



3 Defense ministry runs expat quarantine camp in Subhan



15 Lebanon rooftops busting as virus shifts life upstairs



16 Special effects, virtual guests: China weddings go online



Ramadan KAREEM

Fajr	03:30
Dhuhr	11:44
Asr	15:20
Maghrib	18:30
Isha	19:56



Kuwait goes into lockdown, essential services continue

163 coronavirus cases reported at two co-ops • Another doctor dies



KUWAIT: Cars jam the streets of Shuwaikh as people panic buy on Saturday before a total lockdown began yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 5)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A decision by the government to place the country under a total lockdown to prevent the spread of the coronavirus took effect at 4 pm yesterday and continues until May 30. Only essential services, in addition to the military, police and security agencies and medical services will be allowed to operate. Food and essential supplies will be accessed through an online reservation system of cooperative societies. Prior reservations can be made at www.moci.shop.

Authorities have appealed to the public to stay indoors to avoid the deadly disease and health authorities said they plan a testing campaign to detect infections. About 163 coronavirus cases have been detected at Khaldiya and Adailiya cooperative societies, forcing them to shut down for sterilization. Khaldiya Cooperative Society said as many as 103 of its workers tested positive, while MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain said another 60 workers at Adailiya Co-op also tested positive.

Several MPs called on the health ministry to launch a concerted campaign to test employees at all cooperative societies and supermarkets. The state-owned Flour Mills Co said it has plenty of supplies to provide all types of bread throughout the lockdown. The health ministry announced that a second physician has died of coronavirus. Vasudeva Rao, a 54-year-old dentist, was working at Kuwait Oil Co hospital where he contracted the disease. Two days ago, an Egyptian doctor, Tareq Hussein,

also died of the disease.

The National Assembly was to decide later yesterday whether to go ahead and hold the emergency Assembly session scheduled for Tuesday, as a number of lawmakers called for holding the session. The Assembly's health and labor committee is scheduled to debate new government amendments to the labor law allowing distressed companies to reduce the salaries of employees after the approval of the ministry of social affairs.

The bill was debated last week but the government withdrew the amendments after lawmakers wanted guarantees that the measures will not apply to over 55,000 Kuwaitis employed in the private sector. Rapporteur of the committee MP Saadoun Hammad said the new government proposals do not clearly stipulate guarantees for Kuwaitis, adding that he will submit such amendments.

The interior ministry said yesterday it has referred a volunteer at a cooperative society for investigation after he was shown physically assaulting an expatriate shopper in a video posted on social media. The ministry said legal measures have been initiated against the volunteer.

The civil aviation authority said yesterday that travelers are allowed to go to the airport during the lockdown provided they show a photocopy or an electronic image of the air ticket to the police if asked. Each traveler is allowed to be escorted by one driver who should also carry a copy of the ticket. The authority said that seven flights, including four to Cairo, were due to operate yesterday.

Fear in Iran as infections rising anew

TEHRAN: While many residents in Iran's capital are taking advantage of loosened COVID-19 controls, some worry about a new spike in infections in what remains the Middle East's deadliest virus epicenter. "The line of fools," muttered shopkeeper Manouchehr, peering disdainfully at a queue of customers outside a foreign currency dealer in the Sadeghieh district of western Tehran. Many in the long line stood close to one another and did not wear masks.

A traffic policeman told AFP such

queues have appeared regularly ever since the money changers re-opened. People rarely observe basic anti-contagion protocols, he complained. The government began paring back coronavirus controls outside Tehran on April 11, arguing that the economy - already sagging under punitive US sanctions - needed to get back to bare bones operations. It allowed small businesses to reopen in the capital a week later, before permitting malls to welcome customers on April 21 and barbers on Wednesday.

At 802, declared daily infections in Iran on May 2 reached their lowest level since early March. But this critical daily number has since begun resurging, breaching 1,500 on Saturday to take the country's total number of confirmed infections beyond 106,000. The capital's streets, bazaars and malls are now bustling after

being nearly deserted for weeks after the bulk of control measures were imposed in March.

Milad, a shopkeeper in a mall, was conflicted about the easing of movement restrictions. "All these customers coming in will endanger our lives - us who are forced to come" to work, he said. The mall gets very busy in the evenings, noted the 22-year-old, who did not have any protective equipment. The COVID-19 respiratory disease has killed nearly 6,600 people in Iran since the first two fatalities were reported in the city of Qom on February 19, according to authorities.

Deputy Health Minister Iraj Harirchi has called Tehran the country's "Achilles heel" in the fight against the virus. The city's eight million residents are densely packed together and it is a magnet for hundreds of

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TEHRAN: Iranians, without observing social distancing, queue outside a money exchange office in the capital on Saturday. — AFP

Digital voice tech gets fresh momentum

WASHINGTON: In a world suddenly fearful of touch, voice technology is getting a fresh look. Voice-activated systems such as Google Assistant, Amazon Alexa and Apple's Siri have seen strong growth in recent years, and the virus pandemic could accelerate that, analysts say. Voice assistants are not only answering queries and shopping, but also being used for smart home control and for a range of business and medical applications which could see increased interest as people seek to limit personal contact.

"Voice has already made significant inroads into the smart home space and voice control can mean avoiding commonly touched surfaces around the home from smartphones, to TV remotes, light switches, thermostats, door

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Tunisians get food aid via text messages

TUNIS: A Tunisian NGO has set up a food bank that dispenses aid by text message to some 300 needy families rendered more vulnerable because of the coronavirus pandemic. The initiative, which had been long in the making, was finally launched at the end of April to coincide with the start of the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. It targets families who have lost jobs because of the lockdown imposed by Tunisia to contain the spread of the virus, like that of Messaouda Raouafi, a cleaning woman forced to stay indoors.

"Because of Ramadan and the lockdown I can no longer go out to work," said the 49-year-old. "I cannot clean homes and earn money to feed my seven children." Her family was among the 300 chosen by the women's affairs ministry and signalled to the NGO known as the "Banque Alimentaire Durable" or Sustainable Food Bank. Under the initiative, Raouafi receives a code by text message allowing her to spend 40 to 60 Tunisian dinars (around \$21-32)

weekly at specially designated grocery stores. With that money, Raouafi has been able to buy basic goods such as oil, milk, coffee and flour.

Farah, who runs a grocery store in the working-class district of Kram, is among those who signed up to take part in the project. "The money is sent to us ahead of time - that way the clients can buy what they want with the funds allocated to them," she said. Farah said this works much better than allowing customers to buy on credit, a system that takes its toll on her own finances. "In our area there are many poor families and unemployed people," she said, explaining why she decided to embrace the initiative.

A member of the NGO, Aisha Zakraoui, said she hopes the initiative will grow so as to reach more needy families across Tunisia. The NGO also aims to help families become more self-sufficient through training in skills such as growing their own vegetables or baking bread to sell. "Our objective is to provide food aid to needy people and in exchange they agree to take part in initiatives aimed at integrating them socially and professionally," Zakraoui said.

Even before the virus outbreak, Tunisia has been struggling with economic and social hardship that has worsened since the country went into lockdown in March to battle the pandemic. The government estimated that two million of Tunisia's 11.5 million

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Obama slams Trump handling of pandemic

WASHINGTON: Former president Barack Obama has launched a scathing attack on Donald Trump's handling of the coronavirus pandemic, calling it an "absolute chaotic disaster". In a leaked web call Friday night with former members of his administration, Obama also said the Justice Department's decision to drop charges against Michael Flynn, the former Trump national security adviser who pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI in the Russia probe, endangers the rule of law in the US.

In the audio, first obtained by Yahoo News, Obama urges former staffers to join him in rallying behind Joe Biden as he prepares to take on Trump in the November presidential election. The United States by far leads the world in the number of coronavirus infections, at nearly 1.3 million, and deaths, with more than 77,000.

Trump has been criticized as essentially abdicating any leadership role in guiding the country

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Local

Kuwaiti female police officer contracts coronavirus: MoI

Family, colleagues tested, prisoners isolated

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Interior announced yesterday that a female police officer tested positive for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The officer was rushed to hospital and her family and colleagues had to undergo medical tests to verify their health conditions, according to a statement by the ministry's relations and security media department. The test results of the females in uniform has yet to be come out, the statement noted.

It affirmed that all women prisoners have been kept in solitary quarantine since their arrival at the jail pending the completion of routine health procedures, including a comprehensive medical checkup, as per the recommendations of the Ministry of Health. The statement came following a tweet, which went viral on social media, that a female police officer at a women prison contracted the virus along with her family and colleagues as well as the inmates of the prison. The tweet alleged

that a number of inmates at a men's prison were also infected and two of them died of the virus, a claim that was refuted by the Ministry of Interior.



Inmates death rumors denied

Animal leftovers

Separately, the Interior Ministry's relations and security media department said two persons who were seen collecting animal leftovers from trash containers were arrested. Both admitted to collecting the material from butcher shops to send it to a



recycling plant for export as animal fat. When asked why they were removing material from the garbage containers instead of butcher shops, they said they were late going to the shops so they took it from the container. Both were sent to concerned authorities. The Interior Ministry also announced that police arrested a person in Mahboula after he threatened others with a sharp object. The man was in an abnormal condition at the time of his arrest, the ministry explained.

Inside the whale



By Jamie Etheridge

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Yesterday, Kuwait entered a total lockdown, 24-hour curfew for the next 20 days. We are now inside the whale - with no choice but to endure, to passively accept the circumstances as they are and to try and make the best of them. The loss of control over our own lives can be difficult to swallow. It would be a challenge under normal circumstances and these are far from normal times. Kuwait has already been under months of stay-at-home orders since the coronavirus first arrived here.

But we have to remember that each of us is playing our part. We are helping the world overcome this pandemic. We are helping Kuwait to eradicate the virus here. We are making a positive contribution just by staying home, helping hospitals and medical workers cope with the cases they have without adding more burdens to their already heavy load. In isolation, staying at home, it is hard to see this. It's difficult to recognize the importance and the value of doing nothing, but as the Queen Mother told Elizabeth in *The Crown* (on Netflix), sometimes doing nothing is the hardest thing to do.

We are in more control of our lives than it seems. Yes, we are stuck at home and now under a total curfew. It would be easy to slide into depression, into feelings of total helplessness. But we can still control our reaction. Scientific studies have shown that the mind can be an important tool for impacting our health and wellness. We cannot 'think' ourselves out of having cancer, a bad diet or a heart attack. Health is a complex set of circumstances that involves chemistry, biology, genetics, lifestyle and diet as well as circumstance. But we can reduce levels of stress and anxiety by changing our perspective and mindset and that does impact blood pressure, immune responses and our body's overall ability to maintain health.

Inside the whale, we can panic and cry. Sometimes a bit of crying can release a lot of pent up emotional stress and feel like relief. Or we can also choose to find the calm. We can pray or meditate or find some other activities that help us endure this period of isolation. We can accept the reality fate has thrust upon us and find a way to make it work. We can distract ourselves through a variety of means including daily exercise (yoga, Pilates, circuit training), creative endeavors (drawing, painting, cooking), play and entertainment (video games, TV, Legos, cards, reading) or through some combination of all these.

We can think ourselves to a place of calm acceptance. We can rearrange our perspective, our view of the circumstances. We can decide to make the most of this period of isolation to reconnect with ourselves and our families. Once we realize that the situation may be beyond our power but our response to the circumstances can be determined by us, we regain control and that is the first key to a calm and peaceful life.

Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 7,623 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of Friday, in addition to 49 deaths. With the exception of 95 cases in intensive care, all infected cases are in stable condition and are recovering in quarantined locations designated by the government for this purpose, while hundreds have been discharged from quarantine after exhibiting no symptoms during their 14-day quarantine period, the Ministry of Health confirmed. Meanwhile, 2,622 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 4,952 people receiving treatment and 4,715 quarantined. Kuwait is taking measures to test Kuwaitis coming from infected areas for potential infection, as it has already tested thousands of people.

Curfew

Kuwait imposed a total curfew from May 10 to May 30, allowing room for people to walk out for daily exercise between 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm, and to shop at co-ops once a week during the curfew hours by making an appointment through www.moci.shop. Earlier, Kuwait enforced a country-wide partial curfew from 5:00 pm to 6:00 am, which was later extended to start from 4:00 pm until 8:00 am during Ramadan, while allowing restaurants and food stores to make home deliveries from 5:00 pm until 1:00 am. The government also locked down Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh in a bid to contain the spread of the virus and enable health workers to test inhabitants. Earlier, the government decided to close all shopping malls, beauty salons and barber shops as part of its measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The government also allowed supermarkets, restaurants and shops to host a maximum of five people at a time and in case there are lines, the distance must be at least one meter between people. The Ministry of Commerce launched a website (www.moci.shop) to enable people to book appointments to shop at co-operative societies in their areas. The Public Authority for Industry also announced that companies can apply to evacuate their workers from Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Mahboula. To do so, they must fill a 'workers evacuation form' available on www.pai.gov.kw, and send the form via email to: jasiri@moh.gov.kw.

Precautions

Kuwait halted all commercial flights until further notice, and has sent special flights to repatriate Kuwaitis back home from countries affected with the virus' spread. All arrivals to Kuwait from all countries are to be placed under compulsory quarantine for 14 days, during which the person is monitored, and prescribed health procedures are applied, the health ministry said. Kuwait had required all expatriates who arrived from travel on March 1 and beyond to visit Kuwait International Fairground where the Ministry of Health has set up a center to test people for possible infection. Meanwhile, the Cabinet announced on April 9 the operation of all airline flights for expats who are wishing to return back to their countries. Authorities also announced a public holiday in the country from March 12 to May 28, with work resuming on May 31, while entities providing vital services will remain open. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education has suspended classes for March at all public and private schools (for both students and teaching staffs); first from March 1 to March 12, and later extended it until March 29, before eventually suspending schools until August for grade 12 and October for other stages. 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.

Kuwait suspended issuing entry permits and visas unless those issued through diplomatic missions. The Interior Ministry issued an amnesty allowing residency violators to leave the country between April 1 and April 30 without paying any fines or airfare with a chance to return to Kuwait later. The amnesty was issued in view of the circumstances the country is currently going through and as part of the precautionary measures taken to

fight the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). During the amnesty period, individuals desiring to procure valid residencies in Kuwait and were willing to pay the fines without being subjected to investigations were allowed to pay the fines and legalize their status if they meet the required conditions.

Hotlines

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

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

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

Medicine delivery

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

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

Meanwhile, all licensed pharmacies in Kuwait delivering medicine are allowed to continue their services 24 hours a day. The Ministry of Health is also asking doctors and nurses affiliated with the private medical sector to volunteer in order to contribute to the fight against the virus. Volunteering is available through the link: <http://volunteering.q8-ehealth.com>. The ministry had closed all private clinics and medical centers effective March 22, 2020 until further notice.

Mental health assistance

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

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

For information and other concerns, call 9401-4283.

Speaker praises Amir's address

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Saturday a cable from National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem who expressed deep gratitude and appreciation for his address marking last ten days of the blessed month of Ramadan. The parliament speaker, in his cable, noted that His Highness the Amir's speech constituted a road map on how to deal with current and future challenges. He pledged to His Highness the Amir to shoulder national responsibilities in shadow of cooperation between the legislative and executive authorities. Ghanem noted that the vow to bear these responsibilities would be under guidance of His Highness the Amir as well as His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Earlier, Ghanem lauded His Highness the Amir's address as having focused on both health and future conditions in the country. He said that His Highness the Amir's speech was centered on the novel coronavirus situation, economic and financial affairs, and how to reduce reliance upon others, diversify sources of income and cut consumption. The speaker called on everyone to follow the directives of His Highness the Amir regarding all health and security measures to beat the virus, and to think about his words on the country's future so seriously. The speaker spoke highly of His Highness the Amir's call for diversifying sources of income, reducing reliance on others and cutting consumption as a reflection of his eagerness to address challenges ahead. He reassured that Kuwait would overcome this crisis thanks to the political leadership's directives and national unity.

In other news, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh on Saturday telephoned Iraqi Minister of Interior Othman Al-Ghanmi congratulating him on his assignment and on the holy month of Ramadan. A ministry statement said Saleh expressed good wishes to Ghanmi in his mission for bolstering security and stability in the brotherly country. Ghanmi for his part underscored distinctiveness of the brotherly bilateral relations between the two countries, expressing readiness to be engaged in full-fledged cooperation at the security level for sake of regional stability and security. He also expressed hope that the Kuwaiti leadership and the graceful people of Kuwait would surpass this hardship. — KUNA

In my view

Coronavirus revisited



By Abdellatif Sharaa

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Here we go again...health officials spoke and are speaking about how to protect ourselves against the coronavirus. The start was very simple: Wash your hands often, keep a distance between yourself and others, avoid shaking hands. If you sneeze or cough, do it in the inner side of your arm, and the best weapon against this thing is to stay home.

People's compliance with those instructions was lax and widely not adhered to or they didn't take the matter seriously. This prompted authorities to impose a partial curfew, close down certain businesses, make special arrangements to visit co-ops, then restrict co-ops to accept area residents only, besides other measures to limit the exposure, but few heeded the warnings. We had areas that were placed under total lockdown for one reason and another. The number of cases started to climb again lately despite all efforts being taken by state authorities, which called for quick action and imposition of a total curfew for a three-week period to bring the virus under control.

But people rushed to markets in huge numbers like there is no tomorrow! Scary scenes show waves of shoppers near food stores, supermarkets, co-ops, etc, standing in line. But they were close to each other and one was almost breathing in the ear of the person in front of him - what a horror situation! This is something that should be avoided under normal circumstances, and we are under the threat of a pandemic.

A brotherly Arab country, where officials moved very early and had good control over the situation, recently recorded zero cases for eight consecutive days, but had a setback as 24 cases were recorded on the ninth day. This was caused by a truck driver who was ignorant enough to invite more than 40 persons to dinner! The driver was infected with the virus and in turn infected all those who were present, and they in turn took the virus with them and gave it to others. The driver was found to have visited a hospital and the hospital is now under isolation. I mentioned this story to show how one person who ignores all instructions thwarted the efforts of five months in just less than an hour!

This is good evidence that staying home is the best weapon against this enemy. We must remember that we are not immune - no one is immune. The state proved that life can go on normally as far as food, medicine, cooking gas, gasoline and other necessities are concerned, so no need to panic and rush to stock things, as arrangements are already made to enable everyone to get what they need.

So, please listen well and do exactly what the health authorities ask you to do, because it is for your own sake, and the sake of the entire population. Thank you!

Final word: "Even the smallest act of caring for another person is like a drop of water - it will make ripples throughout the pond." — Jessy and Bryan Metteo

Local

Defense ministry runs expat quarantine camp in Subhan

More than 1,000 beds, around half of which currently occupied



Tents lined up at the camp.



By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The ministry of defense has prepared a massive quarantine camp for expats who have recovered from coronavirus, where they can spend two weeks in isolation, in addition to other cases of institutional quarantine. This camp is located at the defense camp in Subhan with a capacity of more than 1,000 beds, around half of which are occupied at present. The first group of patients arrived on April 5.

"Recovered patients, after leaving the hospital, are brought to this camp to stay for 14 days in quarantine to make sure they are 100 percent clear, especially since most of them are 'bachelors' who stay with many other roommates. The tents here are of different sizes, but all are according to conditions and instructions of the ministry of health, including allowing for social distancing with all medical equipment. All tents are equipped with air-conditioning units too," Col Dr Raed Al-Tajalli, director of the quarantine camp, told Kuwait Times during a tour of the camp.

This is the second phase of operations. "In the first phase, we received suspected cases or those who were in contact with infected patients. Now there are only a few such cases, and the majority are recovered patients. We are only at half capacity," he added.

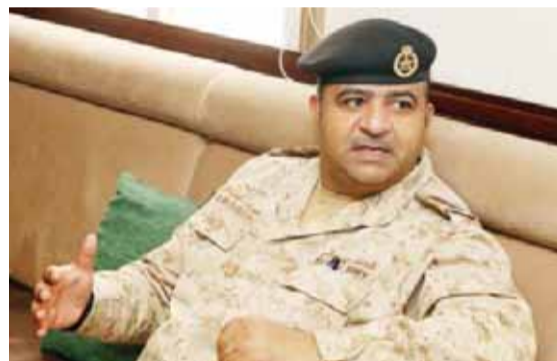
Emergency clinic

The quarantine camp also includes a clinic for minor health issues and a field emergency clinic.

