how I have forgiven both parties and I want both parties to be in peace. And this is for everyone's mental well being (sic)." Meanwhile, Khloe recently praised Tristan's parenting skills, hailing him as a "great person". The reality star shared: "I know her dad is a great person. I know how much he loves her and cares about her. So I want him to be there." Khloe and Tristan, 29, are determined to do their best for their daughter, even though they're no longer together. And Khloe previously admitted she picked up tips on how to co-parent by watching her own parents, Kris Jenner and the late Robert Kardashian, navigate the challenge of raising their children. Khloe said: "I always remember though, how amazing [they were]. "I'm sure now that I have gone through it myself trying to co-parent that they were so seamless with it. I never, ever heard my parents talk disrespectfully about the other one."



Timberlake blames double denim fashion fail on being 'young and in love'

Justin Timberlake blamed his double denim fashion fail on being "young and in love". The "Sexy Back" hitmaker famously sported the outfit to match with his then-girlfriend Britney Spears as they walked the red carpet at the 2001 American Music Awards, but he has insisted he did it because he fell for her badly. Speaking to former *NSYNC bandmate Lance Bass' podcast, The Daily Popcast, he said: "You do a lot of things when you're young and in love."

The 39-year-old singer previously worked with denim company Levi's. Speaking back in 2019, he said: "When you work with such an institution like Levi's, you don't want them to be anything but Levi's. And so it's just a little bit of a swerve here and there on fit or cut or wash or texture and that's it. And then saying, wouldn't it be fun to make a workman's vest, for instance, or wouldn't it be fun to throw a hoodie on a trucker jacket? For the first two seasons, we created a bit of a left-of-cen-

tre aesthetic and we just want to continue to play up on that ... I like to mix things up always." And Justin loves how denim can be adapted to suit any style. He shared: "I get to travel to a lot of different places and I think the biggest part of it, to be honest, is to create something that you feel could be worn in Paris, could be worn in New York, could be worn in Stockholm, could be worn in L.A. and could be worn in Memphis, Tennessee."



Lifestyle | Features



This handout picture released by the Calanques National Park (Parc national des Calanques) shows a group of dolphins swimming in the Mediterranean Sea at the Calanques National Park, off the coast of southeastern France, on March 19, 2020, after a strict lockdown came into effect in France on March 17 aimed of stopping the spread of COVID-19.—AFP photos



This handout picture released by the Calanques National Park (Parc national des Calanques) shows shows shearwater birds on the Mediterranean Sea at the Calanques National Park.

Nature takes back world's empty city streets

As humans retreat into their homes as more and more countries go under coronavirus lockdown, wild animals are slipping cover to explore the empty streets of some of our biggest cities. Wild boar have descended from the hills around Barcelona while sika deer are nosing their way around the deserted metro stations of Nara, Japan. Indian social media has gone wild about footage of a stag scampering through Dehradun, the capital

quickly. When a place becomes quiet, they're straight in there."

Animals 'spring of love'

Animals and birds that normally live in urban parks, like sparrows and pigeons are also more likely to venture beyond their usual territories. Julliard said, "freeing a space for other animals". While the dawn and dusk choruses have been bringing comfort to many quarantined city dwellers, the museum's acoustics specialist Jerome Sueur said that doesn't mean there are more urban birds than before.

It is more that with reduced traffic noise we can hear them better. Some, however, "stop singing when there is noise, so now they are letting themselves go." "Animals are shaking off human noise pollution," Sueur said. And the timing could not have been better time as they embark on their mating season. With the hunting season suspended in several European countries, this promises to be a spring and possibly a summer of love for the animal kingdom.

It is certainly great news for species like the common toad and the spotted salamander. The amoros amphibians are being spared from being "crushed crossing busy roads" in their haste to find a mate, said Jean-Noel Rieffel, of the French biodiversity office (OFB). With few dog walkers to disturb them, baby fawns are also getting an idyllic start to life while birds like Mediterranean gulls who nest along the sandy banks of rivers are being left undisturbed. In the Calanques National Park overlooking the Mediterranean near France's second city of Marseille, wildlife "is reclaiming its natural habitat with surprising speed", said the park's president, Didier Reault. With walkers and boating banned, "the puffins who used to stay on the islets in the highest protected areas are not gathering on the sea," he said.

Birdwatching to stay sane

And it is the same for plants. Wild orchids — which are supposed to be protected — are often picked by walkers when they blossom in late April and May, said Rieffel. This year they will be spared that fate. And in the cities and

suburbs, unmowed lawns will be a source of "bounty for bees, bumble bees and butterflies", Julliard added. But for him, the biggest change is the effect this is having on humans. "The most important phenomenon perhaps is our relationship with nature changing — with people locked up in their homes realising how much they miss nature," he said.

he told his new-found followers. However, there are also down sides to the lockdown for nature.

Work to limit invasive species has been all but halted, cautioned Loic Obled of the OFB, as well as that to help endangered species. And when the lockdown finally ends, Rieffel warned that "people will have a need of



Picture released by Aton Chile showing an approximately one-year-old puma in the streets of Santiago on March 24, 2020 which according to the Agricultural and Livestock Service (SAG) came down from the nearby mountains in search for food as less people are seen in the streets due to the coronavirus, COVID-19, pandemic.

of the northern state of Uttarakhand. Gangs of wild turkeys have been strutting the streets of Oakland, California, while a puma turned up in the centre of the Chilean capital Santiago, which is under curfew.

"This is the habitat they once had and that we've taken away from them," said Marcelo Giagnoni, the head of Chile's agricultural and livestock service that helped police capture the curious big cat. While sightings of dolphins in Venice's canals turned out to be fanciful, they have been popping up in ports elsewhere in the Mediterranean as emboldened wildlife takes "free rein to wander our cities and towns", said Romain Julliard, head of research at the French Natural History Museum. He told AFP that foxes were at the vanguard of the new urban explorers. "They change their behaviour very



Aerial view of empty Plaza de Armas square in Santiago, Chile.

Stuck indoors, with their worlds reduced to a few square meters (yards), confined urbanites have suddenly become avid birdwatchers. British ornithologist David Lindo, who is known as the "Urban Birder", has been tweeting and live streaming birds he spots from the roof of the building in Spain where he has been quarantined. "The sky is a great arena, anything can fly past and, at the very least, it will give you peace. My message is simple: keep looking up,"

nature and there is a risk of too many visitors (to natural parks), which won't be good for the flora and fauna." The birds which have nested in the yard of an abandoned school or factory will find themselves disturbed, he warned. Nature's respite from man may be rather short-lived.—AFP



People take part in a mass round of applause to show their appreciation for the nurses and frontline healthcare staff during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, in the Lebanese capital Beirut.—AFP

Lebanese applaud virus-battling health workers from balconies

Cheering erupted from balconies and windows in Lebanon on Sunday evening, as the country's citizens celebrated their "heroic" medical workers battling the coronavirus pandemic. The initiative spread online with the Arabic hashtag "a cheer for the heroes", shared by public figures including journalists, actors and the Arab pop star Ragheb Alama. In one Beirut neighborhood, a woman draped in a Lebanese flag sang the national anthem as her neighbors drummed on pots and pans, an AFP journalist said.

Elsewhere, Lebanese played drums and blew vuvuzelas, sharing videos of

the street performances online. Similar initiatives have gained attention from Italy to France but they have remained rare in the Arab world. Lebanon has reported 438 COVID-19 cases to date, with 10 deaths. To try to contain the spread of the virus, Lebanon has imposed isolation measures on its population until April 12, with a nighttime curfew in effect. Schools, universities, restaurants and bars are closed. Many fear the country's healthcare system could be overwhelmed by cases.—AFP

Country music star Joe Diffie dies of coronavirus

Joe Diffie, a Grammy award-winning country music singer who had several chart-topping hits in the 1990s, has died of coronavirus. He was 61. Diffie's death was announced on his Facebook page, which said he died on Sunday "from complications of coronavirus." His death came just two days after he had announced that he had tested positive for the virus and was receiving medical care. "My family and I are asking for privacy at this time," he said. "We want to remind the public and all my fans to be vigilant, cautious and careful during this pandemic."

