



## 4 Officials examine plans for repatriating illegal residents



## 15 Face masks, beard oil: Indian millennials defy gender norms

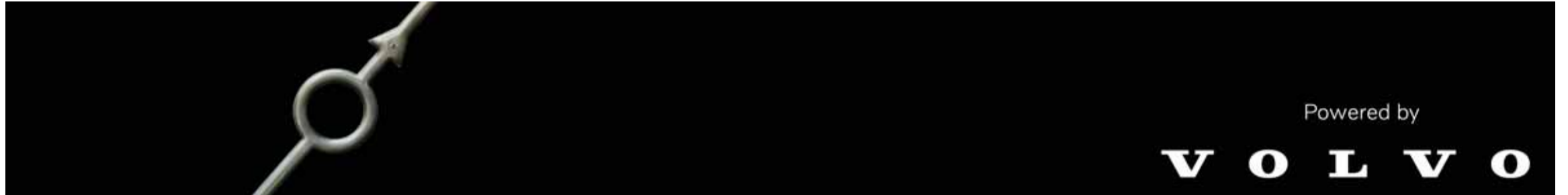


## 16 Coronavirus gives Trump big stage for pet medical theories



### Ramadan KAREEM

Fajr	03:22
Dhuhr	11:44
Asr	15:20
Maghrib	18:36
Isha	20:05



# Municipality to dismiss half of expat workforce

## MPs want quick approval of 'Kuwaitization' law • 'Kafala system to be scrapped'

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Municipality is in the process of finalizing lists of expat employees whose services will be terminated within a few weeks, Minister of State for Municipality Affairs Waleed Al-Jassem said. The minister informed top officials at the Municipality to select the number of expatriate employees that they can dismiss from their departments and that a final decision on the issue is expected immediately after the Eid Al-Fitr holidays, which end on May 26.

Jassem had issued a decision last week to halt the employment of expats at the Municipality and also ordered to terminate the contracts of existing

employees. Local media reports said yesterday that the Municipality plans to terminate the services of at least 50 percent of the expat workforce. According to the latest official figures by the Central Statistical Bureau, Kuwait Municipality had 6,800 employees at the middle of last year, and only 900 of them are expats. This means that the Municipality decision could affect as many as 450 expats, at least in the short-term.

Jassem's decision to dismiss expats was warmly welcomed by a number of lawmakers, who are currently pressing the government to accept legislation to replace all expat employees in the government with citizens within a year. MP Saadoun Hammad, the rapporteur of the Assembly's health and labor

committee, called for approving a comprehensive law to replace all expats employed in government jobs with Kuwaitis immediately after the Eid holidays.

The lawmaker also called for adopting the so-called quota system, which allots a certain percentage to various communities in the country, adding that the behavior of foreign countries during the coronavirus crisis should be taken into consideration. The draft law has already been submitted by a number of lawmakers who essentially call for replacing all expat employees with citizens within one year. In case replacement is not possible, expats can be appointed for only one year.

According to the statistics bureau, total employ-

ees in the government and its agencies reached 413,000 in the middle of last year, 76.3 percent of them or 315,000 Kuwaitis. The number of expats in public sector jobs reached 98,000 or 23.7 percent of all employees, according to the bureau. The main problem with replacement is that expats in government jobs are predominantly high-skilled or low-paid menial workers, both of whom are extremely difficult to replace by Kuwaitis.

Former minister of oil Adel Al-Sabeeh said yesterday that Kuwaitization away from competence and commitment to the job will harm the standard of services like health and education. He wrote on Twitter that Kuwaitis should be given priority in

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### News in brief

#### First UAE flight to Israel

**ABU DHABI:** The United Arab Emirates flew its first publicly announced flight to Israel on Tuesday when Etihad Airways sent 14 tons of medical supplies to help the Palestinians cope with the coronavirus pandemic. "Etihad Airways operated a dedicated humanitarian cargo flight from Abu Dhabi to Tel Aviv on 19 May to provide medical supplies to the Palestinians," an Etihad spokesperson said. "The flight had no passengers on board." The official UAE news agency WAM added: "The aid includes personal protective equipment, PPE, and medical equipment. Most notably, it includes 10 ventilators that are acutely needed." — AFP

#### UAE to launch Mars probe

**DUBAI:** After sending its first astronaut to space last year, the United Arab Emirates is to launch a probe to Mars in July, state news agency WAM announced Tuesday. The unmanned probe, named Hope, will be "the first interplanetary exploration undertaken by an Arab nation", it said. WAM said the probe would be launched on July 15, at 2051 GMT, from Japan's Tanegashima Space Centre, using a Mitsubishi Heavy Industries platform. It is set to make a 495-million-km journey to reach and orbit the Red Planet. Last September, Hazza Al-Mansouri made history as the first Emirati in space. — AFP