"This clinic is equipped with 11 beds and two resuscitation beds. The clinic is ready for any emergency case. Our medical services are ready 24/7. It's fully equipped with all necessary medical equipment inside and outside the clinic. We also have an emergency gathering point for any emergency or evacuation," explained Tajalli.

"We are cooperating closely with the ministry of health, and they arrange swab tests for patients with results between 24 to 48 hours. The patients are transferred from our camp to the hospital under the supervision of doctors from the health ministry

According to health ministry requirements



KUWAIT: Col Dr Raed Al-Tajalli, director of the quarantine camp, speaks to Kuwait Times.



Col Dr Raed Al-Tajalli takes Kuwait Times in a tour around the camp.— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

along with their files from our clinic with their full medical history that is prepared according to the system of the health ministry. All medical staff working in this camp are from the ministry of defense," he said.

"Special staff from MoH sterilize the place daily and also spray our staff working here daily. Also, the fire department helped us with organizing safety measures between the tents including the paths, exits and entrances, placing fire extinguishers and

so on," he pointed out. Patients can move around the tent. "Also, each group of recovered patients is placed in the same section of tents, so they don't mix with other groups. There is a toilet cabin for each tent, and all services are available for patients including three meals a day. But if they want to order food from outside, they are free to do so. There are some sports facilities too, but they were closed due to the ministry's precautionary measures to maintain social distancing," Tajalli added.



Medical equipment inside the camp's clinic.



The tent's interior.



Col Dr Raed Al-Tajalli at a clinic in the camp.



A general view of the quarantine camp.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in the Arabian Gulf

Kuwait Heritage



KUWAIT: Open markets in early 1960. The picture shows an open market in Kuwait City, surrounded by traditional mud brick buildings, and a mosque. Some merchants are seen next to their shops. (Source: Collection of Ali Al-Rais, center of research and studies on Kuwait, 2017. Prepared by: Mahmoud Aakarria Abu Alella, researcher in heritage, Ministry of Information)

Nothing happens without Allah's will

By Hassan Twaha Bwambale

It is important to note and acknowledge that everything that happens has already been pre-ordained by Allah (the Almighty and Majestic). Nothing happens without Allah's will, and there is wisdom behind whatever happens.

During Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) time, the hypocrites and other enemies of Islam used to grieve over whatever bounty the Muslims were blessed with, and rejoiced whenever the Muslims were afflicted with a trial. In such a situation, when Muslims faced a hardship, their enemies would claim that they didn't take precautions. Allah (SWT) instructed Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to inform them that nothing would befall the Muslims without Allah's will. We read in the Noble Qur'an, what can be translated as: "Say, 'Nothing will befall us except what Allah has decreed for us. He is our protector, and upon Allah let the believers rely'" (Al-Tawbah 9: 51).

If any affliction strikes you, Allah (the Almighty and Majestic) is the only one who can remove it. We read in the Noble Qur'an, translated as: "If Allah afflicts you with any hardship, none other than Him can remove it. And if He wills good for you, none can block His bounty. He grants His bounty to whomever He wills among His servants. And He is the All-Forgiving and Most Merciful" (Yunus 10: 107).

Therefore, it is very important to completely submit to Allah (SWT) and depend entirely on Him. Whenever you are afflicted with a hardship, remember the following two elements of true reliance on Allah (SWT):

a. To believe, trust, surrender and rely on Him completely, without any iota of doubt.

b. Take precautionary measures if you see or sense that danger is looming in the horizon. And if an affliction strikes you, try your level best to find a way out with the realization that none can remove it except Allah (SWT). So do not depend on the means, but rather on Allah (SWT). Conversely, if you have some goals that you intend to achieve, take effective means of success, keeping in mind that everything happens by Allah's will. Therefore, it is imperative to take effective means of success and find credible solutions to our problems with the realization that nothing happens without the will of Allah (SWT).

Guiding us towards true dependence on Allah (SWT), Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, translated as: Abu Huraira (RA) narrated that

the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, translated as: "A strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than a weak believer, and there is good in both. Be keen to do and say things that are beneficial for you, seek help from Allah, and do not lose heart. And if any trouble befalls you, don't say, 'Had I done such and such' (it would not have happened). But rather say, 'Allah has pre-ordained (everything), and whatever He wills happens. For 'if' or 'had I' opens the (door) for the Devil' (to tempt you) (Muslim # 2, 664).

Among the lessons that we learn from the above-mentioned Hadeeth, is that we should work hard to find solutions to our problems, and never to lose hope.

It should also be clearly understood that if you are afflicted with any hardship despite all your precautionary measures, then there is reason for that and Allah (SWT) will reward you abundantly if you patiently persevere and avoid any negative statement or thought about Him.

Abu Saeed Al-Khudrey and Abu Huraira (RA) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, translated as: No believer is afflicted by a chronic or normal disease, fatigue, sadness or grief except that it expiates some of his sins" (Saheeh Muslim # 2, 573).

What are the supplications to repeat during a difficult situation? Uthman bin Affaan (RA) narrated that Allah's Messenger (pbuh) said, translated as: "Whoever recites three times (at night): 'In the name of Allah, with Whose name (mentioned) nothing on Earth or in Heaven can harm (anyone), and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knower,' no sudden affliction will befall him until morning, and if anyone says it in the morning, no sudden affliction will befall him until the evening" (Al-Albani rated it as Saheeh (authentic) in Saheeh Abi Dawud # 5, 088).

Anas bin Malik (RA) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) used to say (in supplication), translated as: "O Allah, I seek refuge in You from leprosy, leukoderma, madness and (all) evil (infectious) diseases" (Al-Albani rated it as Saheeh (authentic) in Saheeh Abi Dawud # 1, 554).

— Courtesy of the TIES Center: the TIES Center aims at empowering Kuwait's expats through social and educational services that promote a positive and productive role in society, and to facilitate opportunities for intra- and interfaith interactions that promote social solidarity. For more information, you can contact TIES at Tel:25231015/6; Hotline:94079777; e-mail: info@tiescenter.net.

Kuwait Municipality shuts commercial stores in Hawally

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality said on Saturday it shut down 147 commercial stores in Hawally in April for breaching preventive precautions against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The municipality said in statement that its inspectors addressed 235 warnings against owners of grocery stores, issued various tickets against restaurants, hair dressing stores, health clubs, entertainment halls and wed-

ding halls. It also reported sanitizing 66,000 containers, abandoned vehicles and penalized law breaking vendors. There were others tasks, namely cutting power to really units. Kuwait is observing nearly three weeks of total lock down as of Sunday afternoon. People will be allowed to venture out for exercise for two hours provided they wear medical masks and observe social distancing. The state has taken a series of other measures against the contagion. — KUNA

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Local

Panic buying sweeps through Kuwait ahead of total curfew



KUWAIT: Panic buying swept through Kuwait on Saturday as people flocked to supermarkets, bakeries, food supply, and cooking gas cylinder stores among others to stockpile on basic necessities ahead of a total curfew that kicked off yesterday afternoon. Long lines of people - not necessarily observing social distancing - was the common scene in areas all over Kuwait as most efforts to prevent large crowds went to no avail. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh





Pakistanis crowd markets as virus lockdown eased

Seoul closes bars, clubs over fears of virus 2nd wave

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DUBAI: Emirati officials present roses to members of an Indian medical team upon their arrival at Dubai International Airport on Saturday. — AFP

Global virus cases top 4 million

France, Spain move toward reopening

PARIS: The number of coronavirus cases worldwide topped four million as some of the hardest-hit countries readied to lift lockdown restrictions, despite concerns about a second wave of infections. Governments around the world are trying to stop the spread of the disease while scrambling for ways to relieve pressure on their economies, which are facing a historic downturn with millions pushed into unemployment.

But with the death toll already past 280,000, nations are keen to avoid second waves of infections that could overwhelm their healthcare systems, with a new cluster of cases in South Korea raising fears about the virus hitting back rapidly. Amid the barrage of deaths, some European countries have cited signs of progress that they said justified cautious steps towards a sense of normality. Officials in France on Saturday said the day's death toll of 80 was the lowest since early April, while nursing home fatalities also fell sharply as the nation prepared to relax curbs on public movement imposed eight weeks ago.

The easing, to begin Monday, has brought mixed reactions. "I've been scared to death" about the reopening, said Maya Flandin, a bookshop manager from Lyon. "It's a big responsibility to have to protect my staff and my customers." French health officials have warned that "the epidemic remains active and

evolving", and that social distancing must be kept up even as restrictions are eased. In Spain, about half the population will be allowed out on Monday for limited socialization, and restaurants will be able to offer some outdoor service as the country begins a phased transition set to last through June.



Death toll exceeds 280,000

Fears lingered, however, of a resurgence, and authorities excluded Madrid and Barcelona - two COVID-19 hotspots - from the first phase. Belgium is also easing some restrictions on Monday, and in some parts of Germany, bars and restaurants reopened on Saturday with further easing set for today. Overall, the situation in Europe was still far from normal. Britain is

reportedly planning to announce on Sunday that all overseas visitors will face a mandatory two-week quarantine, and the European Union warned against opening borders to travellers from outside the bloc.

Across Europe, commemorations marking 75 years since Nazi Germany's surrender were cancelled or scaled down. And Poland's election on Sunday will be one for the history books as polling stations remain closed and turnout will clock in at zero due to a political crisis set off by the pandemic — the presidential ballot is formally neither postponed nor cancelled because the government and opposition were unable to agree on a constitutional and safe solution.

'Phenomenal' recovery?

South Korea's capital Seoul shut all bars and clubs on Saturday after a burst of cases were tracked to one of the city's busiest nightlife districts. Even as the country eased virus restrictions, officials warned against carelessness after the new cluster of infections, highlighting the challenge of containing the spread of the deadly disease while pursuing an economic revival. Global economic figures are pointing to the most acute downturn in nearly a century with businesses forced to shut and supply lines badly disrupted, and pressure is growing on leaders around the world to

find a way out.

In the United States, the country with the world's highest death toll, President Donald Trump faced sharp criticism from his predecessor Barack Obama, who said on a leaked tape that Trump's handling of the crisis was an "absolute chaotic disaster". Facing re-election in November, Trump has insisted that next year would be "phenomenal" for the US economy, urging reopening in a country where the virus continues to claim well over 1,000 lives daily. The United States lost an unprecedented 20.5 million jobs in April, driving the unemployment rate to 14.7 percent — the highest level since the Great Depression.

'Life costs money'

Health experts have cautioned that while the growth of cases may be slowing in some European and Asian countries, other nations - many of them impoverished - are only in the first phases of their outbreaks. In Iran, the Middle East's virus epicenter, many were taking advantage of loosened restrictions despite worries about a spike in infections. "Life costs money," said Hamed, a 22-year-old out on the streets of the capital Tehran without a mask. "People have to go to work since this virus has been with us for about three months now." — AFP

Brazil tops 10,000 deaths from COVID

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil, the hardest-hit Latin American country in the coronavirus pandemic, has surpassed 10,000 deaths, according to figures released Saturday by the Ministry of Health. While Brazil's numbers are high - 10,627 deaths and 155,939 confirmed cases - scientists think the real figures could be 15 or even 20 times worse, given the country's inability to carry out widespread testing. Congress and the Supreme Court decreed an official mourning period of three days and lawmakers asked Brazilians to follow health authorities' recommendations to reduce infection rates while the country prepares for "a safe and definitive return back to normal."

Meanwhile President Jair Bolsonaro, who opposes stay-at-home measures due to their impact on the country's economy, was seen jet skiing on Lake Paranoa in Brasilia, according to the Metropoles news website. Officials told AFP he did not plan to make a statement on the country reaching 10,000 deaths. In the last 24 hours alone, the nation saw 10,611 new cases and 730 fatalities, Brazil's second-highest daily death toll, after a record set on Friday (751 deaths).

'Situation is dire'

Resisting pressure from Bolsonaro, the governors of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro states have said they will extend the partial quarantine measures in force since March until the end of May. The pandemic has given rise to ongoing governmental clashes, pitting the president against governors and



MANAUS, Brazil: A man carries a coffin out of a ship upon arrival to attend to the high demand due to the high number of deaths related to the new coronavirus at Manaus Port on May 8, 2020. — AFP

mayors who have implemented social distancing and confinement measures to contain the virus' spread — efforts supported by the country's Supreme Court. In announcing that his state's lockdown would be prolonged, Sao Paulo Governor Joao Doria said Friday: "We are at the height of this pandemic. The situation is dire." His southeastern state of almost 46 million inhabitants has seen more than 3,600 deaths and over 44,400 cases.

Neighboring Rio de Janeiro state, home to more than 16 million people, follows with 1,653 deaths and 16,929 infections. Less populated states such as Ceara, Pernambuco and Amazonas already have around a thousand dead each. Amazonas, home to a number of indigenous tribes that are extremely vulnerable to the virus, has recorded 232 deaths per million inhabitants,

almost three times the rate in Sao Paulo state. While Brazil's coronavirus peak is not expected for several more weeks, seven states have already seen their intensive care units fill to 90 percent capacity.

Bolsonaro, who has compared the coronavirus to a "little flu," tweeted Saturday that the country's "army of unemployed continues to grow" in reference to a factory closure in the northeast, before asking "is chaos coming?" On Thursday the country's economy minister, Paulo Guedes, said Brazil could face "economic collapse" in a month's time due to stay-at-home measures. According to the IMF, Brazil risks a 5.3 percent contraction in GDP this year. Worldwide the virus has claimed more than 277,000 lives and the number of coronavirus cases has surpassed four million, according to an AFP tally. —AFP

US Supreme Court to take on Trump taxes, immunity

WASHINGTON: Can Donald Trump refuse to turn over his tax returns and financial records to Congress and New York prosecutors? The Supreme Court takes up this politically charged question on Tuesday, and it may use the occasion to better define the limits of presidential immunity. The high court's nine justices, confined at home by the novel coronavirus pandemic, will question lawyers for both sides by telephone in a highly anticipated session to be broadcast live.

The hearing, initially set for late March, is being held now to allow time for the justices to render a decision before the presidential election in November, as Trump seeks a second term. The former real estate magnate, who used his fortune as an argument in his 2016 election campaign, is the first president since Richard Nixon in the 1970s to refuse to release his tax returns - prompting speculation about his true worth and his possible financial entanglements.

"There is clearly something in these documents that the president does not want us to see," Steven Mazie, an author and educator, said during a webinar. Since retaking control of the House of Representatives in midterm elections in 2018, the Democratic opposition has been eager to find out just what that "something" might be. Several congress-

sional committees have issued subpoenas to Trump's longtime accounting firm, Mazars, as well as to Deutsche Bank and Capital One bank, demanding Trump's financial records for the 2011-2018 period.

Manhattan prosecutor Cyrus Vance, a Democrat, meantime made a similar demand to Mazars as part of an investigation into payments to the porn actress known as Stormy Daniels to buy her silence about an alleged liaison with the billionaire. Trump immediately sued to block the documents' release. "What they are doing is not legal," he said on Twitter, adding, "the Witch Hunt continues." Having lost his argument in the lower courts, Trump turned to the nation's highest legal body. With two conservative Trump appointees on the nine-justice panel, the high court has taken a clear turn to the right.

'To torment the president'

The justices will devote the first hour of Tuesday's oral arguments to the congressional subpoenas, highlighting a fierce battle over the legislature's investigative powers. "Unleashing each and every House committee to torment the president with legislative subpoena after legislative subpoena is a recipe for constitutional crisis," the president's lawyers said in a brief to the court. Yet such requests are nothing new. House lawyers responded in their own brief, citing examples involving presidents Richard Nixon, a Republican, and Jimmy Carter, a Democrat. "What is unprecedented," they added, "is the extraordinary breadth of the arguments that President Trump and the solicitor general make about the supposed power of a president to thwart investigations." The high court may be tempted to sidestep the central issue. — AFP

International

Russia buries latest priest to die from coronavirus

Russia records 198,676 cases and 1,827 deaths

MOSCOW: Father Andrei Molchanov, the latest Russian Orthodox priest to die from the novel coronavirus, was buried on Saturday by his heartbroken daughter who said she wished the Moscow church where he served had closed earlier. Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, called in late March for believers to pray at home.

However tough government lockdown measures at the end of that month, which closed down restaurants and most stores, and told people to stay at home, did not order churches to shut. "I believe above all else that we should have closed churches, along with restaurants and other places," Anastasia Molchanova, the late priest's daughter, told Reuters after his burial.

Despite the patriarch's call, most churches in Moscow, including Molchanov's, remained open

until mid-April before Russia's consumer health watchdog, a government agency, issued an order to



At least 11 other Russian clerics have died

shut them. The consumer health watchdog and the Russian Orthodox Church did not immediately respond to requests for comment. At least 11 other

Russian clerics in addition to Molchanov have died since the start of the outbreak, according to a list published by "Orthodoxy and the World", an online media outlet that focuses on religious and social issues.

Most of them served in churches in the capital Moscow, which accounts for more than a half of Russia's 198,676 cases and 1,827 deaths, and the wider Moscow region. Many more clerics have been infected with the virus, Russian media have reported. Father Molchanov fell sick shortly after an Easter service, which he conducted in an empty church to broadcast it online. He later tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

The 54-year-old deacon died on May 3 in Moscow's main hospital for treating coronavirus patients. Molchanov's wife later developed pneumonia and several other members of the clergy in

the same church, including a senior priest, came down with symptoms of the virus, his daughter said. Molchanov's body was taken on Saturday from a morgue back to the Church of Saints Zosima and Savvatiy in eastern Moscow, where he served and may have been infected. His memorial service was carried out by a priest wearing a medical mask outside the church, which was closed. The gravediggers who buried him wore protective suits.

More than 20 parishioners, some of them in tears, watched the service from a distance and lit candles in front of a portrait of the priest. Molchanov's daughter said she was now taking care of her sick mother but that the only thing she could do was to bring groceries to her door. "That's the hardest thing. Everybody is quarantined. There is nobody to give a hug. I cannot even go to hug my mum." — Reuters

Russians mark Victory Day on lockdown

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin told Russians they are "invincible" when they stand together as the country on Saturday marked the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II in lockdown from the coronavirus. With cases surging and authorities urging Russians to stay in their homes, celebrations of this year's Victory Day were muted after the Kremlin grudgingly postponed plans for a grand parade with world leaders.

Instead of columns of military hardware and thousands of troops marching through Red Square as planned, Putin walked alone to lay flowers at the Eternal Flame outside the red brick walls of the Kremlin. In a solemn televised speech, he made no mention of the virus, despite Russia having the fifth-highest number of confirmed infections in the world. Putin instead highlighted the sacrifices made by the Soviet Union in what Russians call the Great Patriotic War and hinted at the threat now facing the country.

"Our veterans fought for life, against death. And we will always be equal to their unity and endurance," Putin said. "We know and firmly believe that we are invincible when we stand together." An honor guard marched past Putin after his speech, as Russian television showed images of Red Square empty under cloudy skies. Military helicopters, bombers and fighter jets flew over the city, releasing smoke in the red, white and blue of the Russian flag. State television counted down a minute of silence later in the evening, to commemorate the millions who perished in the war.

Surge in virus cases

The pandemic hit Russia later than western Europe but the country has seen a major increase in cases, with more than 10,000 new infections registered every day this week. On Saturday officials said the number of confirmed infections had risen by another 10,817 to reach a total of 198,676, putting Russia behind only the United States, Spain, Italy and Britain in total cases. Russia says the increase is due in part to a huge testing campaign, with more than 5.2 million tests carried out so far. The country's reported mortality rate is much lower than in many countries, with 1,827 dead from the coronavirus as of Saturday.

Critics have cast doubt on the numbers and accused authorities of under-reporting deaths. The pandemic has been a major blow to Putin's political plans for this spring. The postponed Victory Day parade, which was due to be attended by world leaders including China's Xi Jinping and Emmanuel Macron of France, had been meant as a showcase of Russia's increased global prestige under Putin. He was also forced to postpone a vote last month on constitutional reforms that would have paved his way, after being in power for more than 20 years, to potentially stay in the Kremlin until 2036.