Diffie, who was from Oklahoma, had several hit songs during the 1990s including "Pickup Man," "Prop Me Up Beside the Jukebox (If I Die)" and "John Deere Green." His first album, "A Thousand Winding Roads," was released in 1990 and including his hit song "Home." Nearly 137,000 people have tested positive for coronavirus in the United States and there have been more than 2,400 deaths.—AFP



In this file photo Musician Joe Diffie performs during Tootsie's Orchid Lounge 54th Birthday Bash at Tootsie's Orchid Lounge in Nashville, Tennessee.—AFP

Penderecki: Avant-gardist loved by Hollywood

Polish composer and conductor Krzysztof Penderecki, who blazed a trail in classical music with innovative religious and symphonic works, died aged 86 on Sunday in his home city of Krakow after a long illness, his family told local media. Venerated as one of the 20th Century's most influential composers, Penderecki worked with symphony orchestras across the world and won fans among top film directors including Stanley Kubrick, Martin Scorsese and David Lynch who commissioned film scores.

His music appears in Kubrick's The Shining, Scorsese's Shutter Island, Lynch's Twin Peaks and, more recently, in an episode of TV show Black Mirror. A key figure of the 1960s avant-garde, Penderecki remained respectful of great religious and symphonic traditions while blazing a trail in contemporary classical music. Thanks to a temporary political thaw in Poland's communist regime at the time, Penderecki's works managed to break through the Iron Curtain and achieve swift international success.

The composer made use of unusual intervals, tone clusters and glissandi and used the timbres of instruments in innovative ways. Such techniques featured in "Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima", a 1960 work for large string orchestra that won much recognition. Penderecki did

not shy away from unconventional effects: He used sheet metal, whistles, pieces of glass and metal rubbed with a file, rattles, electric sounds, saws, typewriters or alarm bells to add sonic texture to compositions. He also invented music notation symbols to match his original means of expression.



This file photo shows Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki applauding during the opening of the Krzysztof Penderecki European Centre for Music in Lusławice, southeastern Poland.—AFP

Later, Penderecki gradually abandoned his avant-garde sound. Criticized by some in the musical community for backtracking, this evolution won him applause among non-specialists. He returned to neo-tonal, post-Romantic writing, with content and form more readily accessible to a larger audience.—AFP



In this file photo Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex (left), and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex leave after attending the Endeavour Fund Awards at Mansion House in London.—AFP

Trump says US won't pay Harry and Meghan security

President Donald Trump said Sunday that the United States would not pay security costs for Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, appearing to confirm that the royal couple have moved to live in California. They reportedly flew by private jet from Canada to Los Angeles before the border between the two countries closed because of the deadly coronavirus outbreak. The couple, who had been living in Canada for several months, rocked the royal family earlier this year with their decision to no longer repre-

sent the British monarchy and to pursue a new, independent life. "I am a great friend and admirer of the Queen & the United Kingdom," Trump tweeted.

"It was reported that Harry and Meghan, who left the Kingdom, would reside permanently in Canada. Now they have left Canada for the US however, the US will not pay for their security protection. They must pay!" Meghan grew up in Los Angeles and her mother, Doria Ragland, still lives in the city. The one-time actress has a network of friends and work contacts in

Los Angeles, where she could now restart her career. Disney announced on Thursday that she will narrate a new film about a family of African elephants. Harry was reportedly caught in a hoax telephone call recently in which he attacked Trump for his stance on climate change. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex will formally step back from royal duties on March 31.—AFP

Gulf's massive expatriate workforce fears virus limbo

DOHA: Millions of migrant workers across the Gulf face uncertainty as host countries lock down, employers withhold wages or mull redundancies, and strict coronavirus containment measures lead to deportations and confinement. "We've been in lockdown for the last eight to 10 days, we don't know when it will end," said a 27-year-old Pakistani engineer in Qatar beginning a second week under mandatory quarantine. "The basic issue we are facing now is groceries. The government is providing us with food but only after some days - and little things only."

He is among tens of thousands of workers strictly confined to Doha's Industrial Area after dozens in the blue-collar district tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. Advocacy groups including Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty warn that cramped accommodation and inadequate sanitation endanger migrant workers across the Gulf, who may not have access to healthcare. They also face salaries going unpaid and arbitrary dismissal or deportation - an outcome that could spell disaster for families at home dependent on their income.

'Already disadvantaged'

"Migrant workers in the Gulf are already disadvantaged (under) a labor governance system that gives employers excessive powers over migrant workers and drives their abuse and exploitation," HRW's Gulf researcher Hiba Zayadin told AFP.

"Gulf countries should go above and beyond in introducing measures to prevent the spread of the virus in migrant accommodations and migrant detention centers."

With the region so far reporting 3,200 cases of the disease, Amnesty said that workers "trapped in camps" are particularly vulnerable, enduring conditions that make social distancing impossible. Foreign workers in the oil-rich Gulf region, predominantly from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, account for around 10 percent of all migrants worldwide. Many who spoke to AFP say they now fear for their health and job security.

Saudis receive paid leave

Some laborers in Saudi Arabia, home to 10 million expat workers, complained that they were required by bosses to work while Saudis were permitted paid quarantine leave. One said he was told to accept unpaid leave if he felt unwell, but opted to continue working. "Many workers in the private sector are suffering due to the closure of most sectors, as many owners force the workers to sit in their homes without a salary," an Arab diplomat based in Riyadh told AFP. "And despite the kingdom's compensation to the private sector, the owners use it to cover their losses due to the closure without caring for the workers."

After Saudi Arabia, the UAE hosts the Gulf's second largest migrant labor force with 8.7 million, fol-

lowed by Kuwait with 2.8 million. In Kuwait, Um Sabrine, an Egyptian beauty salon manager, said she would not be paid because of the government's closure of non-essential businesses. While she plans to sue her employer, many in the region are reluctant to speak out for fear of reprisals. Others believe the health situation is worse in their home countries.

World Cup rolls on

Gas-rich Qatar's record on migrant labor has been under the spotlight since it won the right to host the 2022 World Cup, with seven new football stadiums as well as towering skyscrapers to be built by an army of foreign workers. Ninety percent of Qatar's 2.75 million people are expats. Many are from developing countries and working on projects linked to the tournament - stadium construction has continued even as other businesses have shuttered.

Rights groups have previously criticized labor practices in Qatar, which has responded with initiatives to enhance worker welfare. But the lockdown of the densely populated Industrial Area has drawn scrutiny. "They identified a ground-zero and it was very easy for them to shut it down quickly," said one Western diplomat. "Would they have done it if it had been somewhere in the Pearl? I don't know," she added, referring to an artificial island popular with wealthy expatriates. Qatari officials insisted last week's sealing of the area, now ringed by the police, was essential to save lives. They also say

they have flooded the area with medical resources and pledged to pay missed salaries.

'I'm scared'

The International Labor Organization's Doha office said several employers had transferred staff to more spacious lodgings over fears cramped conditions could incubate the virus, while others have improved hygiene. A Sri Lankan supermarket worker, 23, said his communal villa was sanitized and cleaned in response to COVID-19, but anxiety persisted. "I'm homesick - my mother keeps asking me to come back." One Turkish salesman, 49, told AFP he was self-isolating as a precaution and was on unpaid leave. "I'm scared to get infected," said the man who, like many Gulf expats, is ineligible for sick pay.