#### Endangered cheetah filmed

**ALGIERS:** Naturalists in Algeria have filmed a Saharan cheetah, a subspecies listed as critically endangered on the IUCN Red List, for the first time in a decade, the national parks authority said. The animal was spotted in the Hoggar Mountains national park in the vast country's desert south, parks official Salah Amokrane told the state-run APS news agency. Amokrane was speaking at the release on Monday of a documentary on the work of the park's scientists, which includes images of the cheetah taken in the Atakor volcanic field whose peaks approach a height of 3,000 m. — AFP

#### Aqsa mosque to reopen

**JERUSALEM:** Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque will reopen to worshippers after the Eid holiday, a statement from its governing body said Tuesday, two months after closing for the first time in more than 50 years due to the coronavirus. "The council decided to lift the suspension on worshippers entering the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque after the Eid al-Fitr holiday," a statement from the Waqf organization said. The mosque's director, Omar Al-Kiswani, told AFP he hoped for no restrictions on the number of worshippers but said the governing body would announce the exact "mechanisms and measures later". — AFP

## Virus curfew hits Kuwaiti polygamists

**KUWAIT:** Abu Othman, like thousands of Kuwaiti men, has struggled to split his time between two wives living in separate homes amid the Gulf state's strict lockdown to combat the coronavirus. "My life has become so complicated," the 45-year-old, who has 10 children between the two women, told AFP. "I am constantly on the move between them," he said, stressing that he could never choose one wife over the other.

The oil-rich country has imposed some of the

strictest measures in the Gulf to combat the spread of the virus, which has so far infected over 15,000 people and claimed 118 lives there. Last week, Kuwait announced a nationwide "total" lockdown until May 30, suspending all but essential private and public sector activities.

Under the curfew, residents are allowed to shop for food only once every six days, after electronically obtaining official permission, and may otherwise leave home for two-hour evening walks. Those who break the rules, which also include mandatory use of face masks outside the home, can be fined as much as \$16,000 and jailed for up to three months.

But in response to appeals by scores of polygamists like Abu Othman to ease their restrictions on movement, the Kuwaiti authorities on Sunday introduced electronic permits to men married to more than one woman for one-hour visits twice a week.

Traditional Islamic jurisprudence allows Muslim men to marry up to four women — a custom initially meant to ensure the welfare of widows and orphans of those who had died fighting for Islam. A strict requirement is that men treat all their wives equally and fairly.

Abu Othman married his first wife in 2001 and his second wife in 2006. The two women live in separate houses in Jahra, a predominantly bedouin area 40 km west of Kuwait City. Polygamy has become increasingly uncommon in much of the Muslim world. Tunisia was the first predominantly Muslim country to abolish the practice in 1956. Kuwait had one of the highest rates of polygamy in the Gulf between 2010 and 2015, at over eight percent of marriages, according to a study by the Doha International Family Institute.

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## Unpaid foreign maids stranded in Lebanon

**BEIRUT:** A week after her Lebanese employer kicked her out without her luggage, pay or passport, all Ethiopian domestic worker Sofia wants is to go home as Lebanon begins repatriations. "My madam threw me out. She owes me six-and-a-half months' salary," Sofia said, her hair draped in a red scarf. "I want to go back to Ethiopia," said the mother of two girls, who has not seen them for almost three years.

Lebanon is suffering its worst economic crisis in decades, as well as a coronavirus lockdown. Some Lebanese families have started paying their home help in the depreciating local currency, while others are now unable to pay them at all, with increasing reports of domestic workers being thrown into the street. Lebanon was to start repatriation flights

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BEIRUT: Ethiopian domestic workers wait outside their country's consulate to register for repatriation in the Hazmieh suburb of the Lebanese capital on May 18, 2020. — AFP

## 30 years after unity, Yemen faces reality

**DUBAI:** Thirty years after unification, Yemen is on the verge of fragmentation as a result of armed conflicts, regional rivalries and foreign interference. On May 22, 1990, to popular acclaim, the leaders of the former North and South Yemen states announced from Sanaa the formation of a new republic that was seen as "the dream of an entire generation of Yemenis", according to political analyst Saleh Al-Baidhani.