Officials are hoping both events can still be held in 2020 and Putin said Saturday that Victory Day celebrations would take place this year "properly and on a grand scale." But no dates have been set and much will depend on when the outbreak comes under control. As with others around the world, Russians are deeply worried about the long-term economic impact of the pandemic and polls show many are increasingly frustrated with the government's handling of the crisis. One survey by independent pollster Levada this week showed Putin's approval rating falling to a historic low of 59 percent in April. — AFP



MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin looks at military aircraft flying over the Kremlin and Red Square on Saturday to mark the 75th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany in World War Two. — AFP

Defiant Belarus stages Victory Day parade

MINSK: Thousands of soldiers marched in Belarus on Saturday to celebrate the Soviet victory in World War Two, as President Alexander Lukashenko rejected calls for lockdown measures to fight the coronavirus pandemic. Lukashenko, who has ruled the eastern European country since 1994, has called fears over the coronavirus a "psychosis" and variously suggested drinking vodka, visiting saunas or playing ice hockey to beat the disease.

Spectators in stands in the capital Minsk, a few of whom wore masks, looked on as soldiers marched, tanks rolled past and Su-30 fighter jets flew in formation overhead. Lukashenko's insistence on going ahead with the display contrasted with neighbour Russia, which scaled back celebrations amid a jump in coronavirus cases and postponed its usual massive military parade on Red Square. Dressed in military uniform and surrounded by generals, Lukashenko said it was unacceptable for Belarus to even think about cancelling the parade.

"There will be people who will condemn us," Lukashenko said. He told such critics: "do not rush to draw conclusions, let alone condemn us, the heirs of the Victory, the Belarusians ... We simply could not ??t differently, we had no other choice." Belarus



MINSK: Belarus' Yakovlev Yak-130 aircraft takes part in a military parade on Saturday to mark the 75th anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany in World War Two. — AFP

has not imposed lockdown measures or social distancing rules, and kept its borders open while countries around the world have closed them. "This is a demonstration of determination, will, strength, not so much for society as for the inner circle of the elite," said Andrey Egorov, senior analyst at the Center for European Transformation. "It's a demonstration that everything remains under control."

Another reason for staging the parade could be an act of one-upmanship against Russian President Vladimir Putin. Ties between the two traditional allies have been strained, especially over Moscow's decision to scale back subsidies and loans that prop up Lukashenko's rule. "Against the background of

Putin's cancelled parade, Lukashenko has the opportunity to draw attention to himself," said political analyst Alexander Klaskovsky.

"This is such a kind of revenge for the numerous humiliations. Putin hid in the bunker, and Lukashenko at that time will be standing on the podium in a beautiful uniform." The World Organization has called on Belarus to introduce tougher measures to fight the coronavirus and the head of its Minsk office has expressed concern about holding the parade. There are 21,107 confirmed coronavirus cases in Belarus, with 121 deaths. But some in the country believe the official statistics underestimate the true toll. — Reuters



GORING, United Kingdom: Mannequins with wigs are pictured looking out of the window of a hairdresser's salon, closed-down due to COVID-19, west of London on Saturday. — AFP

Britain mulls quarantine for visitors

LONDON: Britain could introduce a 14-day mandatory quarantine for international arrivals to stem the spread of coronavirus, an airline association said, sparking alarm in an industry already hard hit by the global pandemic. Tim Alderslade, chief executive of Airlines UK, the trade body for UK-registered airlines, confirmed to AFP that the government had approached it with the idea.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson could unveil the measure in the evening, media reports said, when he sets out his roadmap for easing a nationwide lockdown imposed in late March to slow the spread of COVID-19. He has already said he will proceed with "maximum caution" to avoid exacerbating the outbreak in Britain, the worst hit country in Europe with 31,587 confirmed coronavirus deaths.

No major changes to the stay-at-home rules are expected next week, although garden centres are expected to reopen on Wednesday. The quarantine measures were first reported in The Times newspaper, which said that anyone coming into Britain by plane, train or boat will be required to self-isolate for a fortnight from early June. Visitors from neighboring Ireland would be exempt, it said, as would lorry drivers bringing in crucial supplies - but the measure would include British nationals returning from abroad.

The rule would be enforced through spot-checks on the address given by travellers, with possible penalties including fines of up to £1,000 (\$1,200, 1,100 euros) or deportation, The Times said. The

aviation industry, which is already teetering on the brink after planes were grounded across the globe at the start of the virus outbreak, called for urgent clarity on the plans. Airlines UK had previously warned a quarantine would "effectively kill international travel to and from the UK", making it "all but impossible for aviation to resume any time soon".

In a statement on Saturday, Alderslade said the group needed to see more details of the plan and would be asking for assurances the decision was "led by the science" and would be regularly reviewed. "We also need to see a number of new support measures to see airlines through this period so that we still have a UK aviation sector once the quarantine period is lifted," he added. Derek Provan, chief executive of AGS Airports, which owns and operates several regional British airports, also expressed alarm.

"This measure will have a devastating effect on aviation, tourism and hospitality as inbound visitors will not come to the UK whilst this is in place," he said. The government declined to comment on the plans on Saturday, but Johnson's spokesman on Friday had confirmed the idea was under "active" consideration. At the start of the global outbreak, Britain asked visitors from hotspots such as the Chinese city of Wuhan and northern Italy to self-isolate on arrival. But it refused to follow other countries in shutting its borders, saying coronavirus was already in Britain. If infection rates fall enough to start lifting the lockdown, officials say that putting foreign visitors into quarantine might help stop a new surge. Separately, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps announced plans to increase and improve cycle routes and widen pavements across England in the coming weeks, to boost cycling and walking. He warned that when the lockdown is eased, continued social distancing measures mean the public transport network will only be able to cope with one tenth of pre-outbreak passengers. — AFP

Flowers via a stranger: Chileans compromise on cemetery visits

SANTIAGO: Every year for the past 20, Rosa Maria Fuenzalida has visited her mother's grave on Mother's Day without fail in the central Chilean city of Curico. She is one of millions of people in Latin America, where family is its own religion, who flock to take floral offerings to the cemeteries where their mothers and grandmothers are buried to show they are not forgotten. This year though, with Chileans self-isolating as the new coronavirus spreads around the country, Rosa Maria relied on a stranger to take flowers to her mother's grave.

Burial places throughout Chile announced widespread dismay that they would not open on Mother's Day. But Curico's general cemetery, which ordinarily would have 15,000 visitors on Mother's Day, offered a compromise. For three days in the run-up to Sunday, it invited visitors to bring their flowers to the front gate on different days, according to the letters of their surnames, for the bouquets to be delivered for them to their loved ones' final resting place.

Those leaving bouquets said they received a Whatsapp message shortly afterward with a photograph of the flowers in place, with a note assuring them they had fresh water. Roberto Garcia, the cemetery's director, said more than 1,000 people had brought flowers by Friday afternoon. "Today in Chile the truth is that it has been hard; we have people who have died, in Curico we have more than 45 cases of coronavirus," he said. "This acts as a ray of light. We are doing this with care and love for each of these families and especially the children who have lost their mothers."

Rosa Maria, an only child who was 21 when her mother died, said she had been struck by the local authorities' recognizing the practice as "essential" amid social distancing rules across Chile. "Despite the time that has passed, I still have a relationship with my mum and to be able to go to the cemetery regularly to see her is important to me," she said. "Everything is strange at the moment, but to have someone else take care of something so personal was really strange, but also really lovely."

In the capital, Santiago, where the largest cemeteries ordinarily attract tens of thousands of visitors with associated road closures and chaotic scenes, the national federation of cemetery workers this week urged people to stay away. Luis Yevenes, its president, told a local radio station: "It's for everyone's safety. We need to stop this virus. It is sad to see the funeral corteges coming in without people, just the coffin, because the relatives cannot go amid the quarantine. We want to avoid more people going through that pain."

Around the region, where many nations are only just nearing the peak of infections from the deadly virus, Mother's Day will be a muted affair on Sunday. — Reuters

International

Seoul closes bars and clubs over fears of virus 2nd wave

'Carelessness can lead to an explosion in infections'

SEOUL: South Korea's capital has ordered the closure of all clubs and bars after a burst of new cases sparked fears of a second coronavirus wave, and President Moon Jae-in urged the public to remain vigilant. The nation has been held up as a global model in how to curb the virus, but the order from the Seoul mayor on Saturday followed a new infection cluster in Itaewon, one of the city's busiest nightlife districts. More than 50 cases so far have been linked to a 29-year-old man who tested positive after spending time at five clubs and bars in Itaewon last weekend. "Carelessness can lead to an explosion in infections," said Seoul mayor Park Won-soon, adding the order will remain in effect indefinitely.

Gyeonggi province - which surrounds Seoul with a population of around 12 million people - also ordered more than 5,700 entertainment facilities to suspend operations for two weeks starting Sunday. With around 7,200 people estimated to have visited the five establishments, health authorities have warned of a further spike in infections and have asked those who went to any of the venues to get tested. Of the 34 new infections reported on Sunday, 24 were tied to the Itaewon cluster, according to the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"We cannot but feel sorry to see the emergence of the new infection cluster surrounding the Itaewon clubs," KCDC director Jeong Eun-kyeong

told reporters. The spike in new infections came as everyday life in South Korea was slowly returning to normal, with the government relaxing social distancing rules last Wednesday. President Moon said Sunday the new cluster had "raised awareness that even during the stabilisation phase, similar situations can arise again anytime".

A burst of new cases sparks fears

er lower our guard regarding epidemic prevention," he added. Moon has enjoyed growing public support on the back of his government's handling of the virus, which led to a landslide victory for his ruling party at last month's parliamentary elections. The usually bustling streets of Itaewon were largely empty on Sunday afternoon, with bars and clubs fronting signs reading "Temporarily closed for business" or "Prevention of assembly".

"I think this incident can happen anywhere, not only in Itaewon," said Kim Jae-sung, a chef at a neighborhood restaurant. "What is most important is one's of social distancing, avoiding enclosed places and being aware so that incidents like this won't happen again," he told AFP. Lee Seung-wook, a 22-year-old restaurant worker, added: "We hope

'Not over'

"It's not over until it's over," Moon said during a speech marking his third anniversary of taking office. "While keeping enhanced alertness till the end, we must nev-



SEOUL: A man wearing a facemask walks in the popular nightlife district of Itaewon yesterday. — AFP

customers will be more co-operative when we ask for their names for the visiting records since we all need to work together."

The country endured one of the worst early outbreaks of the disease outside mainland China, and while it never imposed a compulsory lockdown, strict social distancing had been widely observed since

March. But it appears to have brought its outbreak under control thanks to an extensive "trace, test and treat" program that has drawn widespread praise. Facilities such as museums and churches have reopened and some professional sports - including baseball and soccer - have started new seasons, while schools are set to re-open starting next week. — AFP

Iraq's new govt reaches out to Oct protesters

BAGHDAD: Iraq's new government promised Saturday to release demonstrators arrested during mass protests that erupted in October and pledged justice and compensation to relatives of over 550 people killed during that unrest. The announcement was made in a televised address following Prime Minister Mustafa Kadhemi's first cabinet meeting. Kadhemi, who with 15 of his proposed 22 ministers won the confidence of Parliament on Wednesday evening, promised "the truth about everything that happened" during the months-long protests.

He vowed to "hold to account all those who shed Iraqi blood". Kadhemi was Iraq's spy chief when the protests broke out and the address to the nation comes as calls spread on social media for renewed demonstrations yesterday. The government of his predecessor Adel Abdel Mahdi had since October repeatedly said it could not find the "unidentified gunmen" who fired on protesters who took to the streets to demand the overhaul of the political system.

At the start of the protests that would become the largest and bloodiest social movement in Iraq's recent history, many demonstrators carried portraits of General Abdulwahab al-Saadi - a highly popular figure in the military campaign to dislodge the Islamic State from Mosul in 2017. He had been dismissed by Abdel Mahdi in September.

Kadhemi on Saturday reinstated the general as the head of counter-terrorism, putting him back in charge of units created and armed by the Americans. The new Iraqi premier has long been seen as Washington's man in Baghdad, but he has also forged close ties with America's arch-foe Iran. Kadhemi also called on parliament to adopt a new electoral law needed for early elections that had been promised by his predecessor.

The new government had presented itself as a "transitional" cabinet on Wednesday evening. It rescinded a decision taken by the outgoing government just before it stepped down that blocked all state spending, including civil servants' salaries and pension payments - relied on by one in five Iraqis. Pensions will be paid out in the coming days, Kadhemi promised. But an implosion of oil prices amid the coronavirus pandemic indicates that Iraq will have little option but to impose austerity policies that could give rise to renewed protests. — AFP



NASIRIYAH, Iraq: Iraqi protesters gather amid clashes with security forces following an anti-government demonstration in this southern city in Dhi Qar province yesterday. — AFP

Pakistanis crowd markets as virus lockdown eased

ISLAMABAD: Pakistanis crowded markets on Saturday after a nationwide coronavirus lockdown was eased, despite the country declaring its second highest daily infection toll. Prime Minister Imran Khan has allowed businesses to reopen in phases from the weekend, citing the economic havoc the virus restrictions have wreaked on the improvised nation. In the garrison city of Rawalpindi, thousands of shoppers were preparing for Eid, which follows the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, with many flouting social distancing rules and advice to wear masks.

In the southern port city of Karachi shopkeepers set out their wares of shoes, clothes, bangles and fabrics, while in the capital Islamabad shoppers



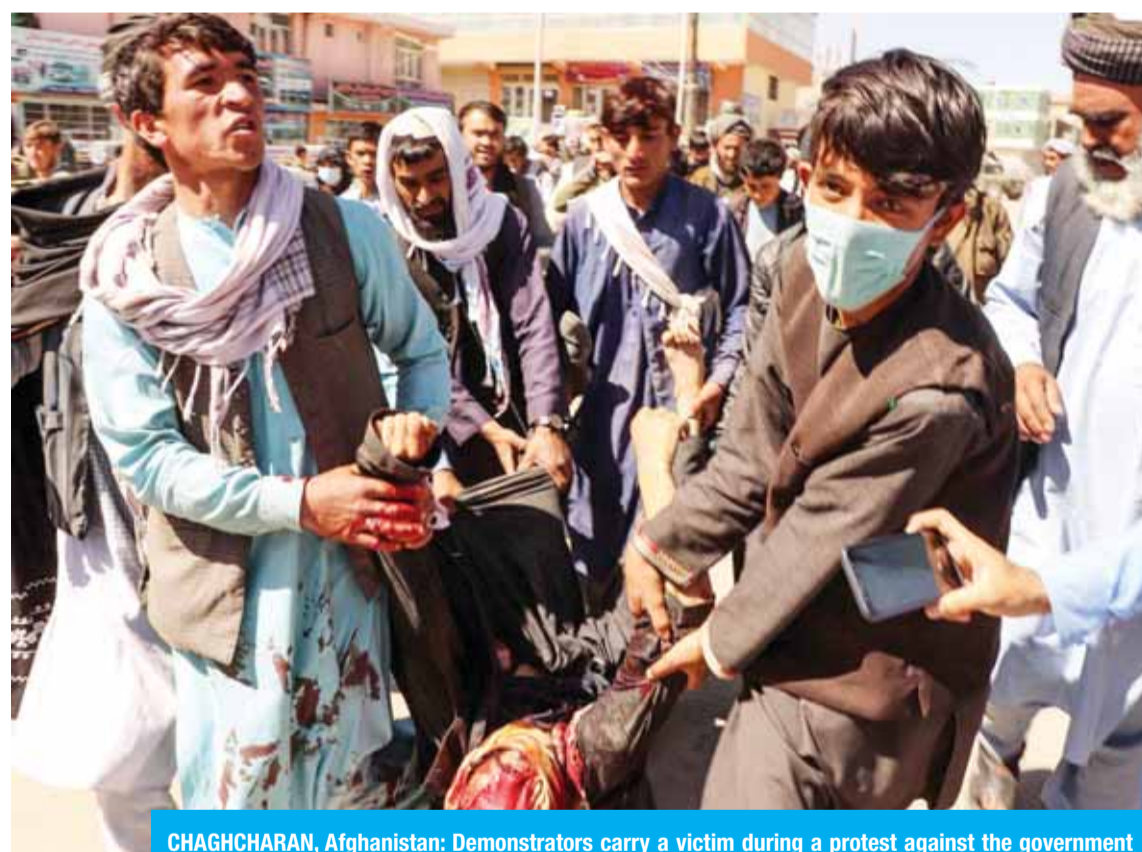
QUETTA: People shop for shoes after the government eased a nationwide lockdown imposed as a preventive measure against the coronavirus on Saturday. — AFP

stood in tightly-packed queues as they waited for stores to open. Similar scenes were played out in Lahore, Quetta and Peshawar. Omar Shirazi, a banker shopping for clothes with his daughter in Rawalpindi, welcomed the move. "Eid is approach-

ing," he said. "We have to buy new garments for our children. It's the responsibility of people to comply with rules and wear safety gear."

Tehmina Sattar, who was shopping with her sister and sons, was more cautious. "We are happy with this decision but at the same time I have a fear in my heart that if this disease spreads it could be devastating. People here are not taking preventative measures." The country's Information Minister Shibli Faraz warned Saturday that the lockdown on businesses would be reimposed if safety guidelines were not followed, after authorities reported more than 1,600 new cases in the past 24 hours.

Infections have been rising steadily as testing has increased, with more than 27,000 cases and more than 600 deaths recorded in the nation of over 210 million. The easing comes as many across the country have openly ignored restrictions on gatherings in public during the past month, especially during the evenings as people celebrate Ramadan. Schools will remain closed until mid-July however, while there are no plans to restart public transportation or domestic flights. — AFP



CHAGHCHARAN, Afghanistan: Demonstrators carry a victim during a protest against the government outside the governor's office following a clash in Firozkoh in Ghor province on Saturday. — AFP

Six killed in clashes at Afghan food aid event

HERAT: Two policemen and four other people were killed in Afghanistan on Saturday after a deadly clash at a public food donation in central Ghor province, officials said. Hundreds of people had gathered outside the governor's office in the provincial capital Firozkoh, where a Qatari group was distributing aid. Some of those who had queued up to receive aid staged a protest against what they saw as "unjust distribution of food items to poor families," Abdul Rahman Akshar, the deputy head of Ghor's provincial council said.

He said that many protesters tried to barge into the governor's office, leading to clashes between them and police present at the site. Officials blamed the protesters for the ensuing violence that left six people dead. "The protesters opened fire on the police," the provincial governor's spokesman Aref Haber said. "Four civilians, including an employee of a local radio and two policemen were killed," he

said, adding that 19 people were also wounded. He said the protesters also beat security personnel, and an investigation into the incident was underway.

The interior ministry confirmed the death toll in a statement, saying "some illegal armed men in the mob attacked the government building", which prompted police to fire into the air to disperse the crowd. Afghan Vice President Amrullah Saleh said the attack was "shocking" and announced that the "government was seriously investigating the incident" in a Facebook post. But the chief of the Afghanistan Human Rights Commission Shaharzar Akbar wrote on Twitter that there were "worrying reports of police firing at protesters in Ghor". She said this was "completely unacceptable" and a team from the commission was looking into the incident.

The aid group was distributing food to about 1,000 local families when the violence erupted. Food drives are a common practice in the country during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Afghanistan is also battling a growing coronavirus outbreak that has exacerbated problems with food access in the impoverished country. In recent weeks authorities have distributed bread in Kabul and other parts of the country since the government imposed a lockdown. Afghanistan's health ministry has so far reported 4,333 cases of COVID-19 and 115 deaths. — AFP

Nepal protests new Indian road through disputed territory

KATHMANDU: Nepal protested India's inauguration of a new road to China that passes through territory claimed by Kathmandu on Saturday, with police arresting dozens demonstrating close to India's embassy. Indian defense minister Rajnath Singh on Friday inaugurated via video link the 80-kilometre (50 miles) long road from Ghatiabagarh in northern Uttarakhand state to the Lipu Lekh pass high in the Himalaya. The pass is claimed by Nepal based on an 1816 treaty that defines its western border with India.