At least 20 Nepalese migrant laborers were deported by Qatar for ignoring containment rules. Nepalese officials told AFP, even though Kathmandu has sought to block returnees. The ILO questioned how long companies could continue paying workers as the crisis continues, chilling Gulf economies which have been blindsided by the plunge in oil prices. Mass redundancies, avoided so far, would do huge economic damage to countries sending labor to the region, said the head of the ILO's Qatar office, Houtan Homayounpour. "The impact is disastrous." — AFP



DUBAI: Men wait to cross a street on March 28, 2020 as the emirate tries to stem the spread of the COVID-19. — AFP

Govt mulls locking down expat...

Continued from Page 1

one million expats, a majority of them blue-collar workers, are residing. She said the lockdown has become necessary to resolve the problem of not knowing the source of the disease.

MP Khalil Al-Saleh said he called the ministers of interior and health and asked them to convince authorities to lock down some areas like Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Mahboula, saying this has become inevitable because several workers have contracted the disease from unknown sources. A number of MPs urged the government to utilize the current period and adjust the demographic structure in the country, which is tilted in favor of expatriates.

Private schools continue...

Continued from Page 1

"We know that the IGCSE exams were canceled by Cambridge, so why are the schools forcing teachers to continue teaching live online? They have not told us when we will start in August and are just waiting for the ministry to resolve the fee uncertainty faced by many schools," explained a teacher working in a private British-curriculum school. None of the teachers and parents Kuwait Times spoke with wanted to be named for fear of repercussions from schools. School administrations approached by Kuwait Times did not respond to requests for interviews.

Some schools have cancelled the planned spring break - it's unclear with or without ministry approval - and are having teachers expand online learning. "The psychological impact on most of the teachers is dreadful. When the ministry announcement was made, the school had plans to put on more live Zoom teaching lessons on its timetable and increase the workload," the teacher noted.

The reason, teachers contend, that private schools are continuing with e-learning is that this will justify schools' requirement for the final installment of tuition fees. But it's unclear how effective or organized the e-learning is across all private schools, and also what e-learning will mean for students in the fall. Will they repeat everything they are doing now via e-learning? Or does continuation of e-learning mean they can complete the year in June and move on to the next grade? Parents want to know.

"Teachers are struggling mentally, and parents feel frustrated with the sheer madness of the amount of new material constantly sent to them of

The ministry of health yesterday announced 11 new coronavirus cases that include eight Indians, one Saudi and two Kuwaitis. The ministry's spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said the 11 new cases include a Kuwaiti who had travelled to the United Kingdom and a Saudi who had travelled to Saudi Arabia. Eight cases of contact infection were recorded - a Kuwaiti in contact with a case related to travel to France and Switzerland, seven Indians in contact with confirmed cases and an Indian whose case is under epidemiological investigation.

On Sunday, the ministry reported 20 cases that included nine Indians, three Bangladeshis and one Filipina, in addition to seven Kuwaitis. The new cases raise the total to 266, of whom 73 have recovered after the ministry announced five new recoveries yesterday. The spokesman said 194 cases are receiving treatment, 13 of whom are in the intensive care unit. As many as 910 people have been discharged from quarantine.

different subjects. They cannot cope with the pressure from school, but teachers are doing it out of fear of the management because the school has fired teachers unjustly before and is threatening teachers with non-renewal of contracts," another teacher told Kuwait Times.

There are parents who want e-learning to continue and are willing to pay the fees as well. But there are outstanding questions for these parents as well. If children continue e-learning, will they finish the school year in June as normal or will they have to repeat the last part of the year in the fall as the ministry has said?

Some private schools are abiding by the education ministry and Cabinet decisions. But now those decisions have been muddled by additional announcements from the education ministry. Last Sunday, the education ministry announced on its official Instagram account that the second stage of the operational plan was launched to activate e-learning at the ministry, which includes the new Kuwait educational portal that will allow teachers to provide lessons directly through virtual classes with various interactive tools such as interactive books and interactive videos. The application will be available on tablets and smartphones.

But Education Minister Saud Al-Harbi said during an interview with Al-Rai TV on March 23 that private schools must not count on e-learning in the present time because the ministry of education is committed to the decision of the Council of Ministers, which was clear on suspending studies at public and private schools, universities and educational institutions, including e-learning, until Aug 4, and any school that continues e-learning is going against the Cabinet's decision.

Regarding tuition fees in private schools, he said: "This matter is between the parents and the school, but I believe that private schools have completed about 60 percent of the academic year and they will complete the rest of the year in August, which is a fair and legal way to earn their fees."

No resting place for coronavirus dead in Iraq

BAGHDAD: For Saad Malik, losing his father to the novel coronavirus was only the beginning of his nightmare. For over a week, cemeteries across Iraq refused to allow the elderly man's burial. Fearing the respiratory illness could somehow spread from the corpses to nearby population centers, Iraqi religious authorities, tribes and townspeople have sent the bodies of COVID-19 victims back to hospital morgues, where they are piling up.

"We couldn't hold a funeral for him and haven't been able to bury his body, even though it's been more than a week since he died," Malik told AFP, his voice laced with bitterness. Armed men claiming to be tribal leaders threatened Malik, his family and his friends, saying they would set fire to his car if they tried to bury the body in their area. "Can you imagine that across this huge country Iraq, there aren't a few square meters to bury a small number of bodies?"

In Islam, a person must be buried as soon as possible after death, usually within 24 hours. Cremation is strictly prohibited. Iraq has confirmed more than 500 COVID-19 cases and 42 deaths from the respiratory disease, but the real numbers are likely much higher as few of the country's 40 million people have been tested. Authorities have declared a countrywide lockdown until April 11, urging citizens to stay at home and adopt rigorous hygiene routines to forestall the spread of the virus.

'Where will we put bodies?'

But in some areas, local powers are getting even stricter. Northeast of the capital Baghdad this week, tribal figures prevented a team of health ministry officials from burying four bodies in a cemetery the state had specifically designated for COVID-19 victims. When the delegation tried to take the bodies to another burial ground southeast of Baghdad, dozens of local townspeople turned out in protest.

Ultimately, the bodies were returned to the morgue. One Iraqi living near Baghdad told AFP "we decided to block any burials in our area". "We panicked over (the health of) our children and families." According to the World Health Organization (WHO), which is leading the global response to the pandemic, coronavirus is transmitted through droplets and surface contact.

There is no scientific evidence yet that it could spread via corpses, according to Iraqi health ministry spokesman Seif Al-Badr. He said the government was taking all possible precautions when burying bodies, including wrapping them in bags, disinfecting them and placing them in special coffins. Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the country's top Shiite cleric, has said those who lost their lives to the disease must be wrapped in three shrouds and insisted authorities facilitate burials.

But rejections of burials have continued, including in the two shrine cities of Karbala and Najaf, where one of the world's largest cemeteries is located. An Iraqi medic in Najaf told AFP the health ministry had tried to intervene directly to convince Najaf authorities to allow burials of COVID-19 victims, to no avail. The medic, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said he had witnessed one widower beg authorities to release his wife's body. "Just give me the body and I'll bury her in my own home," the heartbroken husband had said. "This is the situation after just 40 deaths. What happens if it gets worse? Where will we put the bodies?" the medic asked.

Many in Iraq have been bracing themselves for a rise in cases in the weeks ahead, but the country's hospitals are ill-prepared to deal with large numbers. They have been ravaged by decades of conflict and have received little investment in recent years, leaving them woefully bereft of medicine and equipment. Doctors, too, have been threatened, kidnapped and even killed in recent years over ransoms or under pressure from relatives of patients.