But 30 years on, that dream has faded and the impoverished country has turned into a patchwork of rival zones

mired in endless conflicts. Yemen has been embroiled in civil war since 2014 between the government — supported by a Saudi-led military coalition — and Iran-backed Houthi rebels, who now control much of the north, including the capital Sanaa.

The government still holds the central district of Marib and the eastern provinces, while the south is in the hands of the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) — which has made no secret of its intention to declare an independent state. "Our strategic goal, on which we will not concede, is the establishment of an independent state," STC official Thabet Al-Awlaki told AFP. According to Ali Al-Sarari, an aide to Yemen's prime minister, the country appears to be faced with two options.

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ABYAN, Yemen: A fighter loyal to Yemen's separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) holds the separatist flag in this southern province on May 18, 2020. — AFP

# Innovation in the time of a global pandemic: Case study of Kuwait's 'Shield' initiative

## Producing medical face shields as protective aid for frontliners

Pandemic Diaries

### Half way there

By Jamie Etheridge

etheridge@kuwaittimes.com

We've turned the corner, 10 days finished, 10 days to go. In the past we would book a 10-day holiday and I'd think, 'That's not enough time, I need two weeks at least.' But these past 10 days seemed an eternity and also almost like a dream, as if we've been suspended in time and space.

These 10 days have been both an oasis of calm, a peaceful retreat from the world where my family and I live in quiet harmony or at least free from the stress and pressures of normal daily life. At the same time, there were periods when the time seemed to drag and the urge to go out, to escape felt almost overwhelming.

Still I am grateful for these days. Even in the midst of this pandemic, time to be with my family seems precious to me. I hope one day my children look back on this period and think of it as one of the most special of their childhood.

Now as we prepare for the end of the lockdown and the reopening of normal life, I wonder what we will change. After the global financial crisis in 2008/2009, we all faced a period of economic instability. People lost their jobs and income and many businesses collapsed. It is certain that the situation will be much worse this time around, with the economic impact lasting far into the future.

This crisis has created an opportunity for all of us to rethink about how we think about our lives, about what we value and what we strive for. Money and the accumulation of wealth, epitomized by the nouveau riche tech billionaires of Silicon Valley has become the global siren song. The mantra of the times is take, take, take. Use up all our natural resources. Deplete the earth's ecosystem to make more money. Exploit workers as much as possible. Enrich our pockets at the expense of every natural environment. Who cares about climate change? About human trafficking? About human rights?

All other values are subsumed beneath the grasping for greater wealth. At the same time, earning enough for anything beyond basic survival for far too many has become out of reach.

I don't know what will happen when economies reopen, when the world reaches a new 'normal' and we all jump back into the stream with both feet. We have gone half way towards a new reality, toward seeing a new way of living, of building a world where our relationships with each other, our communities, our connectedness is what matters most. I hope and pray that we take this new vision all the way. That we come away from this pandemic, that those who survive this pandemic, emerge from it with a greater sense of our interconnectedness and a greater appreciation for all that life and humanity can offer not only what it can take from the earth and each other.



KUWAIT: The Shield founding team at work. — Photos courtesy Maryam Khalfan



By Sadie Hussain

**KUWAIT:** The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a meteoric shift in global business and the importance of innovation is now more vital than ever.

Although innovation may sound like a slogan, it is the sine qua non of business continuity in this day and age. Innovation allows organizations to stay relevant in the competitive market and plays a pivotal role in economic growth. It also grants entire economies the ability to combat critical problems, which hinge on sustainable and efficient solutions. The calamity we are fighting today is but an illustration of the many challenges we might face in the future.

Innovation stems from an urge to make a change. Maryam Khalfan and "Shield" is a great example of this. Maryam works as a biomedical engineer with Central Circle Company and recently founded an initiative called Shield that produces medical "face shields" as a protective aid for frontliners in Kuwait.

Shield started as a humble family dialogue. Maryam and her family were discussing the problems created as a result of the rapid spike of coronavirus cases in Kuwait. The discussion shifted to brainstorming ideas for how they could help their beloved country. With her background in biomedical engineering, Maryam came up with the idea of helping to protect the thousands of healthcare workers in Kuwait on the frontlines battling against the virus.

Maryam, together with her sister Fatemah Khalfan, a research officer for the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS), launched Shield and immediately began seeking available resources in Kuwait to realize their goal.

Maryam and Fatemah created a 3D printing community page on Slack and circulated a volunteer call out, requesting experts in Kuwait with experience in 3D printing or CNC machinery to reach out to them. To their astonishment, they received 80 responses from a variety of professionals in Kuwait, who included engineers, architects and logistic experts.