Kathmandu also claims the adjoining and strategic Kalapani as a part of its territory, although Indian troops have been deployed there since New Delhi fought a war with China in 1962. Last year New Delhi published a new map that showed Kalapani within its borders, a move protested by Kathmandu. Nepal's foreign ministry condemned India's "unilateral act" that "runs against the understanding reached between the two countries... that a solution to boundary issues would be sought through negotiations."

It called on India "to refrain from carrying out any activity inside" in the territory. Police said at least 38 people were detained as they gathered outside the Indian embassy in Kathmandu and other areas to protest the inauguration of the road. A nationwide coronavirus lockdown has been imposed in Nepal. Nepal protested to India and China in 2015 when the two countries issued a joint statement listing the Lipu Lekh pass as a bilateral trade route. The hashtag #backoffindia was trending on Twitter in Nepal Saturday. — AFP



KATHMANDU: Police detain demonstrators during a protest against India's newly inaugurated link road to the Chinese border in front of the parliament yesterday. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, MAY 11, 2020

10 Crisis lays bare poverty in Geneva, as thousands queue for free food**11** Musk threatens removing Tesla from California**11** Britain's gardeners dig for victory as virus takes toll

A US military vehicle patrols the oil fields in the town of Qahtaniyah in Syria's northeastern Hasakeh province near the Turkish border. Around 5.6 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey had scraped by on meager daily wages but now find even that is denied them as the coronavirus pandemic forces their host countries into shutdown. — AFP

Syrian refugees starve amid lockdowns, job losses

Lockdowns in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey prevent many working

BEIRUT: Ahmad Al-Mostafa can't afford milk for his baby daughter. A Syrian refugee, he has barely been able to feed his family since Lebanon sank into economic crisis last year. But now, a coronavirus lockdown has made things even worse. "Nobody will hire us anymore," said the 28-year-old, who lost his restaurant job a few months ago. He racked up hundreds of dollars in debt at the local minimarket getting food before the owner said he could borrow no more. "We're afraid of tomorrow," he said. "We don't know what will happen to us."

His plight echoes that facing many of the 5.6 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, who had scraped by on meager daily wages but now find even that is denied them as the coronavirus pandemic forces their host countries into shutdown. Many Lebanese have themselves been hit by a financial crisis that has evaporated jobs and sent prices soaring, and have become less tolerant of the Syrians who have boosted the population by around 1.5 million to some 6 million.

'They don't hire Syrians'

"Every time I go looking for work, they tell me they don't hire Syrians," said Mostafa, who fled into north Lebanon in 2014. "I'm sitting indoors - and

everything is expensive." He can no longer afford diapers, which have doubled in price, and he relies on a charitable neighbor who gets milk for his one-year-old daughter. More refugees say they are worried about starving than about the virus, said Mireille Girard, representative of the UN refugee



Financial crisis compounds Lebanon woes

agency UNHCR in Lebanon.

In a survey last month, UNHCR found 70 percent were going hungry, while many could not buy soap. Since Syria's war erupted nine years ago, many have languished in crowded camps where aid workers fear any COVID-19 outbreak would be rapid and lethal.

up for long-term rental. "Since the beginning of the summer of 2018, it was fully booked via Airbnb, almost exclusively by foreign tourists," the 32-year-old woman said, but "100 percent of the reservations for April, May and June have been cancelled". Being unemployed, she had no other choice.

"I was counting on the earnings of this apartment, around 1,000 euros per month, to compensate for the loss of my job," she explained, expressing pessimism about the summer season, which the Greek government is hoping to jumpstart on July 1. Long-term rentals are becoming "a major trend", according to Patrick Tkatschenko, a real estate agent in Athens. "Airbnb is suffering a huge blow," he said.

Airbnb slashes staff but will adapt

The "hard hit" American home-sharing platform announced on Tuesday that it will slash a quarter of its work force—some 1,900 people all around the world. "We are collectively living through the most harrowing crisis of our lifetime," Airbnb co-founder and chief executive Brian Chesky said in a blog post. This year the San Francisco-based company's revenue will be "less than the half" of the 2019 figure, and Chesky admits he doesn't know when the tourists will return.

Still there are many who believe that holiday apartments, rather than hotels, have a future, as safe havens away from the crowds. Enrique Alcantara,

'Not a single penny'

In Jordan, the Zaatari camp, home to 80,000 Syrian refugees, has been closed off by the authorities during a two-month lockdown, meaning those who used to go out to work on farms every day can no longer do so.

Jordan hosts some 900,000 refugees in all, most of whom live outside the camps. Abdullah Aba Zaid, who used to get work picking tomatoes, has had no income for two months. "For the last 10 days, I haven't had a single penny in the house even to pay for bread. I am borrowing from here and there," he said. "Everyone is waiting for God's mercy ... hoping things will improve."

But even as businesses return to work after the government eased curbs this week, job losses are on the rise, making more Syrians dependent on already strained aid efforts. UNHCR is getting more calls for help from refugee families who had been largely self-reliant, said Dominik Bartsch, its Jordan representative. Some Syrians said their accumulating debts had forced them to sell UN food coupons to pay for rent and basic goods.

'Everyone is hungry'

Since Turkey's economy tipped into a brief

recession two years ago, the public mood towards Syrians has soured, with some saying they have driven down wages and taken jobs from locals. Many of the three and a half million Syrian refugees work as day laborers in construction and manufacturing, especially textile factories - sectors that have been hard hit by the pandemic curbs.

Unlike millions of Turkish workers who lost their wages, Syrians do not benefit from government aid packages but can apply for food aid from local municipalities. Still, many have no basic protection against the virus. One in five does not have access to clean water, said Omar Kadkoy of the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV). "This brings the issue to an alarming level and the government should be acting to contain it."

In a camp in Lebanon's Bekaa valley, which authorities have sealed off during the lockdown, Younes Hamdou cannot find bread. Clean water is also scarce, illness rife and social distancing nearly impossible. "We are prisoners ... We have no immunity because of the lack of food," he said. "Lebanese people have gone hungry, Syrians have gone hungry. Everyone is hungry." — Reuters

Pandemic a major blow for Airbnb

ATHENS/SAN FRANCISCO: At the foot of the Acropolis hill, in the touristic Koukaki district, the coronavirus lockdown has silenced the sound of Airbnb customers' wheeled luggage. The tourist industry in Athens, as in many other European capitals, has ground to a halt, with planes grounded and restaurants, museums and archaeological monuments all closed. This has left a huge hole in the Greek economy which had been recovering from a decade of crisis.

Owners of small apartments in Koukaki, who had been renting them on the Airbnb platform in order to provide income during the financial crisis, are once again struggling. "The reservations stopped abruptly," laments Romina Tsitou, an Airbnb host since 2014. "I hope I won't have to put them for long-term rental, but I may have to if this situation drags on," she adds. For the time being her two Airbnb apartments accommodate medical staff.

Stefania Dimitroula has already put her apartment

president of Apartur, the holiday apartment owners' federation in Barcelona, foresees a 85 percent drop in sales revenue for 2020. He predicts though that holiday apartments "are going to adapt more easily to the new times that lie ahead, to the new needs of the tourists, mainly as far as security is concerned".

In Athens too, despite the staggering drop in holiday reservations, there remains a glimmer of hope. "Tourists will benefit from private apartments in order to feel more secure in comparison with hotels where they will have to interact with more people," Stratos Paradias, president of the Greek Federation of Property Owners and of the International Union of Property Owners, told AFP.

He also thinks apartments that manage to stay in the short-term rental market will bounce back "faster than elsewhere" because "Greece is considered one of the safe countries thanks to the way it has handled the COVID-19 pandemic".

Holding fast to short-term rentals

In Barcelona, Sybille Campagne's holiday letting calendar is empty. "For July-August, all reservations were cancelled," the 43-year-old French woman explains. Nevertheless she isn't considering taking her apartment off the Airbnb platform because it accounts for 80 percent of all her reservations. Juan Quilis, a 35-year-old telecom technician who owns an apartment in Seville, is also sticking with short-



ATHENS: People pass by "For rent" signs on a pole in the Koukaki district in Athens. Directly hit, the dozens of small landlords who had chosen to rent their property on Airbnb to compensate for the declines in income and revive neighborhoods hit by austerity. — AFP

term rentals for the time being. "I'm not too worried for now, because I have a savings cushion but if I see that things don't come around, I will put my apartment in long term rental. As a last resort." In France, Airbnb expects to see its reservations come back swiftly thanks to its local clientele, with the French particularly fond of staycations. Aurelien Perol, Airbnb director of communication in France, expects last-minute reservations to rise as lockdowns are lifted. — AFP

Business

Crisis lays bare poverty in Geneva, as thousands queue for free food

COVID-19 crisis casts a spotlight on Geneva's usually invisible poor

GENEVA: In one of the world's most expensive cities, thousands of people lined up Saturday for free food, as the COVID-19 crisis casts a spotlight on Geneva's usually invisible poor. In the Swiss city famous for its private banks, luxury watchmakers and fancy boutiques, people began lining up at 5:00 am (0300 GMT) Saturday, according to the association Caravane de Solidarite, the main organizer of the event.

By the time the distribution at Geneva's Vernets hockey stadium began four hours later, the queue of people, most wearing masks and standing two meters (six feet) apart, stretched and wound for about 1.5 kilometers (1 mile). Organizers said they believed at least as many people had showed up as a week earlier, when well over 2,000 took part.

"We're in a bit of a crescendo," Silvana Mastromatteo, head of Caravane de Solidarite, told AFP, adding that Saturday's distribution was the sixth the organisation had set up since the crisis began, with more and more people showing up each time.

"We need food," Silvia Mango, a 64-year-old from the Philippines, said after waiting for three hours under a hot spring sun. "Everything is just so much more difficult since the crisis began," she said, adjusting the scarf draped over her mouth and nose, and acknowledged this is her second time accepting a hand-out.

'Immediately fragilized'

Switzerland introduced a range of emergency measures in mid-March, including closing restaurants and most other businesses, to combat the spread of the novel coronavirus, which to date has killed more than 1,500 people out of more than 30,000 infected in the Alpine nation. While the country has begun gradually lifting measures, the nearly two-month shutdown has had particularly dire consequences for undocumented workers and other vulnerable groups already living on the edge.

According to Switzerland's Federal Statistics Office, around eight percent of the Swiss population, or some 660,000 people, are considered to live in poverty, out of around one million living in a precarious situation. "We know this population exists," said Isabelle Widmer, who is in charge of coordinating the City of Geneva's response to the crisis and who on Saturday was providing support to the food drive. "But it has been astonishing to see how this population was so immediately fragilized by this crisis," she said, as volunteers donning fluorescent yellow and orange vests stacked bags of food behind tables topped with bottles of disinfectant.

COVID-19 tests

Around 1,500 large shopping bags filled with rice, pasta instant coffee, cereal and other goods have been prepared and line the walls of the large entrance hall and fill a nearby hall.

In addition, a large pile of reserves tower in one corner next to mountains of empty bags, ready to be filled if needed. And if the food supplies run out, 20-franc coupons will be handed out, said Patrick Wieland of the Doctor Without

Borders charity, a co-organiser of Saturday's event that goes by its French acronym MSF. In addition to food, MSF is offering free COVID-19 tests to people showing symptoms, said Wieland, who is in charge of MSF's COVID-19 response in Switzerland. Mastromatteo said there was no requirement for recipients to prove they were in need.

"It is not easy to stand in this line and ask for help," she said, insisting that "anyone who is here is here because they are in need." Miguel Martinez, a 27-year-old undocumented restaurant worker from Colombia in the queue, lamented that "the virus has upended everything. There is no work. Nothing."

He said it was frustrating to have to accept handouts, but said he had no choice. "The restaurants have received assistance, but not me. I have nothing to eat."



GENEVA: People in need queue at a free food distribution on Saturday in Geneva as the COVID-19 pandemic casts a spotlight on the usually invisible poor people of Geneva, one of the world's most expensive cities. —AFP

We're in a bit of a crescendo

Audit of Lebanon's CB to include all its transactions

BEIRUT: The audit of Lebanon's central bank accounts announced last month will include every transaction at the bank, Economy Minister Raoul Nehme said in an interview published yesterday.

Prime Minister Hassan Diab said last month that Lebanon will audit its central bank's accounts in a bid to show transparency after launching debt restructuring talks with creditors.

A forensic auditor "will look into all the transactions" for an understanding of activities at the central bank, the economy minister told the Financial Times newspaper.

"Whatever bailouts and so on. Everything that was done", he added. The forensic audit will be executed by an independent auditing firm, one of the three - KPMG, Kroll and Oliver Wyman - appointed in April, the minister told the newspaper without confirming which of those three will actually run it. A crippling financial crisis that has gripped Lebanon for months saw it default on its hefty foreign-currency debt for the first time and launch restructuring talks in late March.

The economic implications of shutdowns related to the coronavirus outbreak have further compounded woes in a country with a weakening currency, dwindling reserves and soaring inflation. The prime minister's cabinet has pledged to reshape the crisis-hit Lebanese banking sector and the audit comes as part of the sector's restructuring. —Reuters

Algeria okays 2-7% increase in pensions

ALGIERS: Algeria's government has approved increases in retirement pensions ranging from 2 percent to 7 percent, the labor ministry said on Saturday, despite financial problems facing the oil exporting North African country. The OPEC member's public finances have come under pressure after a sharp fall in global crude oil prices caused energy earnings, the main source of government revenue, to drop significantly. President Abdelmadjid Tennoune has already announced a 50 percent cut in public spending and delays to planned projects in several sectors including oil and gas.

But Algeria, which subsidizes almost everything from foodstuffs to fuel and medicine, has kept its subsidy policy unchanged to avoid social unrest.

The government has also vowed to improve living standards for the poor by approving a plan to increase the guaranteed national minimum salary by 10 percent and scrap the total income tax for employees whose wages are equal or lower than 30,000 dinars (\$238). —Reuters

Argentina's final push for \$65bn debt deal

BUENOS AIRES/LONDON: Argentina and its international creditors are racing to find middle-ground over a \$65 billion debt restructuring, with sources close to the government indicating it may be willing to be flexible to break a deadlock that risks triggering a default. The talks face a first key deadline on Friday and a harder cutoff on May 22 when the country could enter default, as a grace period for \$500 million of interest payments comes to an end.

There's unlikely, however, to be a clean-cut result soon. Argentina is at loggerheads with its creditors over its proposal to impose large reductions on coupons on a range of debt, a three-year payment hiatus, and to push back maturities into the next decade.

With the economy already struggling to escape a painful recession before the coronavirus pandemic hit, Argentine negotiators want to avoid what would be its ninth default. Such an outcome would damage access to global finance, with investors already

wary after decades of volatility.

"We are hopeful and we will keep moving forward... It's a longer process than deadlines," said a person close to Argentina's discussions with its international creditors, who declined to be named as the talks are private.

The person said Argentina's government may accept tenders made on the offer on Friday even if the number of tenders is low, and then continue dialogue with those debt holders who rejected the offer, trying to "eat one dinosaur a day." "Even if tomorrow comes and we have a good acceptance it's not the end of anything either," he said, adding the deadlines were just milestones in a process that was "tedious at moments, stressful at times."

Argentina's economy ministry declined to comment.

The ministry has said some bondholders have accepted its proposal, though three major creditor groups have publicly rejected it, with one calling it "stillborn." Government officials have said Argentina cannot pay more.

Argentine Economy Minister Martin Guzman told Reuters this week that the country was working with bondholders to close the gap between the two sides, even if the deal was not proving an easy sell.

Guzman said there was wiggle room if a proposal fitted with the govern-

months of the year, Air Canada had a net loss of Can \$1.049 billion, compared to net income in the same quarter last year of Can \$345 million, the company said.

Excluding extraordinary charges, the loss amounted to Can \$1.49 per share, or 19 cents higher than analysts expected on average. "Our first quarter results reflect the severity and abruptness of the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on Air Canada, which started to be felt across the global airline industry in late January with the suspension by many carriers, including Air Canada, of services to China," Rovinescu said.

"The impact was exacerbated during the month of March with mandated social distancing, unprecedented government-imposed travel restrictions in Canada and around the world and the shutting down of economies," he said. —AFP



Members of Polo Obrero social organization protest at Plaza de Mayo square holding banners mostly against the hunger, layoff, external debt, or lack of water in slums during the May Day in Buenos Aires in this file photo. —AFP

ment's debt sustainability analysis.

Most expect that talks will go well beyond the end of this week and likely pass the May 22 deadline, the trip wire for a foreign debt default. That could have a knock-on effect on Argentina's already fragile markets, though bonds themselves are already at default levels of around 20-35 cents on the dollar.

"They will have to change the dead-

line. Then they'll say let's talk some

more with a little bit more money on the table," said one international creditor, who holds bonds involved in the restructuring. Another bondholder in one of the three main creditor committees said the current standoff was a "bit of show" and that while negotiations would be protracted he was confident of an eventual deal. —Reuters



In this file photo an Air Canada Airbus 320 plane is seen on the tarmac at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) in Los Angeles. —AFP

Lebanon's economic collapse: What happened?

BEIRUT: Protest-hit Lebanon has approved an economic rescue plan and requested aid from the International Monetary Fund as it battles its worst financial crisis in decades. But how did Lebanon become one of the most indebted countries in the world? What's the plan out of this quagmire, and how likely is it to work?

After the 1975-1990 civil war, Lebanon set about rebuilding, launching itself on a path of endless borrowing and ballooning debt. Successive governments focused on developing an economy built around services and tourism, and fuelled by foreign investment, all dependent on stability.

But they neglected structural reforms, as a political class deeply divided along sectarian lines allowed cronyism and graft. "The economic crisis is, at its core, a governance crisis emanating from a dysfunctional sectarian system that hindered rational policymaking and permitted a culture of corruption and waste," experts wrote in a January report published by Carnegie Middle East.

Over the years, Lebanon was also rocked by a wave of assassinations, the 2006 war with Israel and then a

series of attacks after war broke out in Syria in 2011.

Repeated political deadlocks stalled decision-making, with lawmakers on one occasion failing to elect a new president for more than two years. The debt grew as spending increased, including to subsidise a loss-making electricity sector dependent on fuel imports and to pay high interest rates on the loans themselves.

The balance of payments deficit also deepened as growth slowed, while an oversized banking sector offered huge interests on deposits. By late 2019, Lebanon had racked up a debt equivalent to 170 percent of its GDP. The pound has plummeted from 1,507 to more than 4,000 Lebanese pounds to the dollar on the parallel market in recent weeks, and inflation has soared. —AFP

Business

KFH to launch instant cross-border payments to beneficiaries at KFH-Turkey using RippleNet

Zero-fee service, available 24/7 through KFHOnline

KUWAIT: Group Chief Retail and Private Banking Officer at Kuwait Finance House (KFH), Waleed Khaled Mandani said that KFH has successfully completed all technical preparations and launched pilot testing for instant cross-border payments to beneficiaries at KFH-Turkey using Ripple's technology, the enterprise blockchain solution for global payments. "Financial institutions can send payments anywhere instantly, reliably and cost-effectively by joining Ripple's growing, global network RippleNet", he added.

Mandani pointed out in a press release, that KFH will announce very soon the launching of the service to KFH customers, confirming KFH's ongoing keenness to adopt the latest financial technology while delivering superior customer experience.

He indicated this service comes to

serve our customers who want to perform instant transfers to Turkey for personal expenses or investments, in addition Instant Transfer to Kuwait Turk service is presented to KFH customers with zero-fees and the service is available 24/7 in a secure and fast manner



KFH keen on adopting new technologies

through KFHOnline service and KFH mobile App (IOS and Android).

"This service improves and facilitates customers' cross-border payment meth-

ods through trusted global banks network, maximizing the role of blockchain instant payment in providing best service as per highest quality standards," Mandani added.

He boasted that KFH was among the first Kuwaiti banks to join RippleNet, reiterating this move enhances customer experience and comes in line with KFH digital transformation strategy. Mandani concluded by emphasizing that the bank has been always a pioneer in embracing FinTech and rolling out innovative digital services as per highest standards of quality.