According to the WHO, there are only 14 hospital beds in Iraq for every 10,000 people. By way of comparison, France - currently overwhelmed by the spreading virus - has 60 beds for every 10,000 people. To try to fill the gap, Iraqis are stepping up with inventions of their own. Medical engineer Moqtada Al-Zubaidi has created a hospital bed encased in plexiglass, which includes a respirator with oxygen tanks, an air conditioning unit, a bell to ring nurses and a flat-screen television.

"It's an invention with humanitarian purposes. We proposed the name 'the bed of life' because it provides security and reassurance to people who are sick," he said. Zubaidi is awaiting approval from the health ministry to produce more beds, which cost \$4,000 each. But for many fellow Iraqis disheartened by the rising death toll, such measures may be too little, too late. Salem Al-Shummary, Malik's cousin, had tried to help Malik bury his father and was left scarred by the experience. "We're not fazed by death anymore. We just have one dream: to bury our dead," he said. — AFP



BASRA: This picture taken on March 27, 2020 shows a view of a purpose-built sealed hospital bed built by a resident to isolate coronavirus patients. — AFP

Classifieds

Tuesday, March 31, 2020

Kuwait Times
 Now you can browse
www.kuwaittimes.net
 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net



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

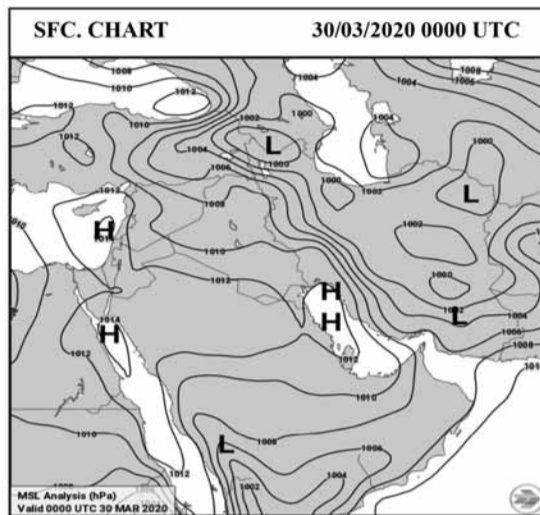
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Warm with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 32 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Rather cold with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	28 °C	19 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	29 °C	15 °C
ABDALY	28 °C	15 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	29 °C	16 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	27 °C	17 °C
SALMIYAH	25 °C	20 °C
AHMADI	24 °C	20 °C
NUWASIB	26 °C	17 °C
WAFRA	29 °C	14 °C
SALMY	27 °C	14 °C



4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Tuesday	03/31	Warm	28 °C	15 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 32 km/h
Wednesday	04/01	Rather hot and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain with a chance for rising dust	31 °C	17 °C	SE	20 - 50 km/h
Thursday	04/02	Rather hot and Partly cloudy	31 °C	18 °C	NW-NE	08 - 30 km/h
Friday	04/03	Rather hot and and some high clouds will appear	32 °C	18 °C	NE-SE	12 - 35 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:20
Sunrise	05:40
Zuhr	11:53
Asr	15:23
Sunset	18:05
Isha	19:23

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	29 °C
MIN. Temp.	18 °C
MAX. RH	84 %
MIN. RH	26 %
MAX. Wind	N 46 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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

NOTICE
 March 26, 2020

Mr. Willbald Bensenly Gomes son of late Mr. Diogo Gomes, resident of H No 97, Belsur ST, Matias Divar Tiswadi, North Goa, Pin: 403403, Goa and Ms. Alria Antonette Dias daughter of Mr. Sebastiao Carma Dias, resident of H NO: 53/9 ST Francis Vaddo, Colvale Bardez, North Goa, Pin: 403513, Goa, both Indian nationals presently residing in Kuwait have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in) / letters/ telephonic calls (00965-22533315, 00965 - 22533125).

(Ranveer Bharti)
 Second Secretary (Cons) and Marriage Officer.
 Embassy of India, Kuwait.
 Email: cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in

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

Daily SuDoku

		9	3		2			
9				1				7
5	2		8					3
	1	3			8			2
2			7			8	1	
	7			9		1		6
6			5					8
	5			7	6			

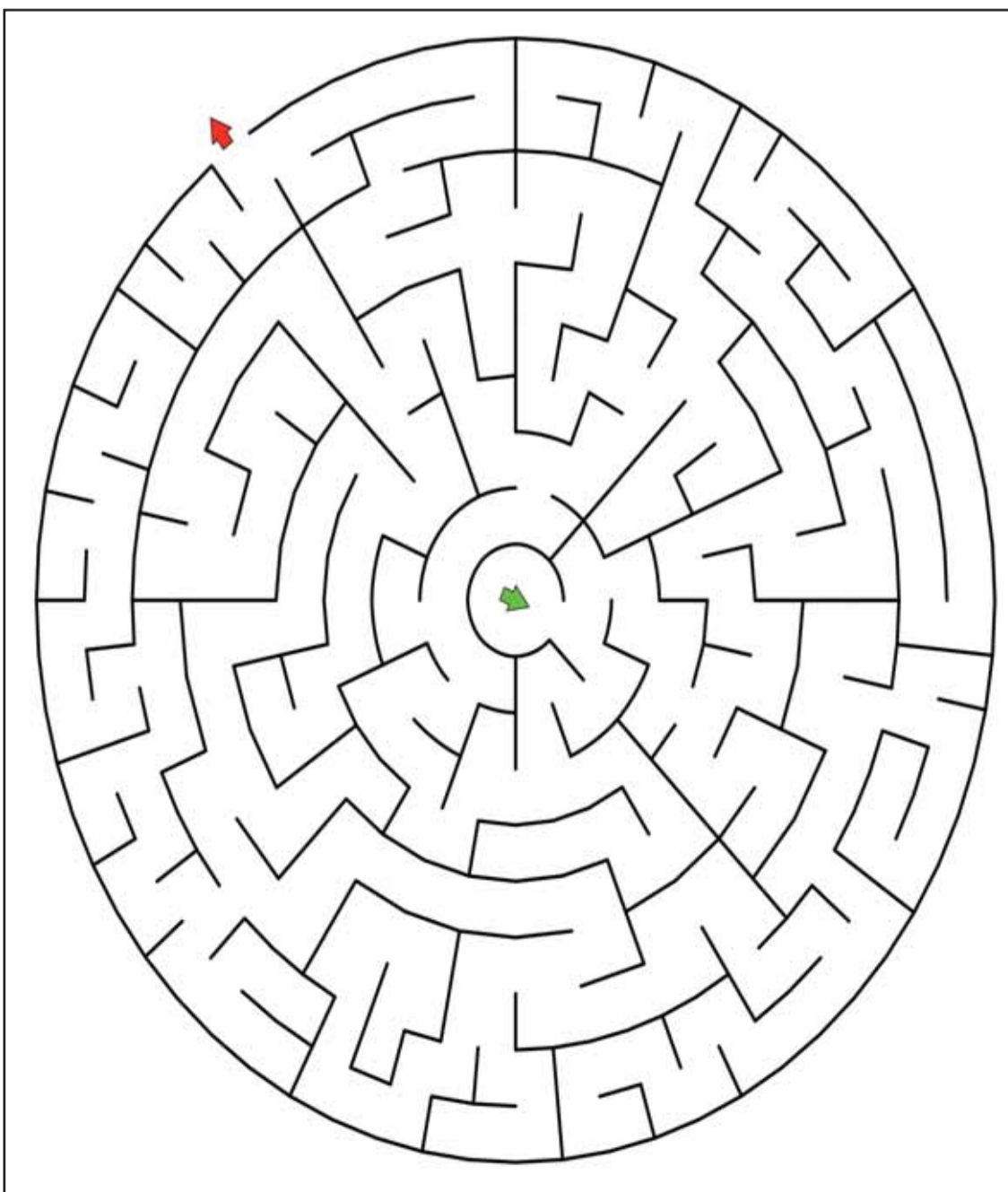
medium

Yesterday's Solution

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

hard

Find the way



STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)
 Today's planetary configuration will give you a strong urge to be out and about, Aries, but responsibilities could keep you at home or the office. Perhaps you're waiting for a delivery or an important phone call or visitor. This could be boring and rather tedious for you today. Find something to do that engrosses you, even if it's only reading or catching up on paperwork. There's no point in just twiddling your thumbs!