Maryam and Fatemah then prepared a questionnaire that they circulated between various healthcare



Over 200  
face shields  
a day

backing.

KES agreed to purchase the 3D printers and materials and gave Maryam and Fatemah a location to kick start their initiative. The day the printers were installed the Khalfan sisters with the support of friend and colleague, Eng Hessa Al-Zayed, began inviting engineers, architects, and other disciplin-

arians in a bid to receive support in constructing the operation. They discussed the idea, calibrated printers and analysed the designs that were most efficient in view of production time and strength. The next day, a member of the Biomedical Association in Kuwait heard what they were doing and opened the doors to the collaborative communal space, Niu to host the headquarters for Shield. Shield Kuwait was finally born.

Maryam then learned of a local doctor that had started a similar campaign, Dr Mohamad Al-Awadh, and had reached out to the public audience on Instagram seeking help to print 3D face masks. Dr Al-Awadh joined the campaign as medical and distribution lead. By early April, Shield began producing and distributing an average of 80 shields a day. Soon after distribution, Eng Abdul Hadi Bo Sakhar, lead engineer from Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), joined the team.

Innovation is the means to advancing society; it not only helps in tackling problems, but enhances society's capacity to act in times of need. Shield Kuwait began simply as an idea to help fight the battle against the virus in Kuwait; at this moment, they are averaging over 200 face shields a day and are distributing them to the frontlines.

## Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait has recorded 16,764 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of Tuesday, in addition to 121 deaths. With the exception of 179 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 thousands have been discharged from quarantine after exhibiting no symptoms during their 14-day quarantine period, the Ministry of Health confirmed. Meanwhile, 4,681 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 11,962 people receiving treatment and 2,619 quarantined.

### 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 and supermarkets once every six days during the curfew hours by making an appointment through [www.moci.shop](http://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](http://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](http://www.pai.gov.kw), and send the form via email to: [Jasiri@moh.gov.kw](mailto: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. Kuwait took all measures to test Kuwaitis repatriated from infected areas for potential infection. 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 Rashid Al-Sahh: on Monday and Wednesday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9797-6168.
- Dr Fahad Al-Tasha: daily from 8:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 9904-8258.
- Dr Othman Al-Asfour: daily 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm. Call 9938-5350.
- Dr Mohammed Al-Khalidi (head of this team): daily 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Call 9903-6470.
- Dr Ahmad Al-Khalidi: daily 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9910-7965.
- Dr Muneera Al-Qattan: Monday and Wednesday 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9953-3108.
- Dr Zainab Al-Saffar: Sunday and Thursday 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9954-9908.
- Dr Sameera Al-Kandari: Tuesday 9:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 6770-9434.
- Dr Kawthar Al-Yaqout: Monday and Wednesday 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 5521-0088.

For information and other concerns, call 9401-4283.

Local

# Jleeb woman recounts tragedy following separation from family due to COVID-19

## Husband dies of heart attack after losing taxi driver income



KUWAIT: These April 7, 2020 file photos show police blocking Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh exits upon Kuwait authorities' decision to put the area under total lockdown in a bid to fight the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** The lockdown and the curfew have separated many families, not just in different countries, but even inside a small country like Kuwait. On April 7, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Mahboula were subjected to isolation – cut off from the rest of the country. Then on May 10, a 24-hour curfew was imposed in the entire country. As a result, some families were separated from each other.

“Theresa”, a Filipina married to a Bangladeshi, who did not want to give her real name, chose to separate from her family in order to continue working. Her husband and children stayed at their apartment in Jleeb, but Theresa had a job in Shuwaikh, though not with her actual sponsor. So instead of going home when Jleeb was placed under isolation, she stayed with friends in Salmiya to be able to work.

Theresa, in her mid-50s, needed the salary because her husband, a taxi driver, had been out of work since the government suspended all taxi services on March 26. Moreover, her iqama had expired and she was working illegally with her new employer in Shuwaikh, and knew she would not be able to leave Jleeb to get to work.

Tens of thousands of workers locked inside Jleeb and Mahboula lost their income when the areas were isolated. In the first few days, basic necessities ran out as crowds rushed to buy groceries and fill cooking gas canisters. “I intend to return to my house in Jleeb, but I was afraid because my iqama with my old employer had expired, and I did not want to explain and deal with

authorities about it. I didn’t want to call my former boss because I didn’t want him to know that I had accepted a job elsewhere. I was still negotiating with them about my fate,” Theresa said.