KFH was established in Kuwait in 1977 and is enlisted in the Kuwait Stock Exchange. KFH Group is a global pioneer in the field of Islamic banking services, where it offers a wide array of Islamic financial products and services, not to mention a high standard of inno-

vation and customer service.

KFH manages its operations in the GCC, Asia, and Europe through over 510 branches, including KFH-Turkey, to offer services for the bank's customers in Turkey, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Germany, and the UAE.

KFH's mission is to achieve highest levels of excellence and innovation in the field of customer service, while developing common interest for all those concerned with the financial institution. KFH's vision is to spearhead the global development in Islamic financial services, and to upgrade the bank into the level of becoming the most sustainable profitable Islamic bank in the world.

KFH's values include cementing leadership through all its businesses, including leadership in the Islamic banking services worldwide, through innovation, superior customer service and the de-



Waleed Khaled Mandani

velopment of its employees. In addition, KFH is committed to all its procedures, and to setting up long-life partnerships with the concerned authorities.

Britain's gardeners dig for victory as virus takes toll

LONDON: Britain's coronavirus lockdown has deepened the nation's love affair with gardening at the same time as threatening the future of traditional businesses in the sector. Some 83 percent of homes in England have some private outdoor space, according to 2016 government figures, providing a haven for a nation stuck indoors. But while online retailers have been inundated with orders from the UK's estimated 23 million gardeners, bricks-and-mortar garden centres have faced a torrid time.

About 650 UK businesses produce ornamental plants, contributing £1.4 billion (\$1.75 billion) to the economy and employing 15,000 people directly, according to the Horticultural Trades Association.

An HTA report at the end of April warned that one in three businesses feared they would likely be insolvent this year, with the association calling for more government help.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson looks set to announce this weekend that they can open their doors to customers from Wednesday, but for many, the lockdown could cause lasting damage.

'All but wiped out'

Adrian Marskell, managing director of the Bransford Webbs Plant Company in central England, said the company expects to lose £2 million in sales this year. He said his company had been hit hard because its core business is to supply garden centres, and believes the next few years will be tough for the industry. He has put the bulk of his staff of around 100 on the government's furlough scheme, and has faced the agony of throwing away unwanted stock.

There is also the logistical headache of how to create space to grow plants for the following season.

"It's a bit like closing a toy shop in De-



Peter Kemp, the youngest son of Nursery Owner Royden Kemp, loads a lorry with plants to be delivered to local gardeners at Sandiacre Nursery near Guildford. The nursery is a third generation family-owned business. —AFP

ember," he told AFP ahead of national Garden Day on Sunday. "Most businesses in this industry do around 70 percent of their turnover at this time."

But he added: "We'll still be here one way or another. This is a big knock and will take some getting over but it's quite a resilient industry." The COVID-19 shutdown has also been bleak for nursery owner Royden Kemp, who said his core wholesale business has been "all but wiped out".

Kemp, who owns Sandiacre Nurseries in southeast England, has continued to supply garden centres who run home delivery services and started an online business of his own but still saw a 75 percent drop in sales in April. He describes the past few weeks as a "seismic shock for the industry", predicting there will be many casualties.

But he said: "Remember, a bedding plant grower has a very resilient character and has seen many difficult spring seasons, usually due to poor weather, so don't write us all off." The coronavirus shutdown has been a different experience for garden designers Nina Baxter and Jo Thompson, who have worked together on Thompson's award-winning gardens at London's Chelsea Flower Show. Each saw demand for their own businesses drop at the start of the lockdown but said it had since picked up, and

they are now joining forces to launch a new bulb design and supply business together.

"People are in their own gardens all the time," said Thompson, who has offices in London and southern England. "Even if they're at home and not outside, they're looking at their gardens and so we have had more enquiries than I've ever had in a short space of time."

They work remotely with photos and videos and are able to maintain the social distancing required under the lockdown rules. Thompson said gardening is "in the blood" of the British. At the beginning of the lockdown, "I think there was a sort of 'Dig for Victory' mentality, growing your own food", she said, referring to the World War II campaign.

"But I think now more and more, people are starting to realize the mental health benefits. If you're lucky enough to have a garden you can get out there, vitamin D is good for you, looking after something is good for you." Baxter, based just outside London, said she hopes the enforced break in normal routines will have given people a chance to reconnect with nature. With holidays abroad looking unlikely this year, they are also "facing a long summer ahead of them and realizing 'we need to do something about the garden now'", she said. —AFP

UK corporate insolvencies edge lower

LONDON: The number of corporate insolvencies in Britain fell a third in April compared to the year before even as the COVID-19 pandemic hammered the economy, figures compiled by KPMG showed on Friday, as government support packages kept firms afloat. The spread of the novel coronavirus - and lockdown measures introduced to contain it - has ravaged the British economy, with Britons told to stay indoors and many non-essential businesses told to close. The Bank of England said on Thursday it could cause the biggest economic slump in over 300 years.

Britain is due to begin a limited easing of lockdown measures next week but a rapid reopening of the economy is not on the cards as Prime Minister Boris Johnson looks to avoid a second peak of infections.

To support businesses through the lockdown, finance minister Rishi Sunak has announced a raft of schemes, including a job retention plan allowing employers to furlough staff while government pays up to 80 percent of their wages. KPMG head of restructuring Blair Nimmo said that the measures had prevented a deluge of companies

entering administration but cautioned that the route out of the crisis was uncertain and that, for some, insolvencies might have been merely delayed.

"It gave companies the opportunity to go into a mothball or hibernate state whilst they waited to see what the outcome would be and how they could access the support schemes," Nimmo told Reuters, adding that courts had also not been processing winding up orders in the same way.

"It doesn't mean to say that the companies won't have issues moving forward." The analysis of insolvency notices by KPMG's Restructuring practice showed that 61 companies fell into administration during April 2020 compared to 91 in April 2019.

Some high profile firms have gone into administration since the pandemic struck, including Carluccio's restaurants in late March and retailers Oasis, Warehouse and Debenhams in April.

Nimmo said that casual dining and retail had already faced substantial difficulties even before the coronavirus lockdown, which would not be alleviated by temporary government measures. He said that some firms that would have gone out of business in April even without the COVID-19 pandemic had been saved by the government's schemes, but the measures had also rescued otherwise viable companies from the effects of the outbreak. "In some cases, the schemes will only help to delay the inevitable," Nimmo said. "But in other cases they may actually be able to avoid it." — Reuters

Musk threatens removing Tesla from California



In this file photo Elon Musk, founder of SpaceX, speaks during the Satellite 2020 at the Washington Convention Center on Saturday. —AFP

WASHINGTON: Tesla chief Elon Musk on Saturday threatened to pull his electric car headquarters and plant out of California after local authorities kept him from resuming production due to the coronavirus pandemic. "Frankly, this is the final straw. Tesla will now move its HQ and future programs to Texas/Nevada immediately," Musk tweeted in a long diatribe, characteristic of past online rants which are not necessarily carried out.

Referring to the California city where the cars are produced, Musk said that "if we even retain Fremont manufacturing activity at all" it will depend on "how Tesla is treated in the future."

Tesla had hoped to reopen the California factory, its only in the United States, in the beginning of May, but had been prevented by local authorities.

Musk highlighted the company's experience in China, where production of electric cars resumed after the country's COVID-19 epidemic was brought under control.

"Tesla knows far more about what needs to be done to be safe through

our Tesla China factory experience than an (unselected) interim junior official," he tweeted, referencing a local-level health officer. The irascible, outspoken billionaire, who announced the birth of a son with musician Grimes earlier this week, threatened to "immediately" sue Alameda County where the plant is located, accusing its authorities of being "irrational & detached from reality."

Its health officer, he said, had acted contrary "to the Governor, the President, our Constitutional freedoms & just plain common sense!" Musk made headlines just over a week ago with a different Twitter rant declaring that Tesla's stock was overvalued, which sent the electric carmaker's shares tumbling more than 10 percent. Several days prior he delivered an expletive-laden diatribe during an earnings call in which he dubbed coronavirus restrictions "fascist."

Tesla managed to post a modest but surprise \$16 million in profit during the first quarter, a 33 percent jump in car deliveries and turnover that climbed 32 percent to \$5.99 billion. —AFP

Major US airlines okay temperature checks for passengers

WASHINGTON: A major US airline trade group on Saturday said it backed the US Transportation Security Administration (TSA) checking the temperatures of passengers and customer-facing employees during the coronavirus pandemic. Airlines for America, which represents the largest US airlines including American Airlines, United Airlines, Delta Air Lines and Southwest Airlines, said the checks "will add an extra layer of protection for passengers as well as airline and airport employees. Temperature checks also will provide additional public confidence that is critical to relaunching air travel and our nation's economy."

A US official said Saturday no decision has been made on whether to mandate the checks, but said the issue is the subject of extensive talks among government agencies and with US airlines and added a decision could potentially be made as early as next week.

One possible route would be for a pilot project or to initially begin temperature checks at the largest US airports. Questions remain about what the government would do if someone had a high temperature and was turned away from a flight. US officials said the temperature checks would not eliminate the risk of coronavirus cases but could act as a deterrent to prevent people who were not feeling well from traveling. TSA Administrator David Pekoske told employees during a town hall meeting Wednesday that no decision had been



PITTSBURGH, PA: Travelers make their way through ticketing and TSA inspection as State of Pennsylvania remains under restrictions for work and travel at Pittsburgh International Airport in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. — AFP

made regarding possible temperature checks of passengers at airports and that questions remained about where such checks might take place and which agency might perform them.

"It's been a discussion that's been ongoing for several weeks now," he said.

A TSA spokesman did not immediately comment Saturday. Frontier Airlines said on Thursday it would begin temperature screenings for all passengers and crew members on June 1 and bar anyone with a temperature at or exceeding 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 C). The move, the first among

major US airlines, followed the industry mandating facial coverings for all passengers and heightened cleaning procedures to address coronavirus concerns. The airline group said having temperature checks performed by the TSA "will ensure that procedures are standardized." The endorsement comes amid signs of a modest travel rebound from historic lows. On Friday, TSA screened 215,444 people at airport checkpoints, the first time the number topped 200,000 since March 26. But that is still a fraction of the 2.6 million screened on the equivalent day last year. —Reuters

Health & Science

Virus mutations may not mean stronger strain

PARIS: The coronavirus' constant mutation is unlikely to have changes its potency or its contagiousness, disease experts say, despite recent research suggesting the emergence of a more virulent strain. A pre-paper—that is, not reviewed by a collection of the researchers' peers—released last month by Los Alamos National Laboratory claimed to have identified a new strain of the virus.

A mutation on one of the virus' protein spikes made the strain currently circulating in Europe and the United States potentially more potent than the one that emerged from China at the end of last year, the authors claimed. "The mutation Spike is of urgent concern; it began spreading in Europe in early February, and when introduced to new regions it rapidly becomes the dominant form," they wrote.

They said that any new strain might have implications on the efficacy of treatments or vaccines against COVID-19 currently in development.

The study made headlines but provoked calls for caution from disease experts, mainly due to the fact that the theory of increased transmissibility had not been tested in the lab.

"This variant might have been lucky and got introduced to places outside Wuhan and different approaches to social distancing early on," William Hanage, associate professor at Harvard University's T. H. Chan School of Public Health, said on Twitter. "Essentially the virus has been mutating... That don't mean that much. Mutations are what happens when genomes replicate. Comes with the territory like showers with the springtime."

Viruses such as COVID-19 are essentially bundles of coded material-RNA-containing instructions for how to build copies of themselves. Since they need the cells of another organism in order to replicate, tiny errors occur as the RNA is reproduced, leading to mutations.

A paper by researchers at University College London found that at least 198 sites in the virus' genome had already undergone sustained mutation. This was "consistent with multiple introductions of the virus to regions throughout the world seeding local transmission events," the authors said.



NEW YORK: A mutation on one of the virus' protein spikes made the strain currently circulating in Europe and the United States potentially more potent than the one that emerged from China at the end of last year.— AFP

Reacting to both the UCL and Los Alamos studies, Lawrence Young, professor of Molecular Oncology at the University of Warwick, said any talk of more virulent strains was "speculation" right now.

He noted that unlike other viral diseases such as HIV, COVID-19 doesn't appear to be mutating at a high rate. "There is currently no compelling evidence that the mutations have had a significant effect on how the virus affects us," he said.

In a paper published this week in the journal Virus Evolution, researchers from the University of

Glasgow said they had only found evidence of one type of the virus. "By analyzing the extensive genetic sequence variation present in the genomes of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the evolutionary analysis shows why these claims that multiple types of the virus are currently circulating are unfounded," said Oscar MacLean, from the university's Centre for Virus Research. "It is important people are not concerned about virus mutations—these are normal and expected as a virus passes through a population."

While mutations don't mean that COVID-19 is

getting more potent or more infectious, experts stressed it was still important to track its evolution. "Sequencing more genomes will help us to better understand the spread of the virus and whether some of the minor changes observed are important in the behavior of the virus and how we should develop effective vaccines," said Young.

For Ian Jones, a professor of virology at the University of Reading, the issue of mutation was of less importance than testing and treating people who become infected.— AFP

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Lifestyle | Features

Little Richard, rock's flashy founding father, dies at 87

Little Richard, whose outrageous showmanship and lightning-fast rhythms intoxicated crowds with hits like "Tutti Frutti" and "Long Tall Sally," has died. He was 87 years old. Reverend Bill Minson, a friend of the legendary musician, told AFP Little Richard died Saturday morning following a battle with cancer. With a distinctive range from robust belting to howling falsetto, Richard transfixed audiences and inspired artists including The Beatles as he transformed the blues into the feverish new style of rock 'n' roll alongside Fats Domino and Chuck Berry.

His raunchy 1955 song "Tutti Frutti" became a sort of opening salvo of rock 'n' roll's entry into American life, starting with his nonsensical but instantly thrilling first line: "Awop bop a loo mop / Alop bam boom." Richard stunned buttoned-down post-World War II America with an otherworldly look of blindingly colorful shirts, glass-embedded jackets, a needle-thin moustache and a six-inch (15-centimeter) high pompadour. A consummate entertainer, he would play piano with one leg hoisted over the keys and, in one legendary concert in Britain, played dead on stage so effectively that the venue sought medical help before he resurrected himself to an astounded crowd. Richard's lifestyle — he spoke fondly of bisexual parties — became the epitome of rock 'n' roll decadence. But he never became an obvious icon for the African-American or gay communities.

Once openly — by standards of the time — attracted to men, Richard became a born-again Christian and renounced homosexuality as a temporary choice, anathema to the modern gay rights movement and psychologists. And while he was one of the first African-American artists to cross the racial divide, a younger generation of black DJs had little interest in an artist seen as embedded in the white mainstream.

Mentor to rock's greats

But his influence was incalculable. Early white rockers including Buddy Holly, Jerry Lee Lewis and Elvis Presley all pursued Richard's sound. The upstart Beatles and Rolling Stones served separately as opening acts when Richard toured England, and a young Jimi Hendrix and members of Earth, Wind and Fire played in his back-up band. "He was the biggest inspiration of my early teens," Mick Jagger tweeted Saturday. "His music still has the same raw electric energy when you play it now as it



In this file photo taken on July 3, 2011, Little Richard performs during the annual PBS "A Capitol Fourth" concert at the US Capitol in Washington, DC. —AFP photos



In this file photo taken on June 07, 2005, Little Richard performs on the stage of the Olympia Concert Hall in Paris.

did when it first shot through the music scene in the mid 50's."

Bob Dylan called Richard "my shining star and guiding light back when I was only a little boy. His was the original spirit that moved me to do everything I would do." "Of course he'll live forever," he said in a series of tweets. "But it's like a part of your life is gone." David Bowie was mesmerized when he saw one of Richard's movies, with the then nine-year-old deciding to learn the saxophone and later saying, "If it hadn't have been for him, I probably wouldn't have gone into music." The superstar was aware of the debt his successors owed him. "Prince is the Little Richard of his generation," he told Joan Rivers in 1989. He then turned to face the camera directly and said: "I was wearing purple before you was wearing it!" The estate of Prince, who died in 2016, said Saturday that Richard "didn't just open doors, he smashed entire walls to pieces to make way for all who would come after him."

'Tutti Frutti' reborn

Born Richard Wayne Penniman on December 5, 1932, he was raised in grinding poverty in Macon, Georgia. His father sold bootleg liquor and owned a tavern, where he was shot dead in a dispute when Richard was starting his career. Richard, despite his stage name, stood a skinny five-foot-10 (1.8 meters)

and was born with different sized legs. A mischievous child, he lingered in churches for their music and was noticeably effeminate.

In his 1984 authorized biography, Richard recalled his father telling him, "My father had seven sons and I wanted seven sons. You've spoiled it, you're only half a son." "And then he'd hit me. But I couldn't help it. That was the way I was," Richard said. A key break came in 1947 when gospel singer Sister Rosetta Tharpe spotted him singing at the Macon City Auditorium, where Richard sold soft drinks. Richard had developed a low-key career singing around Georgia, including in underground drag performances, when he was approached by record labels. Success was not immediate. Early recording ventures with RCA Victor and Peacock Records fell flat.

Richard never thought to record "Tutti Frutti," a staple of his live performances driven by frantic piano. But the song caught the ear of Bumps Blackwell, a producer from Specialty Records, which had reluctantly signed Richard after he persistently phoned its office. Blackwell asked young songwriter Dorothy LaBostrie to quickly pen some more radio-friendly lyrics. Within 15 minutes and only three takes, Little Richard had recorded his defining hit, now with the tame lines: "Tutti frutti / Aw rootie... I've got a girl named Sue / She knows just what to do."

'True king'

The song — with its infectious rhythm, high decibel level and lingering sense of naughtiness — triggered an unprecedented reaction. In a 1956 Baltimore concert, women threw underwear as police prevented fans from rushing the stage or leaping from the balcony in euphoria. "Richard arrives and he's attacking the piano; he's banging on it. He's not crooning; he's screaming," said Chris Morris, a music scholar who remastered his 1957 album "Here's Little Richard." "There had never really been a figure who came out of R&B who was that extroverted or loud or wild."

Richard followed with 1956's "Good Golly, Miss Molly." But then he abruptly canceled a tour and became a missionary for the evangelical Church of God. His turn to religion complicated his relationship with the music world — but his legacy as a titan who ushered in a new musical age held. Tributes poured in Saturday, with Chic co-founder Nile Rodgers mourning "the loss of a true giant" and former president Bill Clinton hailing his "unforgettable charisma." Questlove of The Roots was more emphatic: "LITTLE RICHARD IS THE TRUE KING. LONG LIVE THE KING." —AFP



Cape penguins walk past a keeper taking their video images at an aquarium of Hakkeijima Sea Paradise.



Cape penguins walk past seals in an aquarium at Hakkeijima Sea Paradise. —AFP photos

Inter-species lockdown meet-up at Japan aquarium

A Japanese aquarium has come up with a wild idea to entertain the public during its temporary closure due to the coronavirus outbreak — introducing sea animals to each other and sharing the results online. A group of eight penguins at Yokohama Hakkeijima Sea Paradise near Tokyo regularly waddle around inside the aquarium and now they have a new stop — a tank of seals they had never met before. "They're not actively trying to get to know each other, but I'm sure they're interested in each other," aquarium spokesman Naoya Goto told AFP. "They're both really cute, so we decided to let them see each other, film it and share it on social media," he said.

Museums, zoos and aquariums remain closed as a nationwide state of emergency is in place in Japan until the end of May. Penguins at the aquarium stroll for up to 20 minutes regularly — a routine in place even before the pandemic — as they need more exercise, Goto said. And they need to experience some variety from time to time so that they "do not get bored," he added. "We want to increase the quality of life for these penguins." Sea Paradise has also introduced an otter to a beluga, two of their most popular animals. Aquarium keeper Nagomi Sato said she posts their videos, "hoping they will offer healing and relieve stress" for those stuck inside due to the virus. —AFP

Skopje artists pierce humdrum of confinement

Before kicking off a recent rock show in Skopje, the leader of the band Funk Shui did something he had never done before: apologize for the noise the group was about to make. That's because the musicians were jamming in an urban courtyard surrounded by apartment blocks, as part of a city initiative to entertain citizens — and help struggling artists — hemmed in by coronavirus curfews. When concert halls, bars and clubs shuttered after North Macedonia went into lockdown in early March, performers were suddenly starting at blank calendars and empty wallets, while fans were robbed of their entertainment fix.