Libra (September 23-October 22)
 Business might be going very well for you, Libra, but intense changes on the job could have you feeling stressed. Delays in starting new projects could prove frustrating. Don't fall into the trap of thinking that this is going to be a trend. All should be brought back into focus tomorrow. Go to the gym tonight and work off some frustration. You'll be fresh in the morning. Hang in there!

Taurus (April 20-May 20)
 Are your views about certain intellectual or spiritual matters slowly changing, Taurus? If so, you may not be all that comfortable with the changes. Traditional values and ideas could seem especially attractive to you today, so your resistance could be greater than normal. Yet you know you can't stay the same way forever. Give yourself a break today. Tomorrow you'll be back in the groove and on your way to transforming.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)
 Have you been planning a vacation to a distant place, Scorpio? Unexpected, discouraging glitches could interfere with your plans, which could have you thinking that you'll just cancel the trip. You might be tempted to pick up the phone and do it. Take no action today. The entire situation should be straightened out by tomorrow, and you'll look forward to your trip again. Stay focused and don't do anything rash.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)
 Business success may have come your way, Gemini, but today you could find yourself feeling a little sad and wondering why, since there's no real reason to feel this way. What's going on is probably, first of all, a letdown, since your brain is no longer churning out the endorphins. Second, you may be wondering where you go from here. Only you can decide that. Set a new goal and move on.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)
 Money matters could have you descending into a state of pure gloom, Sagittarius. On the surface it might seem like you'll never be able to sort through all the paperwork, but you will. Don't give up. Stay focused on the task and take one step at a time. Before you know it, your efficiency and practicality should have it sorted out and behind you. Cheer up, and plan a great evening!

Cancer (June 21-July 22)
 Today you could feel torn between the desire to get a little exercise and a powerful inclination to curl up in your favorite chair and catch up on some reading, Cancer. There isn't any reason why you can't do both. Go out for a brisk walk and then reach for a favorite book when you return. The key isn't giving up on one, but attaining a balance between the two.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)
 Is your sweetheart out of town, Capricorn? If so, you're probably feeling a bit lonely and insecure. You need to ignore those fantasies of your beloved out on the town having a great time with lots of glamorous people. Your friend is most likely as bored as you are, either transacting business or fulfilling family obligations. Relax, find something to do, and the time will pass before you know it.

Leo (July 23-August 22)
 Do you have the uncomfortable feeling that you've forgotten something but you have no idea what it is, Leo? Are you haunted by the memory of a seemingly insignificant past event, but can't figure out why? It isn't a good idea to obsess over either. You'll remember whatever it is eventually. You'll soon realize the significance of the memory. Your subconscious is trying to tell you something. You can't rush it, so relax!

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)
 You probably won't feel like working today, Aquarius. You may not be tired, but you're probably bored, restless, and unable to focus. It's best to concentrate on routines or mundane chores you can do automatically on days like this. Put on your headphones. Take a long, leisurely lunch or perhaps brunch with friends. It's important to have some fun. Think of it as an exercise to balance your usually serious self!

Virgo (August 23-September 22)
 If you've been thinking about starting a new creative project, Virgo, don't try to do it today. Friends and family could vie for your attention and distract you. Other responsibilities could interfere with your desire to get going on it now. Don't hesitate to try to come up with ideas, but you might have to wait until tomorrow to start the work. Tomorrow you should be raring to go. Be patient!

Pisces (February 19-March 20)
 Love matters could appear to be moving far more slowly than you'd like, Pisces. Both you and your romantic interest may be overloaded with responsibilities now and unable to see each other much. It's frustrating, but you'll get through it. In the meantime, don't let your insecurities get the better of you. Just because your friend is busy doesn't mean that your relationship is on the rocks.

Sports

Rugby Australia posts big losses, warns of 'significant cuts'

Players complain of being locked out of critical talks about their future

SYDNEY: Rugby Australia's alarming financial state heading into the coronavirus shutdown was revealed yesterday with the organisation posting a near Aus\$10 million (US\$6.0 million) deficit, not helped by a hefty payment to the sacked Israel Folau.

The 2019 numbers were released as the governing body struggles to navigate a way through the COVID-19-enforced halt to sport, and with players complaining of being locked out of critical talks about their future.

RA said it was unable to produce a set of audited financial accounts due to uncertainty surrounding its business into the 2020 season and beyond as revenues dry up because of the pandemic.

But after its annual general meeting it reported a provisional Aus\$9.4 million operating deficit, compared to a Aus\$5.4 million profit in 2018. Revenues are ordinarily hit in a World Cup year, with fewer home Tests, but expenditure also increased by Aus\$6.6 million.

Part of the extra spend was the undisclosed settlement with Folau, an ardent Christian and former poster boy of Australian rugby who was fired over homophobic social media posts. The two parties avoided a costly court battle over the legality of the sacking by reaching a mediated agreement in December.

The governing body's perilous position comes

with rugby on hold indefinitely after the Australian government put tough restrictions on public gatherings as it battles to contain the coronavirus.

The country has so far confirmed more than 4,000 coronavirus cases, with 18 fatalities. Rugby Australia chairman Paul McLean said "significant cuts across the business" would be needed to keep the sport financially viable in the short term.

Specific action was not outlined, although talks are underway to tap funds from the government and World Rugby.

EXECUTIVE PAY SLASHED

Whether players will need to take pay cuts has yet to be decided, but chief executive Raelene Castle's salary has been halved and other senior executives are taking a 30 percent cut. "To put it simply, there is no way of knowing what damage this crisis will have on our

“ Significant cuts across the business ”

game, or for how long it will continue to impact us," said McLean.

"It has forced us to make some extremely difficult decisions, and there will be even harder decisions to come as we continue to navigate the implications of the virus on the game's finances." The organisation is set to lose broadcast rights money imminently with a proposed domestic tournament to replace the suspended Super Rugby competition shelved, and serious doubts about whether home



Rugby Australia chairman Paul McLean

Tests against Ireland and Fiji in July will take place.

Ahead of the AGM, the Rugby Union Players' Association (RUPA) slammed the governing body for sidelining it on discussions about the future, complaining about "a vacuum of information".

"While our colleagues in the other major football codes across Australia have been meeting with their governing bodies for weeks, RA has refused to share any information about the future financial direction of the game," said RUPA chief Justin

Harrison.

Castle said talks would begin with players today. "I understand from their point of view that there is a level of frustration that they haven't had a deeper engagement earlier," she said.

"But the reality is Rugby Australia didn't want to enter into those conversations until it had the chance to give them accurate information so we could enter into a solution-based scenario for the next three months." —AFP

Cash-strapped NZ cancels lower tier competitions

WELLINGTON: Rugby powerhouse New Zealand cancelled a string of this season's lower tier provincial competitions yesterday "to help secure the future of the sport" after the coronavirus lockdown.

All rugby in New Zealand has been called off indefinitely because of the government measures put in place to halt the spread of the virus, which has infected 589 and killed one person in the island nation.

New Zealand Rugby (NZR) chief Mark Robinson said last week the game was "fighting for survival" after the intercontinental Super Rugby competition was brought a halt and plans to put on a domestic tournament in its place were scuppered.