But the country's artists and cultural institutions have been quick to adapt. With backing from city hall, they have launched the "Culture in the time of Corona" program to save Skopje's entertainment scene. During the nightly curfews and over several weekend-long lockdowns, some 200 artists have put on more than 40 open air shows on rooftops, parks and playgrounds around the capital, with something for everyone in genres ranging from pop, rock and jazz to alternative and electronic music. The shows have reached some 50,000 people in their homes and also garnered more than 500,000 views online, said Nikola Naumoski from the mayor's office. And in addition to easing the boredom of the apartment-bound, unemployed artists are getting 235 euros — the country's minimum wage — to help them survive the dry spell, he said.

Neighbourhood dance parties

The small Balkan country, where some 90 people have died from COVID-19, has issued some of the tightest restrictions in the region to curb the virus spread,

including one holiday weekend curfew that topped 80 hours of confinement. On a recent Saturday when families were hunkered down around the clock, members of the alt-rock band Funk Shui hung up their face masks before letting loose for their outdoor show. As their funky guitar riffs echoed around the neighbourhood, fans turned out on their balconies and windows to watch and dance along.

"It is a little bit strange, to have bands perform in a place like this, and I understand that there can be both complaints and joy. However, I hope that we brought some joy to the people in this neighbourhood," the group's singer and guitar player Luka Gorgievski, 26, told AFP. Other Macedonian artists have also found creative ways to connect. One high school group organised a three-day online festival of movies, exhibitions, interviews with artists and music performances. And Jovan Petreski, who performs under the name DJ Babura Junior, has been giving live electronic music concerts from his home since the start of the confinement.

After confirming his neighbours didn't mind the noise, the popular 27-year-old DJ installed his speakers and other equipment on the balcony of his apartment, replete with a colorful strobe light. At one recent session scores of apartments across the neighbourhood added to the strobe affect by flickering their lights on and off to his beats. "My parties were accepted way beyond my expectations," the DJ told AFP. "It was not easy at the beginning when I thought that as an artist I won't be able to work as usual," he explained. "That's how I got the idea to start parties from my studio and entertain people the same way I did before the crisis." —AFP



North Macedonian band 'Funk Shui' perform in Skopje, as part of the event "Culture in Time of Corona". —AFP photos



Macedonian band 'Eye Cue' perform in Skopje, as part of the event "Culture in Time of Corona".

Indian tigers find lockdown grrreat Kolkata



In this file photo a male Royal Bengal Tiger leaps into the water after it was released from a forest department boat on the River Harikhal in the Sundarbans delta forest, some 150 kms south of Kolkata. —AFP

With the humans of West Bengal under virus lockdown, tigers in the Sundarbans mangrove forest in the eastern Indian state are coming out to play, with park rangers Thursday reporting a jump in sightings of the big cats. The Sundarbans, straddling West Bengal and neighboring Bangladesh, is the world's biggest mangrove forest and home to the majestic and endangered Royal Bengal tiger. "Sighting of tigers has gone up... after the lockdown," said Sudhir Das, director of the Sundarbans tiger reserve, referring to the nationwide restrictions in place since late March. In normal times, forest officials catch a glimpse of the big cats no more than twice a week, Das said.

But with the lockdown ending tourist traffic and grounding the noisy motorboats and launches that usually ply the region's waterways, they are now sighting tigers "up to six times" a week, he added. The number of the big cats at the UNESCO World Heritage site has also gone up to 96 in the Indian

part of the territory, up from 88 in 2018, according to the West Bengal state forest department which unveiled the latest headcount on Wednesday night. Officials counted as many as 43 female tigers and 11 cubs using over 700 pairs of all-weather night-vision camera traps.

The Sundarbans is spread over 10,000 square kilometers (around 4,000 square miles) and derives its name from Sundari trees found abundantly in the region. India is home to around 70 percent of the world's tigers. Last year, the government said the tiger population had risen from 2,226 in 2014 to 2,967 in 2018. The government credited the increase in numbers to a strict ban on hunting and awareness drives in villages. Despite the uptick, the increasing number of human-tiger conflicts due to shrinking habitats remains an area of concern for conservationists. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Lebanese architect Roy Dagher builds a wooden structure on the rooftop of his building, during a lockdown imposed by the authorities in a bid to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus in the village of Fatri, north of the capital Beirut.—AFP photos



Lebanese gymnast Karen Dib practices on the rooftop of her building.

Lebanon rooftops bustle as virus shifts life upstairs

Usually the kingdom of water tanks and satellite dishes, Lebanon's rooftops have recently been graced by unlikely scenes of locked-down residents fleeing their flats. Deprived of rehearsal rooms or workshops by restrictions imposed to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus, or just needing some extra breathing space, many people have found solace without leaving their buildings. Several have ventured onto their roofs to escape the lockdown after taking to the streets in recent months as part of nationwide protests against rulers deemed corrupt and inept.

AFP photographer Joseph Eid spent weeks scaling staircases to see how people have taken over underused rooftops, whose only visitors used to be caretakers, plumbers and electricians. "When confinement started, I soon couldn't take it anymore, and that's when I thought of checking out the roof," said Sherazade Mami, a Tunisian dancer who has been living in Beirut since 2016. Every day, she

walks up to the ninth floor of her building with her water, her mat and her music to stretch and practise. Like others discovering their rooftops during the lockdown, Mami said her outlook on the city had changed.

"Once you're up there, you realise — I have an amazing view on the whole of Beirut. It's beautiful, the city is so quiet," she said of the sprawling metropolis usually known for its noise and chaotic traffic. "You can hear the birds singing, you're under the sun, it's heaven ... It's better than rehearsing in the theatre in some ways," she added.

A place to 'feel free'

A bird's eye view of Beirut around sunset since mid-March would show largely empty streets and shuttered shops at ground level, but unusual activity above. On a hedgehopping flight over the city, maybe yoga instructors Rabi al-Medawar and his wife Alona Aleksandrova could be spotted trying

out new acrobatic moves on their roof. Travelling north towards the seaside town of Byblos, Lebanese gymnast Karen Dib might appear, tumbling down the red mat she had laid out on the top of her building.

And in Tripoli, Lebanon's main northern city, artist and activist Hayat Nazer might be glimpsed working on her latest canvas. Others too have been heading upstairs to sunbathe, read or smoke a shisha water pipe. Nazer said she hoped the weeks of lockdown would leave a positive mark on the way residents thought of their city. "I really hope people will start planting and greening their roofs to help the environment," she said. "They have been underused. You can do sports there, organize barbecues, have parties." Mami, the dancer, said she would not forsake her roof when the lockdown ended and her theatre reopened its doors. "I have found a place where I feel free and I will continue to use it," she said.—AFP



Lebanese gymnast Karen Dib practices on the rooftop of her building.



Sherazade Mami, a 28-year-old Tunisian professional dancer and performer at the Caracalla dance theatre and a teacher at the Caracalla dance school, practices while wearing a surgical mask on the roof of her apartment building.



Lebanese musician Ziad Al-Zayyat (left) and his flatmate, interior designer Saad Molaeb, play their guitars on the rooftop of their building.



Lebanese Yoga instructor Rabi al-Medawar, 29, practices Acroyoga with his Ukrainian wife, fellow Yoga instructor and professional choreographer, Alona Aleksandrova, 24, on the roof of their apartment building.



Lebanese public sector employee Anna Belle Shadarevian practices Tai Chi Chuan on the rooftop of her building.



Lebanese tattoo artist Hady Baydoun works on a wooden sculpture on the rooftop of his building.



Two men smoke a water pipe as they sit on the rooftop of their building.



Syrian national Salah Sido Rcho smokes a waterpipe as he observes his pigeons on the rooftop of his building.



A woman does some stretching exercises on the rooftop of her building



Lebanese Artist Manal Souaid gardens on the rooftop of her building.



Hairdresser Oudi cuts the hair of his friend on a rooftop.



Lebanese Fitness Instructor Farah al-Jack practices on the rooftop of her building.



Lebanese Artist Hayat Nazer draws a painting on the roof of her family's apartment building.

Special effects, virtual guests: China weddings go online

BEIJING: Like many couples in the era of social distancing, Ma Jialun and Zhang Yitong held their wedding ceremony online - but they added a twist by livestreaming the event to more than 100,000 strangers. Coronavirus lockdowns and travel restrictions have forced people around the world to delay their nuptials or adapt to the unusual times by celebrating via web link. But in China - where livestreaming is extremely popular - some young couples are allowing anyone to watch their big day and even send them gifts.

Creative entrepreneurs are also cashing in, offering people the option to spice up their ceremony with special effects. When groom Ma and his bride Zhang got married in the eastern city of Hangzhou on May 1, more than 100,000 impromptu guests watched it live on video-streaming site Bilibili, leaving likes, comments and virtual coins and gifts. Just a dozen people were able to join in person. The pair were originally planning to have the ceremony in January but were left trapped in different cities as the virus outbreak brought the country to a halt. Public gatherings including wedding parties were banned.

Wedding preparations are now restarting since all provinces in China have lifted their top-level state of emergency and life is beginning to show some return to normality. However, banquets and big gatherings are still not allowed, leaving an online celebration as a preferred option. Ma joined Zhang just one day before their wedding as Beijing lifted quarantine measures on all returnees after the couple's three-month separation. "This epidemic has made us feel that we could become each other's strength," said Ma. The pair said they wanted to share their big day online to do something meaningful during the epidemic. "It's good to share our happiness with more people, even unknown netizens," said Ma.

Millions of guests

Liu Wenchao, an online teacher, was one of the first to make livestreamed weddings popular in China. In accordance with tradition, his parents selected March 20 for his wedding eight months before the date, believing it was lucky based on Liu and his partner's birthdays. But the carefully-laid plans were disrupted by the virus outbreak. Because of the restrictions on travel and gatherings, Liu's parents in northern China were not able to attend their son's big day, and nor could the couple's friends and relatives.

Thanks to his online teaching experience, Liu had the idea of livestreaming their wedding ceremony. "I have used livestreaming for online courses for nearly a year. I thought, if we livestream our wedding, my family and students can join the wedding too," he said. Liu and his bride had a very simple ceremony



HANGZHOU, China: This handout photo taken on May 1, 2020 shows bridegroom Ma Jialun and bride Zhang Yitong during their livestreamed wedding ceremony. — AFP

in front of the camera - they exchanged rings, made a toast and ate wedding candy in their bridal chamber all by themselves.

As is common in China, the legal registration of the marriage had already been completed. The video of the ceremony posted on Bilibili has become a hit, with more than five million views and over 860,000 likes. "I didn't expect so many people would love our wedding video," Liu said. "Maybe people are in need of watching good news

during this long epidemic."

While many couples are content with a simple ceremony, livestreaming platform Huajiao has used special effects to give one of its employees their dream wedding. "When we were designing the wedding, the bride told us that her dream wedding would be held in a hot-air balloon in front of a castle, so we used the special effects to make her dream come true," said Huajiao's online wedding event organizer Liu Qi.

He thinks these special effects and the chance to share the fun on social media will appeal to young Chinese people. "It may be difficult to realize in the real world, but there are endless possibilities online," Liu said. More than 50 couples have already signed up for an online wedding package. "Young couples have more and more diverse demands," said Liu. "But this kind of online wedding may become a new option for couples in the future even when the epidemic ends." — AFP



TUNIS: A Tunisian man wearing protective gear amid the COVID-19 pandemic looks on as he chats with another person on a street in the Kram area of the capital on May 8, 2020. — AFP

Tunisians get food aid via...

Continued from Page 1

population were in need of financial assistance during that time. In March and April, the government

made emergency handouts of 200 dinars to vulnerable families.

Tunisia, which has officially declared 1,000 cases of the novel coronavirus including 45 deaths, began easing its lockdown on May 4. In the early days of the containment measures, several hundred Tunisians had demonstrated in working class districts of the capital demanding government support and protesting the lockdown. — AFP

Fear in Iran as infections...

Continued from Page 1

thousands of workers from other provinces. The government moved to ease restrictions even as Tehran remained at red on its color graded risk model - white denoting low risk, yellow medium and red high risk. Schools, universities, cinemas and stadiums remain closed to contain the spread of the virus.

"People being careful made infections drop, but as soon as the disease was deemed less of a concern, we saw cases grow," said Masoud Mardani, an infectious disease expert at the health ministry. The rise is "partly due to the reopening (of businesses) and people going out shopping," he told the semi-official ISNA news agency, while also citing an increase in travel in Tehran province. Health officials have vowed to re-impose stringent measures if the number of cases continues to climb.

But many Iranians remain adamant that they have to work to avoid financial ruin. "Life costs money," said Hamed. "People have to go to work since this

virus has been with us for about three months now." The 22-year-old was among those out on the streets without a mask, deeming such protection "largely ineffective." He had travelled over 150 km from Qom to Tehran for banking business for the private firm that employs him. It is a trip he has to undertake every few days and says he cannot refuse for fear of losing his job.

A few streets away, pedestrians were shopping for fresh vegetables and dried fruit - mostly women or older men, but this time, mainly in masks. "I think maybe only half the people follow health protocols" across the capital as a whole, said Zahra, a 30-year-old accountant. "Either people don't care or don't have the patience" to wear a mask, she said.

Mohammad, a former building contractor, complained that masks were expensive and in short supply. A disposable surgical mask can cost from 49,000 rials (30 US cents, using the unofficial rate) to 10 or 15 times that amount for the better quality durable coverings. "They should have given them to people for free," said the mask-less 58-year-old. But Mohammad's biggest gripe was overcrowding on buses, where red crosses marked on half of the seats to maintain social distancing are routinely ignored. He said he was outraged to see a bus with "40 people on it" during his morning commute and urged authorities to increase services. — AFP

Obama slams Trump handling...

Continued from Page 1

through one of its worst crises in a century, leaving states on their own to grapple with the pandemic and even bid against each other to obtain critical medical equipment on the open market or abroad. Critics say Trump, after first downplaying the threat posed by the virus, squandered precious time in February as the pathogen spread in America and his administration did little to stock up on testing kits and other medical gear or to develop a cohesive national strategy.

With an eye to re-election, the president has also been blasted as putting his own political interests before human life by aggressively pushing states to reopen their devastated economies without a clear blueprint for how to do it safely. "What we're fighting against is these long-term trends in which being selfish, being tribal, being divided, and seeing others as an enemy - that has become a stronger impulse in American life," Obama told his former staffers.

"It's part of the reason why the response to this global crisis has been so anemic and spotty," Obama said. "It would have been bad even with

the best of governments. It has been an absolute chaotic disaster when that mindset - of 'what's in it for me' and 'to heck with everybody else' - when that mindset is operationalized in our government," he said.

Obama said that the dropping of charges against Flynn was ominous. "That's the kind of stuff where you begin to get worried that basic - not just institutional norms - but our basic understanding of rule of law is at risk," he said. Obama endorsed Biden's candidacy last month and has said he would be deeply involved in his campaign against Trump. He told the Obama Alumni Association: "I am hoping that all of you feel the same sense of urgency that I do."

White House spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany said Trump's response to the coronavirus "has been unprecedented" and has saved American lives. She harked back to the Ukraine inquiry launched by Democrats in the US House of Representatives last year that led to House passage of articles of impeachment against Trump. The Republican-led Senate acquitted Trump early this year. "While Democrats were pursuing a sham witch hunt against President Trump, President Trump was shutting down travel from China. While Democrats encouraged mass gatherings, President Trump was deploying PPE, ventilators, and testing across the country," she said. — Agencies

Digital voice tech gets fresh...

Continued from Page 1

handles and more," said analyst Jonathan Collins of ABI Research. The pandemic is likely to provide "additional motivation and incentive for voice control in the home that will help drive awareness and adoption for a range of additional smart home devices and applications," Collins said.

ABI estimates that voice control device shipments for smart home devices hit 141 million last year, and in 2020 will grow globally by close to 30 percent. For the broader market of voice assistants, Juniper Research estimates 4.2 billion devices in use this year, growing to 8.4 billion by 2024, with much of the interactions on smartphones.

Collins said he expected to see growing interest in smart locks and doorbells, along with other smart home systems, to eliminate the need for personal contact and face-to-face interaction as a result of the pandemic. Avi Greengart, a technology analyst and consultant with Techspontaneous, said data is not yet available but that "anecdotally, voice assistant usage is way up" as a result of lockdowns.

Greengart said he expects a wider range of business applications for voice technologies in response to health and safety concerns. "Looking forward, office spaces will need move towards more touch-free controls: voice can be a solution, although motion triggers for lighting is often easier and more

friction-free," he said. "However, I do expect smart speakers - along with an emailed list of commands - to be a common feature at hotels and other rental properties. The fewer touch points, the better."

Julian Issa of Futuresource Consulting said there appears to be "an uptick in the use of voice assistants since the virus outbreak" during the pandemic. "Whilst avoiding touching surfaces may play a small part in this, it is mainly due to consumers spending far more time at home with their devices," Issa said.

Chris Pennell, another Futuresource analyst, said he expects adoption of digital assistants is likely to accelerate, "especially in client facing areas such as healthcare, retail and entertainment". One example of this already in use is a Mayo Clinic tool using Amazon Alexa which allows people to assess their symptoms and access information on the virus. Other medical applications are also in the works for voice technologies.

Veton Kepuska, a Florida Tech computer engineering professor who specializes in speech recognition technologies, is seeking to develop voice-activated medical robots that can help limit physical contact and contagion. "If we had this infrastructure in place, we would have been better off today," said Kepuska, who was spurred by the COVID-19 outbreak to seek funding for the research effort. Kepuska said this effort could lead to a "humanoid" medical robot which can take over many tasks from doctors or nurses with voice interaction. "The pandemic has created a situation where we need to think about how to deliver services to people who need our help without putting ourselves in danger," he said. — AFP

Stars

Daily SuDoku

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

very hard

Yesterday's Solution

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

hard

STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)

It's a day of challenges, Aries. You're a pro at questioning yourself, as you'll prove today when you take a hard look at your accomplishments. In the last ten years, what have you created that's truly yours? Have you followed someone else's example because you doubted yourself? Have you been eternally "almost" ready? Have you dared to jump into projects that were still imperfect? These questions need to be addressed.

Libra (September 23-October 22)

Expect today to be kind of intense, Libra. Even if you've made a conscious decision not to let anything get you down, you may still harbor some negative emotions from the last few days. Take advantage of this time to relieve stress. Talk to someone close or go find an empty court and whack tennis balls. An artistic pursuit, such as sketching or photography, can also help eliminate some of the negative energy.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)

If you give the impression that you're in a reserved, introspective mood (even if you aren't), you'll succeed in avoiding confrontation. Today there's no such thing as a simple exchange with someone, Taurus. But even in this atmosphere, it is still a great day to evaluate your fundamental objectives a little more closely. And if you're lucky, everyone else is too absorbed in their own concerns to worry about yours.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

The little rebel that you are makes it very difficult for you to join us in the great communal river that we're all trying to navigate, Scorpio. You prefer to travel solo, following your private stream as you see fit. However, these are opportunity days for joining up with others. As your community struggles with the direct or indirect effects of COVID-19, share your insights and inspirations with those who need them.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)

A challenging day is in store for you, Gemini. If you're part of a group or team, among friends, or seeing too much of the people you live with, you may feel ill at ease. Could it be that you instill jealousy in others? There's only one way to find out. Clear the air by saying what needs to be said. State it clearly and directly and you'll eliminate any bad feelings among your group.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Be disciplined about all areas of your body, Sagittarius. Take extra care to eat healthful, balanced meals. Make sure you get enough sleep. And even though you gripe about having no time, get out there and exercise within the limits of personal safety. Don't wait for an emergency before you take action. And you alone control how you feel. Your health is essential to your well-being, not to mention your life!