Starved of match day revenue and television money, as well as facing the possible cancellation of the money-spinning July tests against Wales and Scotland, NZR has cancelled all provincial competitions below the national championships for men and women.

The Heartland Championship, which features the 12 weakest provinces, the Jock Hobbs Memorial national under-19 tournament, the National Sevens Tournament and all other "Provincial Union representative rugby tournaments" have been axed.

"It's surreal how much this has impacted everyone in just seven days and we've needed to act swiftly, decisively and together," Robinson said in a statement. "We are united in what we want to achieve and that's to secure the future of rugby."

"These decisions have all been about ensuring when the time comes our communities can be up and running club, community and school rugby as quickly as possible."

A decision on whether to hold the national provincial championships would be made at a later date, the statement said. Rugby is New Zealand's national sport but even with the huge success over the years of the All Blacks national team, a relatively small domestic market means the game has often had to survive on a shoestring.

All Blacks coach Ian Foster and his staff have taken pay cuts and twice World Player of the Year Beauden Barrett confirmed at the weekend that the top players would soon be following suit.

"As an employee of New Zealand Rugby, we're all facing some tough times and we're all in this together," the All Blacks back told Newstalk ZB radio.

"As players we're working through that with ... the Players' Association. That will come out in due course, but yes we will be at some stage," he said of pay cuts. —Reuters

British fighter Yarde's father dies of virus

LONDON: British boxer Anthony Yarde urged the public to stay at home after revealing his father has died of the coronavirus. Yarde, who fought Sergey

Kovalev for the Russian's cruiserweight world title last year, said his father had been "fit with no health issues".

Like many parts of the world, Britain is under a lockdown in a bid to stop the spread of the pandemic. There have been over 17,000 confirmed cases in Britain and Yarde, 28, called on people to respect the situation and stay at home.

"I'm a very private person and tbh I'm still in shock but maybe this can help

people stay at home," Yarde wrote on Instagram. "My dad passed away from this virus yesterday and he was fit with no health issues. The more people go out and mingle the longer this isolation will last and the more it will spread."

"I'm not a doctor but I do know if you stay home you are less likely to catch it or pass it on. It's seriously not worth the risk."

A statement from Yarde's promoter Frank Warren said: "Frank Warren and

everyone at Queensberry Promotions would like to express sincere condolences to Anthony Yarde and his family after the untimely passing of his father."

"Coronavirus is an issue affecting all of us, but that doesn't make the individual casualties any less tragic. "We hope that his fans listen to Anthony's heartfelt plea for people to take the government's advice seriously so we can try and minimise the suffering of others." —AFP

Kuwaiti champion thrives on fitness

KUWAIT: World Champion and Kuwaiti watersport athlete Mohammed Burbayea is inspired by his own lifestyle, and his home country. In his over a decade presence in the sport, it appears in everything he achieves.

Along with practice on the jet ski, his main focus remains on his weekly fitness routine. "The biggest challenge is endurance and cardio capabilities," said Mohammed Burbayea, which is vital to his sport. He maintains a high level throughout the year, and averages 4 to 6 workouts a week. He continued by saying, "Riding a jet ski is one thing, and pro racing is a whole other thing. It requires a lot of effort and high energy levels."

Professional jet ski athlete Mohammed Burbayea improves his cardio by running. He attributes his success to his devotion to the sport. Rarely is there a time where he isn't trying to learn and improve. He actively trains in one aspect or another, to keep his fitness race ready.

His commitment to cardiovascular training doesn't stop within the limitation of being indoors. Burbayea continues to exercise on the treadmill, bike, rowing machine or even by using the jump rope.

Mohammed is looking forward to competition season returning so he can continue to challenge himself to do better and be at the top of his discipline.

During his training season, should his motivation dwindle, he remembers the bigger picture and looks to other great athletes for a boost. He advises young athletes to do the same. By adding athletic benchmarks, motivation is refreshed, and training can continue once more.

He explains, "I always make sure to have someone I look up to who has achieved success. They serve as my motivator and benchmark to the level I want to achieve. It is essential to keep in mind that we are constantly evolving and in order to continuously grow and improve, you need to provide yourself with the time for development."

Having begun his foray into the sport at age 5, he has since shattered world records, including the number of total championships for a watersport moto-athlete. He hopes to continue to do what is required of him to elevate the sport and Kuwaiti athletics on the world stage for as long as he is able to.



Australian rugby league rolls out rescue package

SYDNEY: Australia's National Rugby League rolled out an emergency rescue package yesterday to ensure all 16 clubs can stay afloat during the coronavirus shutdown, with plans to resume

the season on July 1. The NRL kicked off a fortnight ago, making it through just two rounds — one behind closed doors — before becoming one of the last professional sports worldwide to succumb to the pandemic.

There were concerns that some clubs would not survive the loss of revenue, with many already forced to send staff home, often without pay. But after lengthy talks, funding was agreed that will see each team get an extra Aus\$2.5 million (US\$1.5 million) to cover operational costs

between April and October, paid for by the NRL slashing its staffing levels by 95 percent, cutting the governing body's own expenses by half.

Executives will take a 25 percent salary cut. The funding is separate to player payments, which are still under discussion. "We have a consolidated plan and working with the clubs and the players, are united in our efforts to do all we can to protect rugby league," said Australian Rugby League Commission chairman Peter V'landys. "We had no option but to stop the competition ... but remain

optimistic that the season will restart as quickly as possible, ideally by July 1. "If that isn't possible, then we need to be prepared for that option as well and are making the tough financial decisions now to reduce costs to ensure we get through this crisis."

Rugby league is considered part of Australia's social fabric and the sport's bosses had previously warned closing down the season could bankrupt the sport, with lucrative broadcast contracts at stake. —AFP

Sports

Serie A hits back over 'bubble' remark

ROME: Italy's Serie A league has hit back at the country's sports minister Vincenzo Spadafora after he said the country's top clubs were living in a bubble and criticised the millionaire salaries of some players.

The exchange came with Serie A, like football around the rest of the world, at a standstill because of the coronavirus pandemic. Italy is Europe's worst-affected country with 10,779 deaths and a total of 97,689 confirmed cases.

In an interview with the Rome-based newspaper La Repubblica on Sunday, Spadafora said that sport was not just about football and that he would propose spending 400 million euros (\$443 million) to develop grass roots sport around the country.

"The big clubs are living in a bubble, beyond their means, starting with the millionaire salaries of the players. They must understand that nothing after this crisis will ever be the same again," he said.

In reply, Serie A said in a statement that football in Italy employs 300,000 people and accounts for one percent of gross domestic product. Serie A "has always played a recognised role as the locomotive of the sector", directly generating 3 billion euros of revenue each year, it said.

The league noted that its solidarity payments to develop facilities and youth football outside the top flight had increased from 93 million euros in 2010 to 130 million euros this year.

"This is not the time to make controversy," said Paolo Dal Pino, the president of Serie A. "The numbers above speak for themselves and there is no need to add anything else to highlight the role of the Lega Serie A in support of grassroots football and, indirectly, of all Italian sport." — Reuters

Photo of the Day



WADI RUM: Gurpreet Singh Sandhu and Ahmad Daham perform at Wadi Rum, Jordan. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

African football date-juggling looms amid coronavirus pandemic

African Nations Championship postponed due to coronavirus

JOHANNESBURG: The May semi-finals and finals of the two annual African club competitions are likely to fall victim to the coronavirus pandemic sweeping the continent.

After two-leg semi-finals in the competitions between May 1 and 10, the Champions League final is set for May 29 in Douala, five days after Rabat hosts the Confederation Cup title decider. But the postponement of both competitions seems inevitable as the full impact of the COVID-19 disease has still to be felt in the continent with the most fragile public health systems.