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Sometimes dreams seem like just that? dreams. Whatever big venture you've been planning seems to consume more and more of your time now that the familiar world has ground to a halt, also becoming less attainable and more frustrating. Making any of your dreams come true means possibly jeopardizing relationships. Consider doing some work on your relationships before chasing those dreams any further.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

If you've been feeling deep anger, today isn't the day to let it out but rather the day to consider its source. The people you know best are the easiest targets, so avoid starting anything with them. No, this doesn't mean you get to take the day off! Just be extra careful about your temper. A little extra isolation will go a long way toward easing your tension, and may give you some important insights.

Leo (July 23-August 22)

You'll go one of two ways today, Leo. Either you'll turn inward and meditate in a corner, or you'll call a good friend and confide your dissatisfaction. Don't hesitate to let your guard down and express yourself even more honestly than is typical for you. Have no worries that your problems will bore your friend. True friends are happy to help. You'd do the same, wouldn't you?

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

If by chance you still harbor resentment toward someone, Aquarius, it will probably come out today. You might be uncompromising or even vengeful. Telling that person how you feel accomplishes nothing beyond causing you both pain and regret. Vent your anger in a healthy way. Intense physical activity might do it. Besides, this person really means what they've been saying. That's right, they do care about you.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Today will be an excellent day for meeting interesting people, Virgo. And there won't be anything superficial about these encounters, even when they happen remotely or with masked faces six feet apart. On the contrary, the people you're going to meet will touch you profoundly (metaphorically speaking) and move you deeply on an emotional level. But don't be seduced by ideas alone! Practicality matters, too!

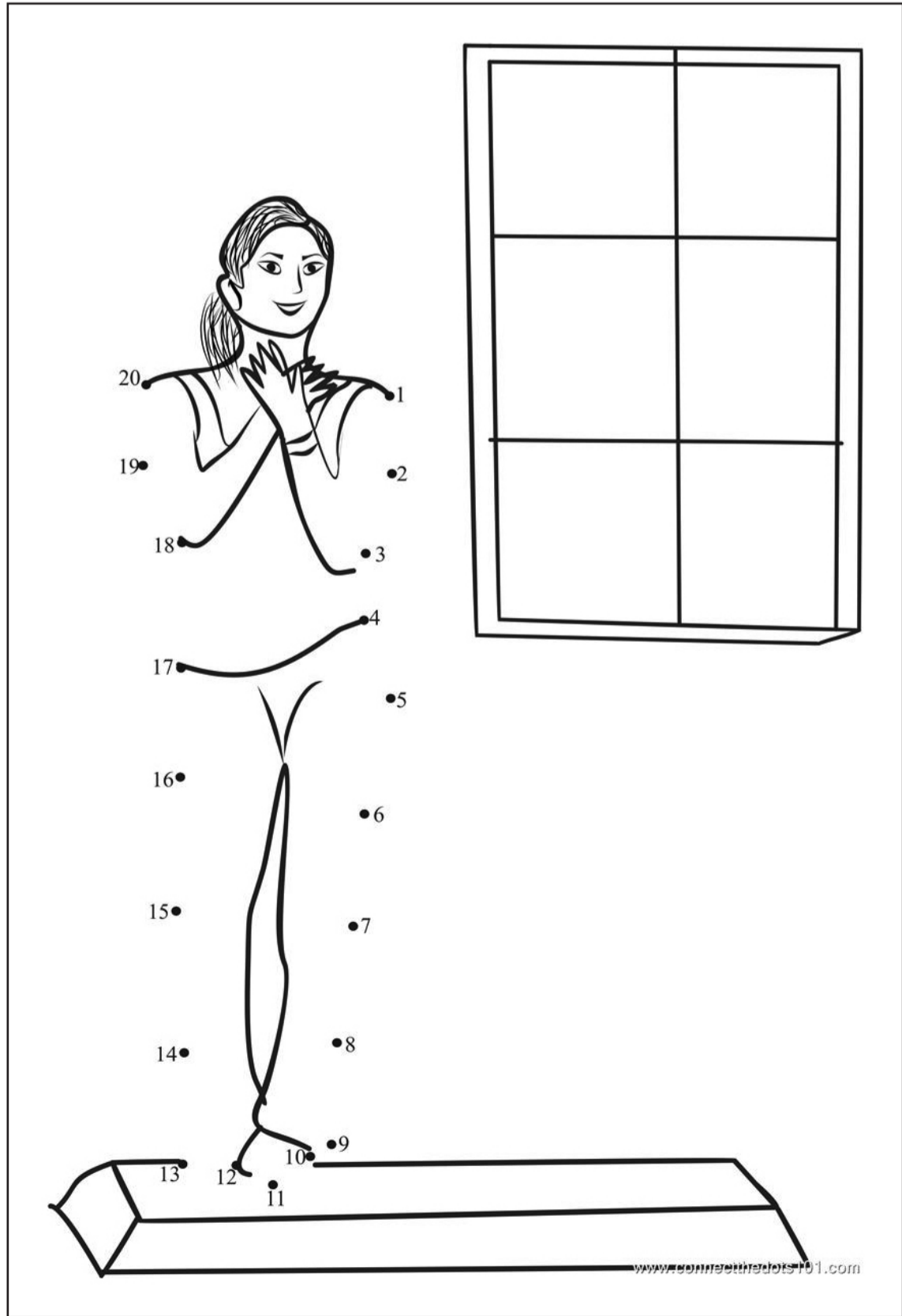
Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You don't suffer fools gladly, and superficial fools even less so. You have a mind to teach those around you a lesson. You're uncompromising today, and you can't understand why others don't have your same high standards. But are you truly as honest as you expect others to be? Remember that the quality of an artistic endeavor, in particular, is likely to be judged differently by each person who experiences it.

Find the way



Join the dots



Word Search

At the Beauty Salon

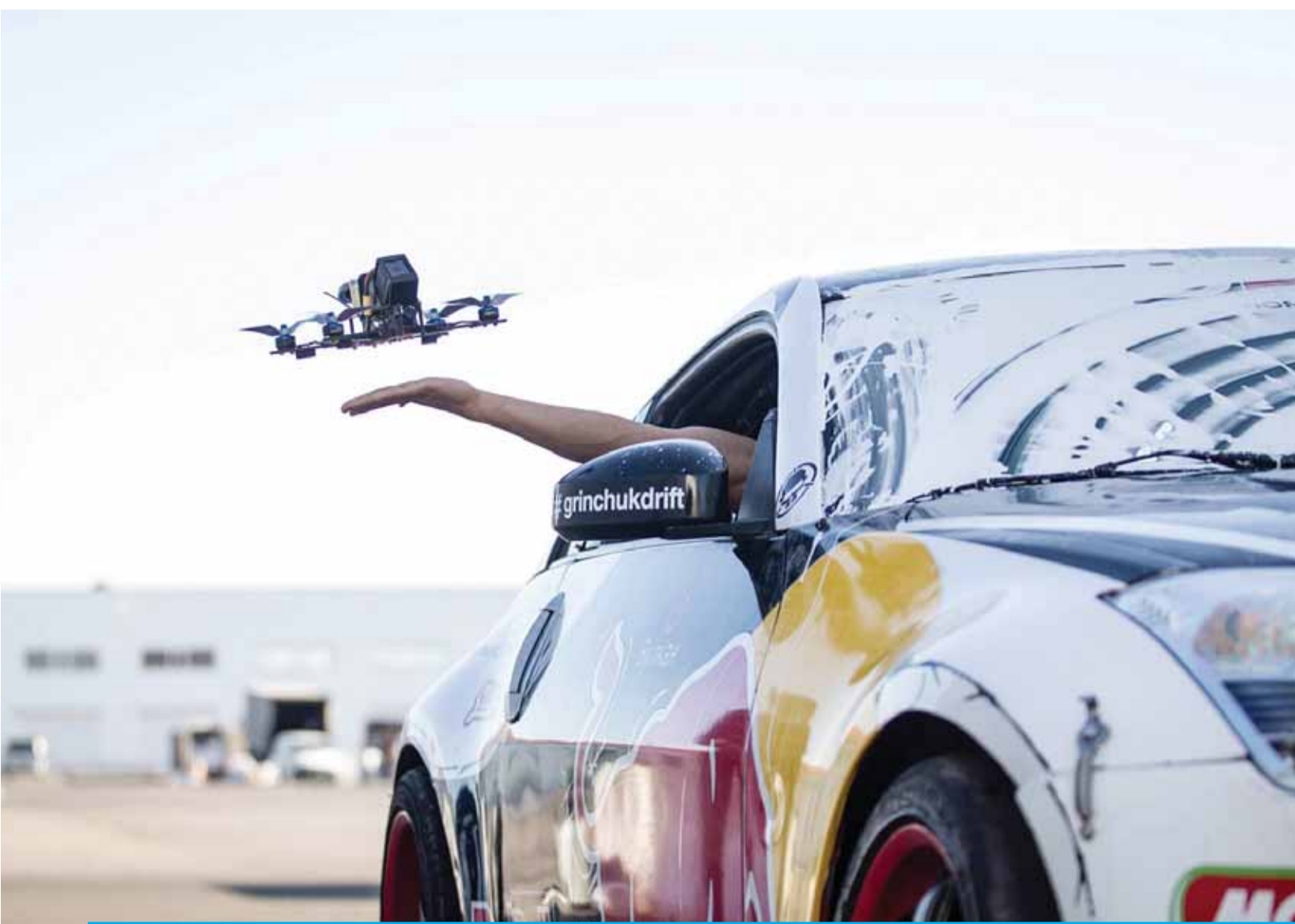
DIRECTIONS: Find and circle the vocabulary words in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.

G	C	C	G	N	B	P	E	D	I	C	U	R	E	B	M	R	O	E	Z	X
G	E	B	M	O	C	F	P	J	M	N	P	C	G	R	L	E	W	O	T	N
W	C	L	B	J	K	B	J	T	N	C	E	B	A	J	I	L	V	S	G	Q
B	E	D	R	L	S	T	B	E	A	U	T	I	C	I	A	N	E	I	E	E
F	V	D	S	O	S	S	K	B	H	F	J	R	M	V	I	A	S	C	Z	Q
K	N	U	Y	L	L	I	C	U	R	L	I	M	G	D	Y	E	N	C	R	L
O	Y	R	F	A	S	R	G	C	X	N	A	A	Q	C	J	N	I	X	J	V
Y	T	O	I	S	R	O	C	L	X	N	S	C	D	O	S	X	R	R	M	V
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M	A	P	R	Z	K	O	X	C	I	K	A	X	I	A	T	W	R	L	S	P
F	L	N	E	R	D	C	U	N	P	P	M	W	J	H	I	R	X	Q	T	P
Q	T	O	S	H	E	R	S	Y	Z	W	P	G	Q	X	O	R	I	Z	P	O
X	H	R	S	Q	E	Y	D	J	E	C	O	E	N	R	Y	E	S	M	E	I
K	F	I	E	D	P	A	R	P	Q	Q	O	B	R	B	R	U	S	H	R	N
I	G	G	R	C	C	O	N	D	I	T	I	O	N	E	R	N	O	V	M	T
Y	V	N	D	R	S	U	Q	B	R	N	S	F	A	D	I	X	M	Z	H	M
W	Q	I	R	Y	S	R	O	S	S	I	C	S	P	Q	Q	W	T	N	W	E
X	I	L	I	R	C	K	D	M	D	J	A	V	N	L	Y	B	A	A	Z	N
S	T	R	A	I	G	H	T	E	N	E	R	H	M	U	I	Q	X	S	L	T
V	E	U	H	G	U	X	O	X	C	M	C	K	G	A	Z	F	J	Y	H	D
A	W	C	A	J	P	W	B	H	A	O	Y	T	M	D	K	I	K	G	A	Q

APPOINTMENT
BEAUTICIAN
BRUSH
CHAIR
CLIPPER
COLORIST
COMB
CONDITIONER
CURL
CURLING IRON
DYE
FACIAL
GEL
HAIRDRESSER
HAIRDRYER
MANICURE
MIRROR
PEDICURE
PERM
RINSE
SCISSORS
SHAMPOO
STRAIGHTENER
TOWEL
TRIM
WASH
WAX

Sports

Photo of the day



Tommy Tibajia drifts in Ukraine. Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

US bobsleigh
Olympian
Jovanovic dead

LOS ANGELES: Pavle Jovanovic, who competed in bobsleigh for the United States at the 2006 Olympics, took his own life last weekend at the age of 43, the US Bobsled and Skeleton federation said Saturday.

"The winter sports community has suffered a tragic loss," said federation chief executive Aron McGuire, a former teammate of Jovanovic.

"Pavle's passion and commitment towards bobsled was seen and felt by his teammates, coaches, competitors, and fans of the sport. He lived life to the fullest and had a lasting influence on all those who had the opportunity to spend time with him." Jovanovic, who competed in bobsleigh for the United States at the 2006 Olympics, took his own life last weekend at the age of 43, the US Bobsled and Skeleton Federation said Saturday.

"The winter sports community has suffered a tragic loss," said federation chief executive Aron McGuire, a former teammate of Jovanovic. "Pavle's passion and commitment towards bobsled was seen and felt by his teammates, coaches, competitors, and fans of the sport. He lived life to the fullest and had a lasting influence on all those who had the opportunity to spend time with him." Another US Olympic teammate, Steve Mesler, posted a moving tribute on Instagram, which was all the more anguished because Jovanovic's suicide comes three years after American bobsleigh driver Steven Holcomb died at the age of 37. "Pav, I can't believe another one of these needs to be written," Mesler wrote. "I can't believe it's you I'm writing this about. My personal legend - the athlete that set the standard for focus, dedication, meticulousness, and drive - tragically took his own life at the age of 43."

Jovanovic missed the 2002 Olympics after failing a drugs test and served a two-year ban before competing at the 2006 games. He placed seventh in the two- and four-man events as a pusher in driver Todd Hays' sleigh.

"You never know what people are going through from outward appearances," former teammate Jason Dorsey commented on Facebook. "We have to talk to them and listen more. I'm going to work on that going forward." —AFP

US PGA's Memorial to track fans to
maintain COVID-19 social distancing

'We're going to use technology to protect everyone around us'

LOS ANGELES: The US PGA Tour's Memorial Tournament will use radio frequency identification (RFID) chips in spectator badges to ensure fans maintain social distance at the July 16-19 event, Golf Digest reported Saturday.

Dan Sullivan, director of the tournament hosted by 18-time major champion Jack Nicklaus in Ohio, said on a Zoom presentation conducted by the Greater Columbus Sports Commission that the high-tech badges were just one measure that will be used to maintain safety amid the coronavirus pandemic. "At any time we can know around the golf course how many people are collecting in a certain area," Sullivan said of the benefits of the tracking technology.

"We're going to use that technology to make sure that we're protecting everyone around us, protecting the folks that are inside those various venues and make sure that we're monitoring effectively and producing a tournament that everyone can be comfortable with."

In a phone interview with Golf Digest Sullivan explained that a small group of marshals on the grounds would have access to the tracking information and if areas become congested people will be asked to disperse.

Sullivan said less high-tech measures, such as elimination of grandstands and wearing of masks by staff and volunteers, would also be employed. The number of fans allowed on the course will also be limited, and those who attend will have their tem-

peratures taken.

Hand sanitizer will be widely available, draft beer and fountain drinks won't be offered and all monetary transactions will be handled by credit or debit card, not cash.

The PGA Tour halted its season on March 12, in the midst of the Players Championship, as increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases brought global sport to a standstill. One of the biggest concerns surrounding the resumption of competition has been the possibility that large gatherings of fans could spark a surge of new virus cases.

The tour is aiming to resume on June 11 with the Charles Schwab Challenge at Colonial Country Club in Fort Worth, Texas, the first of four events that will be played without fans.

The first tournament that might be able to admit fans is the John Deere Classic in Silvis, Illinois, the week before the Memorial. But it's not definite that the closed-door policy will end after four events.

Clair Peterson, tournament director of the John Deere, said the decision to admit fans will depend on what local government restrictions remain in place in to combat the spread of coronavirus.

"Who knows? Memorial could be the first event with fans if we do not have them, but they're in the exact same position of not knowing what will be permissible," Peterson said. "But they have to make every preparation possible, as we are." —AFP

Fans could
spark a surgeF1 without a crowd
leaves Hamilton with
an empty feeling

LONDON: Six-times Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton says the prospect of a home British Grand Prix without spectators leaves him empty inside but he is still raring to get going after months of waiting.

None of the drivers have raced since December, with the season stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but there are plans to start up behind closed doors in Austria and then Silverstone in July.

"It gave me a really empty feeling, because the fans really make that race," Hamilton — a record six-times winner on home soil — said in a video interview released on Saturday by his Mercedes team.

"Around the world, the more fans there the more atmosphere you have, that's why you have places like Silverstone and Monza. So it's going to be very empty."

"I don't know how exciting it's going to be for people watching on TV but it's going to be better than nothing," added the Briton, 35.

"For us it's going to be like a test day, probably even worse than a test day in the sense that at a test day there's not a huge amount of people in

Barcelona that come to watch but there are still some."

The champion, who has homes in Monaco and the United States and enjoyed a busy lifestyle before the crisis, did not disclose his location.

He said he was enjoying the downtime and described himself as a generally quiet, if workaholic, person.

"I'm great. This is the first time that I can remember that I've been in one place for six weeks," he said.

"I'm excited to get back in, I really do miss it. This has been almost a blessing on one side because it gives you more appreciation for the things that you love and do."

"This has given me more energy and inspiration and determination to keep delivering and keep working with this great team."

Hamilton said his weight had stayed the same and he was focusing on areas of weakness in training, such as calf exercises he normally found boring but recognised were important.

He had also done some gaming and signed up for a six-week online course.

"I've always wanted to learn a language and I still don't know any other languages. It's embarrassing I feel when people ask," he said. "I aced French at school, it was the only thing I aced."

"When I do things I just do it to the extreme so I sit down and do it in two hours basically," Hamilton added. "I just do one week a day." —Reuters



AUGUSTA: File photo of Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland walks with Dustin Johnson of the United States during a practice round prior to The Masters at Augusta National Golf Club on April 8, 2019 in Augusta, Georgia. — AFP

Less is more for
Mitchell when rugby
resumes post virus

LONDON: Former New Zealand head coach and current England defence chief John Mitchell believes some good may come from rugby union after the coronavirus if it creates "greater professionalism" thanks to a concentration of talent at fewer clubs worldwide, including Super Rugby.

Even before COVID-19 saw this year's edition of Super Rugby suspended after seven rounds in March, there was a widespread view the southern hemisphere's now 15-string premier club tournament had become increasingly unattractive for fans and broadcasters alike, with talent spread too thinly. The pandemic has already had a huge financial impact on rugby and there are concerns current club structures won't survive the outbreak fully intact.

England's Rugby Football Union has lost £15 million (\$19 million) so far due to the crisis, with Twickenham chiefs forecasting a total loss of £107 million if the autumn internationals are cancelled.

Meanwhile Rugby Australia, already reeling after reaching a multi-million dollar settlement with star player Israel Folau over his sacking for homophobic comments, have reported a \$6 million

operating deficit for last year.

They have also laid off 75 percent of staff, with chief executive Raelene Castle resigning amid accusations of mismanagement and sexism.

Japan's Sunwolves are set to be axed from the 2021 Super Rugby season, which is planned to be a 14-team tournament featuring sides from South Africa, New Zealand, Australia and Argentina.

'LOST ITS VALUE'

But Mitchell, once the coach of Australia's now former Super Rugby side Western Force, indicated greater contraction was still required if the tournament was to return to its mid 1990s and early 2000s heyday.

"I'd like to probably see less markets...The example I give you is Super Rugby," Mitchell told reporters in a conference call. "When it first started it was 12 teams, I think I even played in the first Super 10 but it was probably at its best when it was 12 teams and the best players were playing," added the 56-year-old, who coached the Chiefs in the Super 12 before guiding New Zealand to a third-place finish at the 2003 World Cup. "They obviously wanted to create a style of rugby that suited the southern hemisphere from an athletic point of view." "Ultimately, because they've spread that all round the world, it's in some ways spread players all round the world, creating greater costs."

"It's probably lost its value in some ways because people want to watch the best players playing in their competition." —AFP

Sports

Ligue 2 clubs want to keep promotion but suspend relegation

Battle will be fought out in committee rooms

PARIS: With the French season declared over because of the coronavirus pandemic, Ligue 2 promotion and relegation are at the heart of a debate which is being duplicated in other countries.

The second-division clubs facing the drop or just missing out on promotion complain they are being treated unfairly. Support is growing to scrap relegation and expand to 22 teams next season, while still holding the summer playoff which gives finishers between third and fifth a second chance to win promotion.

Their problem is that Noel Le Graet, the head of the French Football Federation, is opposed to the idea, insisting on the "application of the regulations." If the clubs cannot persuade him, Orleans, in last place with 10 rounds unplayed, and Le Mans, tied on points with Niort but in 19th on goal difference, will go down.

The battle will be fought out in committee rooms and at the general assembly of the French professional league. "I will defend the move to 22, so there will be no automatic drop," Pierre Ferracci, president of Paris FC, in 17th, the last place that guarantees safety, when the season was halted, told AFP, adding that many other clubs shared his position.

"Exceptional circumstances allow exceptions to

be made," he said.

Le Mans has settled for more cautious statements saying it "believes that the decision to stop the championship is the wisest for everyone's health and hopes for a fair and united verdict". The club's fans have launched a petition.

'PLENTY OF TIME'

"In these difficult times, let's stick together and not make two clubs and their supporters pay the price for an unfinished season," wrote one of its organisers.

At the top of the table, leaders Lorient and second-placed Lens have been promoted, but only four points separated first from in fifth and the clubs in the playoff places. Ajaccio, Troyes and Clermont are frustrated.

"Why stop a team that was one point out of second place from taking part in playoffs," asked Ajaccio president Christian Leca at the end of April. "We're not asking to play them tomorrow, we could play four playoff matches on 15 July."

"We've got plenty of time to re-evaluate the health situation." He also proposed enlarging Ligue 1 with a formula that would solve Ajaccio's problem. "We could also do one relegation, three promotions, and a Ligue 1 with 22 clubs," he told AFP.

Adding two teams to a division would reduce

“Application of the regulations”

”



VILLENEUVE-D'ASCQ, France: This file photo taken on May 03, 2015 shows boys holding a banner of Len's football club in front of a French Ligue 1 banner before the French L1 football match between Lille (LOSC) and RC Lens at the Pierre Mauroy Stadium. — AFP

each club's cut of league broadcast and sponsorship income but would increase their revenue by adding four matches. But that would add to fixture congestion in what is likely to be a particularly crowded calendar.

The dissatisfaction is mirrored lower down the French football pyramid. Boulogne-sur-Mer, third in 'National', the third division, are claiming the

regulations mean they should face Niort for a place in Ligue 2.

"We can hold a play-off without difficulty at the same period as the French Cup, that is to say one month before the resumption of the championship, at the end of July or early August," club president Reinold Delatre told AFP. "This would be fair and exciting and could give people pleasure." —AFP

Sri Lanka captain praises Arthur, eyes top-four rank

MUMBAI: Sri Lanka cricket captain Dimuth Karunaratne lauded the impact of new coach Mickey Arthur yesterday and said his side must target a top-four spot in the world rankings for both the test and 50-over formats.

South African Mickey Arthur was appointed as Sri Lanka's head coach on a two-year contract in December. Former first class cricketer Arthur has previously been head coach with the national teams of South Africa, Australia and Pakistan.

"Mickey is a no nonsense cool bloke with loads of experience to back him and his brand," Karunaratne told Sri Lanka Cricket. "At the international level, planning and role clarity is a norm. What is very important is the belief he has instilled among us in his own and subtle way. It sure helped and the results always speak for itself."

Since Arthur's appointment, Sri Lanka lost a two-test series in Pakistan before defeating Zimbabwe at home. They are currently ranked fifth in the format.

The team languish at eighth in one-day internationals but managed to defeat a dangerous West Indies side 3-0 in their last series before the COVID-19 shutdown.

"Rankings is the key word. I'd say Sri Lanka needs to be in the top four of not just ODI cricket, but test



Dimuth Karunaratne

cricket as well," Karunaratne, 32, said.

"That would indirectly mean semi-finalists to say the least and you are perhaps two games away from the plum. There onwards, it's anybody's guess and if you do well on your day you could end up being World Champs."

Test captain Karunaratne was himself handed an olive branch to resurrect his limited-overs career and lead the side in ODI cricket when he was brought back last year ahead of the 50-over World Cup in

England for the first time since 2015. The top-order batsman found success with the willow but was unable to lead his side into the last four of the competition. Karunaratne is, however, positive about the future. "The boys and the respective squads are enjoying their cricket and that makes my job that much easier," he said. "If you like what you are doing and the environment to do so is conducive, the balance at this level of sport becomes that much more beneficial." — Reuters

gienic measures," said Dresden sporting director Ralf Minge.

"We are in contact with the responsible health authority and the DFL. The fact is that we cannot train or participate in games in the next 14 days." As well as the players, Dresden will isolate its entire coaching and supervisory staff.

The Bundesliga will be the first top European league to restart matches since the outbreak of the coronavirus forced lockdown measures to be imposed across the continent. However, matches will be played without fans in attendance and with a maximum number of 300 people, including both teams, allowed at each game.

In the run-up to the restart, all teams must go into a one-week quarantine training camp. After the government gave the go-ahead for the season to restart, there were still worries that an outbreak of the coronavirus in the league could halt the resumed season, this time for good.

As of Thursday, there had been 10 positive cases from 1,724 tests of players and staff at the top 36 clubs in the first wave of testing and two more in the second.

miership, would have been spared relegation.

Budge, the co-chair of the task force, issued a lengthy statement decrying Premiership clubs who voted against expansion before reading a paper on the topic she had prepared for them.

"This is so appallingly disrespectful to everyone on the task force," said Budge. Meanwhile she insisted her plan was not simply a response to Edinburgh club Hearts' plight, saying no club should be "unfairly penalised by exceptional decisions" taken in response to COVID-19.

"I would stand by that view, regardless of Hearts' own position. "If something is wrong, it is wrong... To pour more financial hardship on specific clubs, given what we are all going through both now and for the foreseeable future, is both outrageous and shameful."

Earlier, Partick Thistle — who stand to be relegated from the second-tier Championship now the reconstruction plan has been rejected — criticised the Scottish Professional Football League, with the Jags insisting they had been subjected to "unprece-

Dresden, who are not allowed to train during their isolation, are due to face Greuther Fuerth in their next game on the weekend of May 23-24.

There is little wriggle room for more postponements as officials want the season completed by June 30. "Dynamo Dresden has informed the German Football League. We will determine the further course of action with a view to the club's plans at the beginning of next week," a DFL spokesman told AFP subsidiary SID on Saturday.

The head of the DFL has warned clubs they are "on probation" and must implement strict hygiene measures when the Bundesliga restarts next Saturday. "Everyone must be clear: we are playing on probation," DFL CEO Christian Seifert said.

"I expect everyone to live up to their responsibilities." In the top flight, defending champions Bayern Munich resume with a four-point lead over Borussia Dortmund.

The Bundesliga wants to complete the last nine rounds of matches before June 30 to secure around 300 million euros (\$325 million) in television money. — AFP

dent" treatment.

On Friday, Rangers managing director Stewart Robertson was accused of making "baseless, damaging and self-serving attacks" by his fellow SPFL board members. They added they had "complete confidence" in chief executive Neil Doncaster and legal advisor Rod McKenzie, both of whom Rangers want suspended.

The board members again urged clubs to reject Rangers' call for an independent investigation into the circumstances surrounding the vote that ended the lower-league season and handed the SPFL board the authority to do the same for the Premiership.

The 12 Premiership clubs and Championship winners Dundee United are due to meet on Tuesday. Rangers were 13 points adrift of leaders Celtic when the Premiership season was suspended in March due to the pandemic.

Celtic would be awarded a record-equalling ninth consecutive title if the SPFL board deemed no more games could be played. — AFP

Roland Garros could be behind closed doors

PARIS: French tennis chief Bernard Guidicelli admitted yesterday that Roland Garros, already controversially pushed back four months due to the coronavirus, could be staged behind closed doors.

Guidicelli, who said that the French federation (FFT) had "no regrets" over its unilateral decision to move the clay court Grand Slam from May 24-June 7 to September 20-October 4, insisted all options remain on the table.

"We haven't ruled out any option. Roland Garros is first and foremost a story of matches and players," he told the Journal du Dimanche.

"There is the tournament taking place in the stadium, and the tournament on TV screens.

"Millions of viewers around the world are waiting. Organising it behind closed doors would allow part of the business model — television rights (which account for more than a third of the tournament's revenues) — to go ahead. This cannot be overlooked."

The spread of the coronavirus has halted all tennis since mid-March and will not resume until July 13 at the earliest. Wimbledon has already been cancelled for the first time since the Second World War.

The US Open, due to take place in New York from Aug 31-Sept 13, is also in question with a decision expected in mid-June. Close to 500,000 fans regularly attend Roland Garros every year.

However, an indication as to the thinking around the 2020 edition came on Thursday when the FFT decided to reimburse all tickets bought for the original date of the tournament rather than transfer them.

Guidicelli admitted that the start of the rescheduled French Open could even be pushed back a further week to begin on September 27. That would allow a two-week break between the US Open and Roland Garros.

"I have regular discussions with Andrea Gaudenzi (president of the ATP), Steve Simon (president of the WTA) and David Haggerty (head of the ITF) and another call is planned next week to see how we have progressed.

"We are working well together, but it is still a bit early to precisely determine the schedule." Guidicelli is adamant that the FFT was right to shift the tournament back by four months with the death toll from the coronavirus in France standing at 26,310 by Saturday night.

"Roland Garros is the driving force of tennis in France, it is what feeds the players in our ecosystem (260 million euros in revenue, or 80% of the turnover of the FFT)," added Guidicelli, describing himself as the "good father".

"We think of them first, protecting them. We made a courageous choice and today, no one regrets it."

"A tournament without a date is a boat without a rudder — we don't know where we're going. "We positioned ourselves as far in the calendar as possible, anxious not to harm major events, so that no Masters 1000 or any Grand Slam would be affected. The turn of events seems to have proved us right." — AFP

Hearts owner laments 'disrespect' of her task force

LONDON: Scottish football descended into fresh acrimony Saturday when Hearts owner Ann Budge accused her Premiership counterparts of "appalling disrespect" in rejecting her task force's plan to restructure the league set-up.

After the Scottish 2019/20 campaign at all levels below the Premiership was cancelled because of the coronavirus, a task force was established to look at creating a new three-division system.

But the plan failed to attract sufficient support at a meeting of Premiership clubs on Friday. Had proposals for the top two leagues to increase to 14 teams each been passed, Hearts, bottom of the Pre-

18 US PGA's Memorial to track fans to maintain COVID-19 social distancing



19 Ligue 2 clubs want to keep promotion but suspend relegation

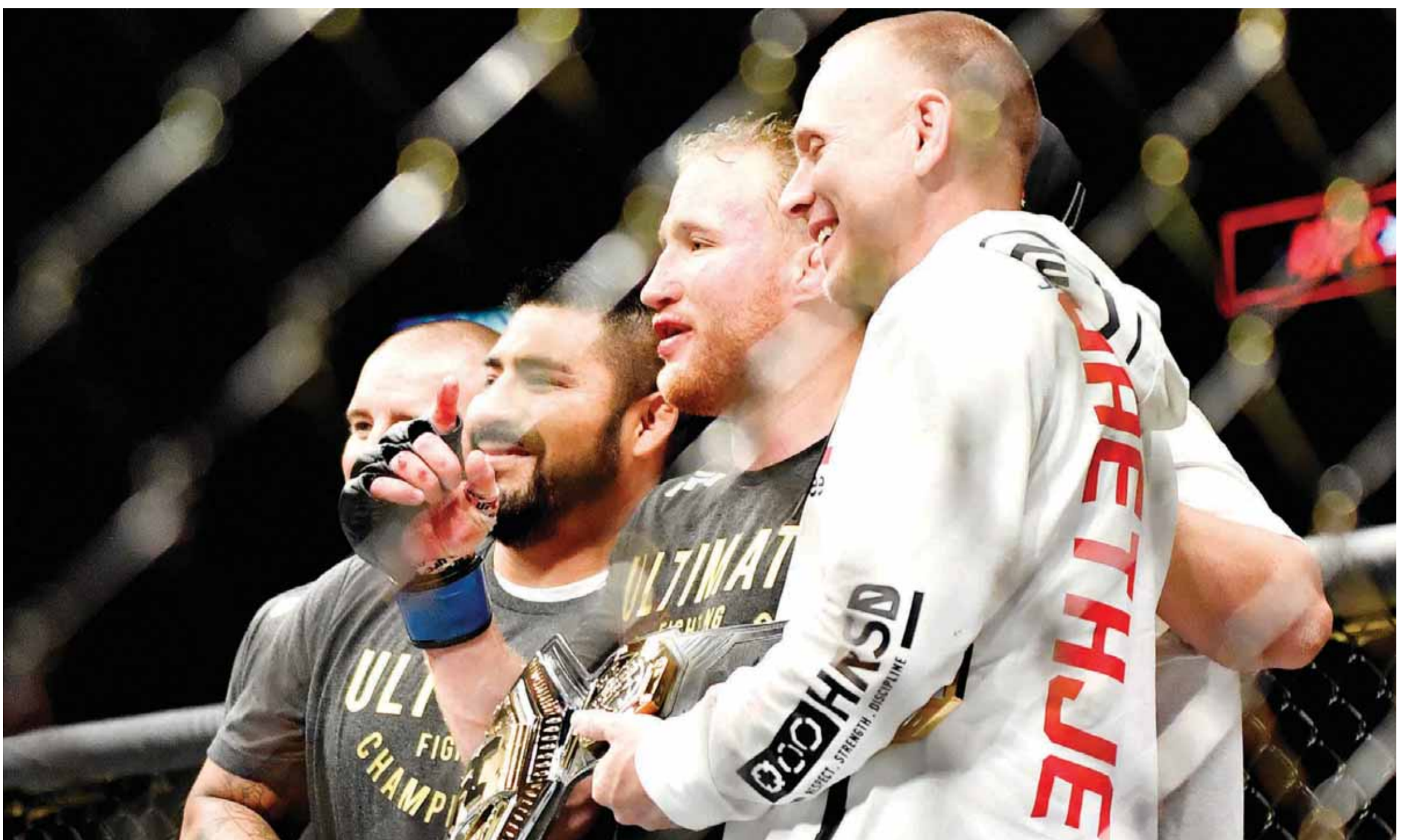


19 Sri Lanka captain praises Arthur, eyes top-four rank



Gaethje upsets Ferguson to win

UFC interim lightweight title



JACKSONVILLE: Justin Gaethje of the United States celebrates with his team after defeating Tony Ferguson of the United States in their Interim lightweight title fight during UFC 249 at VyStar Veterans Memorial Arena on May 09, 2020 in Jacksonville, Florida.— AFP

FLORIDA: Justin Gaethje put on a striking masterclass to score a surprise knockout victory over Tony Ferguson and win the interim lightweight title at UFC 249, which took place at the VyStar Veterans Memorial Arena in Jacksonville, Florida on Saturday.

Ferguson, who came into the fight on a 12-win streak, suffered damage as Gaethje chopped at his legs and landed thunderous hooks before referee Herb Dean stepped in to end the fight late in the fifth round.

With over 80,000 deaths in the United States due to COVID-19, the UFC has come under fire for putting on the event, which took place with no fans in the stands and with stringent health and safety protocols in place.

Despite the absence of a crowd, the fights them-

selves lacked nothing in intensity, with Francis Ngannou scoring the knockout of the night, blitzing Jairzinho Rozenstruik with a left hook to force a stoppage after just 20 seconds of the first round.

Sam Alvey was the first fighter into the empty arena on the night, pointing and high-fiving the imaginary crowd as he made his way to the cage where he fell to a decision loss to Ryan Spann in the evening's opening fight on the prelim card. Apart from the fighters, the referees and the commentators, event staff wore face masks and only one corner-man per fighter was

allowed into the cage in the breaks between rounds.

"It was funny, I could hear a lot. Everybody out there I could hear really clearly, but at the same time ... it wasn't much different than if the crowd were there," Vicente Luque told reporters following his stoppage win over Niko Price.

Such was the silence that Luque was able to hear the commentators, and heavyweight Greg Hardy said he was able to take the advice of TV commentator Daniel Cormier to counter Yorgano De Castro's leg kicks en route to a decision victory. In the co-main event, Henry Cejudo

retained his bantamweight belt with a second-round stoppage win over Dominick Cruz before immediately retiring in the octagon. The 33-year-old, who won a gold medal for wrestling at the 2008 Olympics, has said he was happy with his career and that he wanted to start a family.

Returning after a long layoff, former champ Cruz was dropped with a knee to the head and suffered the first knockout of his career with just two seconds left in the second round.

However, the biggest prize of the night went to Gaethje, who is now next in line to face Khabib Nurmagomedov for the undisputed lightweight crown.

"I'll wait for the real one," Gaethje said as he tossed the interim belt aside moments after it was put around his waist. — Reuters



Empty arena on the night

World Cup star Alex welcomes daughter

LOS ANGELES: Two-time women's World Cup winner Alex Morgan and husband Servando Carrasco have welcomed a new player to their team, announcing the birth of daughter Charlie Elena Carrasco on Saturday.

Morgan tweeted that the baby was born on Thursday. "She made us wait longer than expected, but I should have known she would do it her way and her way only. My super moon baby," Morgan wrote.

Morgan, 30, was due to give birth in April and said on ABC's "Good Morning America" earlier in the week that she hoped to give birth within the week. Morgan, who also won Olympic gold with the US women's team, announced that she was pregnant in October, when she said she still intended to play for the USA at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

She did light training with the national team in February. But with the Tokyo Games postponed a



Alex Morgan

year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Morgan will have even more time to prepare. Carrasco, 31, played in his ninth MLS season in 2019 with the Los Angeles Galaxy. — AFP

Andres Iniesta, best footballers of all time

BARCELONA: A shy village boy who could not bear to leave his parents' bed, Andres Iniesta may have seemed an unlikely candidate to become one of the best footballers of all time, but anyone who saw him play rarely had serious doubts.

Iniesta, who turns 36 today, weaved his magic for Barcelona for 16 years and was one of the architects of the club's greatest era, playing a defining role as they won 32 trophies including nine Spanish titles and four Champions League crowns.

"This kid is going to retire us all," said Pep Guardiola when he first watched a teenage Iniesta in action while Spain coach Luis Enrique describes the diminutive midfielder as "Harry Potter, waving his wand".

Iniesta conducted an equally mesmerising orchestra for Spain and clinched his country's finest sporting achievement when his extra-time goal against the Netherlands sealed victory in the 2010 World Cup

final. That cold-blooded strike in Johannesburg's Soccer City Stadium forever endeared Iniesta to Spaniards no matter their allegiances, earning him standing ovations even when playing away to Barca's sworn enemies Real Madrid and Espanyol.

Most touching, though, was how he celebrated that career-defining goal — ripping off his shirt to pay tribute to his late friend and fellow footballer Dani Jarque who died the previous year.

Jarque's sudden death and a series of injuries had led Iniesta into a severe bout of depression, things getting so bad that he asked to sleep in his parents' bed, just as he had done as a 10-year-old when home from Barcelona's academy. He conquered his demons with the help of a psychologist and a supportive coach in Guardiola, who had never forgotten how Iniesta backed him when he got off to a rocky start in his first season at Barca. That campaign ended with Barcelona winning the Champions League, helped by Iniesta's stoppage-time goal against Chelsea to reach the final, sparking a 50% surge in the birth rate in Barcelona.

Last week, he honoured the anniversary of the "Iniestazo" by calling up some of the children his goal had given life to. "Iniesta is the boyfriend every mother would want for her daughter," said his former Spain team mate Sergio Ramos, summing up the player's universal appeal. — Reuters