Already, two rounds of 2021 Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers and the African Nations Championship in Cameroon have been postponed due to the killer COVID-19 disease. Here, AFP Sport considers the date-juggling options in the major African national team and club competitions:

WORLD CUP

Home and away preliminary round ties last September reduced the number of contenders from 54 to 40 for five places at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. Next comes 10 six-matchday groups be-

tween October 5, 2020, and October 12, 2021, with the table-toppers paired in five two-leg showdowns to decide who represents Africa. Group dates this October and November may have to accommodate delayed 2021 Cup of Nations qualifiers instead, but there are sufficient international windows next year to catch up.

AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS

Qualifiers for the 24-nation tournament in Cameroon from January 9 to February 6 2021 have fallen two rounds behind after fixtures scheduled for this month were cancelled. It is hard to imagine the single round set for June 1-9 taking place and there must also be doubts about matches planned for August 31-September 8. CAF will hope they can stage double matchdays between October 5-13 and November 9-17 — dates currently allocated to World Cup group games — and complete qualifying.

AFRICAN NATIONS CHAMPIONSHIP

The April 4-25 tournament in Cameroon, which is restricted to footballers playing in their country of

birth, has been postponed due to the coronavirus. With no foreign-based stars involved, the tournament does not have to fit into a FIFA international window, creating flexibility when it comes to finding new dates. Apart from the football, the Nations

Wydad against Cairo outfits Zamalek and Al Ahly respectively, raising the possibility of a first final between clubs from the same country. While a May 29 conclusion seems unlikely, the matches can be staged until September 6, with the last-32 first legs of the 2020/2021 season scheduled to kick off five days later. The competition could also be shortened by turning the semi-finals into single matches in Douala, the Cameroon port city chosen to host the final.

CAF CONFEDERATION CUP

The semi-finals in the African equivalent of the UEFA Europa League will see Pyramids of Egypt meet Horoya of Guinea and Renaissance Berkane face fellow Moroccans Hassania Agadir. Like the Champions League, the semi-finals are due to be home-and-away affairs, followed by a single-match final in Rabat, giving Berkane or Agadir a distinct advantage. CAF will likely seek new dates, and possibly reduce the semi-finals to single matches, between June and September 6, five days before the 2000/2021 season gets into full swing. — AFP



Fragile public health systems

Championship offers Cameroon an opportunity to test whether they are ready for a much more demanding task — staging the 2021 Cup of Nations.

CAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

The semi-finals pit Casablanca clubs Raja and

Xavi wants 'total harmony' to return to Barcelona

MADRID: Xavi Hernandez has reiterated his desire to coach Barcelona in the future but suggests he will not return until a different board brings a new sense of direction to the club.

Hernandez is in charge of Al-Sadd in Qatar and turned down an approach in January after Barca sacked Ernesto Valverde, which led to the surprise appointment of Quique Setien.

In an interview with Spanish newspaper La Vanguardia published on Sunday, Xavi said Neymar would be a "spectacular signing", and singled out former Spain defender Carles Puyol and the one-time Dutch winger Jordi Cruyff as people he would like to work with.

Yet the relationship between Barcelona's board, led by president Josep Maria Bartomeu, and the players has remained tense, with Lionel Messi's public criticism of technical secretary Eric Abidal among a number of off-field controversies.

"I am clear that I want to return to Barca, I am very excited," said Xavi, who was asked if a change of board would be needed for it to happen. "Obviously I would like to be in tune with everyone," he said. "In the dressing room there can't be a negative or toxic atmosphere." "Everything has to fit," Xavi added. "I would like to come in with people from my environment that could form a good team."

Pushed on whether working with the current board would



Xavi Hernandez

be a deal-breaker, Xavi said: "It wouldn't be definitive but I insist I would like to have total harmony. I don't know if that can happen... I have nothing against anyone and I don't have a bad relationship with Bartomeu. Xavi mentioned the likes of Puyol, whom he played with under Pep Guardiola, and Cruyff, son of Johan and former Barca and Manchester United winger, as the kind of people he would like to work alongside.

"I would like to work with people in whom I have confidence, with whom there is loyalty," said Xavi. "We are talking about Carles Puyol, who was captain of Barca, and Jordi Cruyff, a very good businessman with a lot of experience as a technical secretary." He also said Neymar, whom the Catalans tried and failed to sign from Paris Saint-Germain last summer, would be a "spectacular signing". "Most of the squad seems extraordinary," Xavi said. "The base is very good. I would sign forwards, like Neymar. I don't know if he would fit in a social sense but in football terms I have no doubt he would be a spectacular signing." — AFP

Korean government guidelines.

Son had already spent two weeks in self-isolation in Britain after returning from South Korea at the end of February, having travelled home for surgery.

He will take part in Tottenham's remote training programme, which is set to begin via video call on Monday. Son was not expected to return from injury this season, but the pandemic has postponed English football until at least April 30.

Meanwhile, Son's Tottenham team-mate Steven Bergwijn has travelled to the Netherlands ahead of the impending birth of his child. "The club has given permission for both Heung-Min Son and Steven Bergwijn to return to their home countries," a statement on Tottenham's website said.

"Both players will continue their individual rehabilitation and training programmes during their time away." — AFP

Son returns to South Korea

LONDON: Tottenham forward Son Heung-min has been allowed to fly home to South Korea for "personal reasons".

Although Britain is on lockdown due to the coronavirus, the Premier League club on Sunday said Son has been given permission to return to Asia.

The 27-year-old has been recovering after suffering a fractured arm during Tottenham's win at Aston Villa on February 16. It was reported Son and his parents arrived in Seoul on Sunday and will spend two weeks in quarantine in line with South

Coronavirus may prove virtual sports changer

PARIS: With an unprecedented captive audience of three billion people in coronavirus lockdown virtual sports events are wooing fans after traditional live sports were shut down and public gatherings banned in many countries.

Horse-racing, boxing, cycling, football and motor-racing chiefs are desperate to maintain their fanbase and are scrambling to provide a fix and maintain revenues.

With stadiums closed and events such as the Tokyo Olympics and Euro 2020 postponed, organisers are generating advertising revenue by streaming virtual sports on YouTube, Facebook and Twitch or even broadcasting them on traditional television platforms.

Sports is where the numbers are and fans denied real games are turning to live streaming, watching people play games, and taking part in those video games themselves. Italy's Mugello motorcycling circuit, which would have attracted 200,000 people for its MotoGP weekend on Sunday, may just have pulverised that figure with a live-streamed virtual race promoted as "The stay at home GP".

Honda's world champion Marc Marquez came fifth as the globe's top riders sat uncomfortably on their sofas livestreaming from their living rooms. Alex Rins looked bored playing with his pet dog on his knee.

Alex Marquez, younger brother of the world champion, won the race and asked jokingly "will the points count to the championship?". Millions of fans, credit cards at the ready, are expected to copy them after downloading the app.

Old-school purists will be heartened by veteran Valentino Rossi's refusal to take

part. The seven-time world champion said this week he was "cheering on the people of Brescia and Bergamo, those who usually cheer me on. It looks like a war zone," he said of his coronavirus-stricken region.

"I have seen very bad images, we must hold on," he told Sky Italia, who will also broadcast the virtual race.

'AND HE'S BACK FROM THE DEAD HERE'

Formula One chiefs have also galvanised some of their drivers to grab their gaming controllers, racing a Virtual Bahrain Grand Prix which was abbreviated because of technical difficulties. Boxing legend Muhammad Ali, who died in 2016, was even back in action, beating Sonny Liston again on Friday in a virtual bout with 35,000 YouTube viewers.

Ali will now meet the long retired Mike Tyson after he beats up George Foreman on Saturday. Racing-mad Britain comes to a standstill each year for the Grand National and with the courses all closed, broadcaster ITV will show a virtual race on April 4.

The real race can be a dangerous lottery with horses and riders potentially suffering serious injuries in the many falls, but it makes millions for the bookies, who this time will run online betting for the field of 40 runners.

"We use the latest CGI technology and algorithms and were ready to go ahead as a forerunner to the big race," said executive producer Rob McLoughlin.

As with the boxing, there will also be a race of champions pitting the late Red Rum, who won the National three times in the 1970s, against defending champion Tiger Roll. Baseball staged a four-player video-game tournament called "MLB The Show" on Friday. It also suffered some technical problems before it was won by Amir Garrett, a Cincinnati Reds pitcher, who played at home wearing his team uniform. "A win's a win," said Garrett but he also said: "You've got to realise it's a video game." — AFP

18 Rugby Australia posts big losses, warns of 'significant cuts'



18 Kuwaiti champion thrives on fitness



19 Xavi wants 'total harmony' to return to Barcelona



New Olympic date likely 'this week'



TOKYO: In this file photo taken on March 11, 2020 a woman wearing a face mask walks in the tunnel of a metro station with a poster of Miraitowa, official mascot of the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo. — AFP

TOKYO: New dates for the delayed Tokyo 2020 Olympics will likely be revealed this week, organisers said yesterday after the coronavirus forced the historic decision to postpone the Games until next year. Tokyo 2020 chief Yoshiro Mori told reporters they were weighing the pros and cons of a summer and spring Games and he expected a decision from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) soon.

"I think perhaps there will be some kind of communication from (IOC) President (Thomas) Bach this week," Mori told reporters. The Tokyo 2020 Olympics were due to open on July 24 and run for 16 days, but the coronavirus pandemic forced the first peace-time postponement of the Games.

The IOC and Japan had for weeks insisted the show could go on but the rapid spread of COVID-19 prompted growing disquiet among athletes and sporting federations. The Olympics was the highest-profile sporting casualty of the coronavirus that has wiped out fixtures worldwide and all but halted professional sport.

There was some speculation that Japanese organisers could take advantage of the blank canvas to shift the Games to spring, avoiding the heat of the Tokyo summer that had been their main concern before coronavirus struck.

Due to the heat, the marathon has been moved to Sapporo, a city some 800 kilometres (500 miles) to the north of Tokyo where the weather is cooler even

at the height of summer. But given the ongoing pandemic and need for preparation time, the most likely plan would be for the Games to begin on July 23, 2021, public broadcaster NHK said over the weekend, citing sources within the organising panel.

The postponement has handed organisers the "unprecedented" task of rearranging an event seven years in the making, and Tokyo 2020 CEO Toshio Muto has admitted the additional costs will be "massive". According to the latest budget, the Games were due to cost \$12.6 billion, shared between the organising committee, the government of Japan and Tokyo city. However, that number is hotly contested with a much-publicised government audit suggesting the central government was spending several times that amount — on items organisers claim are only tangentially related to the Olympics.

The postponement affects every aspect of the organisation — hotels, ticketing, venues and transport being among the major headaches. Hotels have had to cancel bookings, dealing them a bitter blow at a time when tourism is already being hammered by the coronavirus. Some venues that had booked events years in advance will potentially have to scrap them

Wednesday. There is no doubt about it. This is necessary in the current situation.

"It is completely unrealistic to imagine that with the travel restrictions that we currently have an international tennis tournament where hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world would travel. That is unthinkable."

The AELTC did not respond to a request for comment. The postponement of the Tokyo Olympics opened up a two-week window in the tennis calendar in July/August but it is less likely that it will be feasible for Wimbledon, which has only two covered courts and cannot be held past late summer.

French Open organisers stunned the tennis world by unilaterally postponing the claycourt Grand Slam at Roland Garros from May until late September because of the pandemic.

The French Tennis Federation (FFT) came under heavy fire from tennis players around the world at the lack of communication as the new dates clashed with several other events already featuring on the calendar.

to make way for the rescheduled Olympics and there is still uncertainty about whether ticket-holders will get refunded.

Another thorny issue is the athletes' village, which was due to be converted into luxury apartments after the Games, some of which have already found buyers.

The Japanese government had touted the Games as the "Recovery Olympics", designed to show how the country had bounced back from the 2011 triple disaster of the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown in the northeastern Fukushima region. The Games are now being billed as the expression of humanity's triumph over the coronavirus. "We are embarking on an unprecedented challenge," said Mori. "But I believe it is the mission of the Tokyo 2020 organising committee to hold the Olympics and Paralympics next year as a proof of mankind's victory" against the virus.

Meanwhile, Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) has said its decision to pull out of the 2020 Tokyo Games was unilateral and made without the knowledge of Canada or the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

The AOC said last Monday it could not assemble a team for 2020 because of complications brought by

the coronavirus, the announcement coming quickly after the Canada Olympic and Paralympic committees confirmed they would not send athletes.

The double-withdrawal prompted speculation that the two national Olympic committees may have acted in concert with the IOC to give the global body leverage to postpone Tokyo.

Canada on Friday denied any such arrangement, and the AOC followed suit yesterday. "Any assertions that a decision by the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) to tell its athletes to plan for a Tokyo Olympic Games in 2021 was done in concert with either the International Olympic Committee (IOC) or the Canadian Olympic Committee (COC) are completely incorrect," the AOC said in a statement emailed to Reuters.

The AOC said its decision followed a sequence of events, which included the IOC's announcement that the global body was conducting "scenario planning" for Tokyo, with postponement among the options.

The IOC's announcement came a day after Australian authorities announced a slew of measures aimed at containing the coronavirus, including travel curbs and quarantine requirements at national and state borders. "This meant our athletes could not continue their training programs," the AOC said. The effect of the government measures and the IOC's scenario planning prompted a special meeting of the AOC's executive board last Monday.—Agencies

Wimbledon will be cancelled

LONDON: Wimbledon organisers will announce the cancellation of the grasscourt Grand Slam this week due to the coronavirus pandemic, German Tennis Federation (DTB) vice-president Dirk Hordorff has told Sky Sports.

All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) officials earlier said the June 29-July 12 event would not be played behind closed doors and postponement was not without significant risk and difficulty.

"Wimbledon has stated that they will have a board meeting next Wednesday and will make the final decision there," Hordorff told Sky Sports Germany.

"I am also involved in the bodies of the ATP and WTA. The necessary decisions have already been made there and Wimbledon will decide to cancel next



Additional costs will be 'massive'

The men's ATP Tour and the WTA, which runs women's tournaments, require their players to participate at the four Grand Slams, but the new French Open dates are yet to feature on the calendars of either association.

"The unilateral behaviour of the organizers has been criticized by everyone and I can simply predict that the French Open will not be relocated as it was intended," Hordorff said.

He said either the FFT would go ahead with the new dates and feel the wrath of the entire tennis world or they have the option to start working with others to draw up a plan that makes sense for everyone.

"They will be deprived of the points and they will degenerate into a chaos event," he said. "Even those there have understood that and they are slowly crawling back. Solidarity is the order of the day, it is a matter of being together and not going it alone, as the president of the French Tennis Association did." — Reuters

Table tennis shelved until June due to virus

PARIS: Table tennis tournaments will be shelved until June 30 at the earliest due to the coronavirus pandemic and the postponement of the Tokyo Olympics, officials said. The International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) also announced rankings will be frozen as of March 20.

"The ITTF has also been working hard to manage the 2020 finances with the executive committee agreeing to reduce their expenses and senior staff offering to take a salary reduction, as the ITTF looks into other areas to save overall costs," said a statement. The coronavirus pandemic, which has killed more than 31,000 people worldwide, prompted the postponement last week of the Tokyo Olympics until 2021. — AFP