“So I spoke to my current boss and she told me to live temporarily with my co-workers in Salmiya so I could work. My husband, my daughter and my son agreed to this arrangement, so throughout the lockdown period, I was living away from my family. Then on May 10, my husband died,” she said.

Theresa recalled talking to her husband on the telephone about the hardship and trouble-some times ahead of them. “I felt the stress in my husband’s voice and I was worried. I told him to calm down and we shall overcome these trials. I accepted the job despite the threat of coronavirus and being caught by the police because we have two more children studying in the Philippines. Both of them are in university, and we are also worried about their situation there. My husband stopped working since March 26 because he is a taxi driver and taxis were told to stop because of the pandemic,” she said.

“I knew he was worried and over-stressed, and that is why I always talked to him over the phone. I was very concerned with the fact that he could no longer go for regular checkups for his high blood pressure and diabetes. He skipped it for days because we did not have enough

money,” Theresa sobbed.

“On May 10, I received an urgent call from my daughter saying her dad was having a heart attack. I immediately called my current employer to help me reach the Jleeb fence near Ishbiliya. I was monitoring my husband’s condition through Facebook messenger. My two children were pumping their father’s chest so he could be revived. I told them not to stop, so my 23-year-old daughter and my 10-year-old son alternated pumping his chest. My daughter had called an ambulance earlier but it didn’t arrive quickly. In fact, I reached Jleeb ahead of the ambulance.

“Ambulance arrived 30 minutes after I arrived”

“At the gate I was crying hard, and told the police officer at the checkpoint to allow me to enter Jleeb because my husband was dying. I showed them the live chat with my children and I was happy that the police officer did not bother to ask for anything more, not even the civil ID card. They just allowed me to

enter the gate. I ran without feeling exhaustion until I reached our house near Jarallah Clinic. I think it was around five kilometers of running in the midday heat. When I arrived, my kids were terribly exhausted pumping and trying to revive their dad, but it was too late. The ambulance arrived 30 minutes after I arrived, and my husband by that time was no more. I blamed myself for working and that my husband died without me. I pray that no other families are separated like this,” Theresa said.

Now Theresa and her children are back in the Philippines. “He was buried in Kuwait since we are Muslim and he had to be buried within 24 hours. For us it was painful to see the head of the family living without any hope of returning back. I am getting strength from Allah and the support of both families in the Philippines and Bangladesh. I’ve been regularly talking to my children - I know they are devastated but we are okay, this is the will of Allah,” Theresa said.

But she has a problem. Her 10-year-old son could not be taken to the Philippines since he was not legally adopted by the family. “I didn’t want to leave him anywhere; I treat him as my own and I don’t want to leave him. I already sought the help of the Philippine Embassy years ago, but they asked too many papers and I didn’t have them. I hope the embassy will be able to help me so I could legally adopt him,” she said.

The boy was abandoned by his parents when he was 2.5 years old. The parents told them they were going for annual leave, but they never returned. The boy has no birth certificate because he was born inside the house to a Filipina mother and Bangladeshi father. “We totally lost communication with them immediately when they left Kuwait; maybe it was their plan. The boy believed we were his parents and was very close to my husband,” she said.

It is unclear how the boy’s circumstances will be resolved. “That is exactly the reason why I have to stay strong after the death of their father because I have children who are in schools and I have to take good care of them,” she concluded.

News in brief

Sports back in Sept?

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Football Association announced reaching a decision to resume all sport activities in Kuwait on September 11, 2020, pending approval of the Ministry of Health.

Customs clearance

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait General Administration of Customs said that its employees are working around the clock to finish customs clearance procedures, affirming that no delay penalties will be

Five flights

**KUWAIT:** The Directorate General of Civil Aviation announced that five flights departed from Kuwait International Airport yesterday, carrying a total of 1,159 passengers. They included one flight to Turkey, one flight to Qatar, one flight to India, one flight to Benin, and one flight to Pakistan.

Fake news

**KUWAIT:** The Civil Service Commission announced that rumors about sharing the database of their employees are false, affirming that the commission is using a highly secure data storage systems. The commission will take legal action against anyone that shared, claimed, or posted the fake news, it

Stock exchange on recess

**KUWAIT** Kuwait’s stock exchange, Boursa Kuwait, said it would go on a three-day break for the Eid Al-Fitr holidays starting Sunday. The stock exchange’s working hours will begin again on Wednesday, read a statement on its website. Trading closed on Tuesday with the stock market index up by 68.98 points to 4,894.35 points, representing a 1.43 percent leap. — KUNA

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed

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Established 1961  
The First Daily in the Arabian Gulf



# Officials examine plans for repatriating illegal residents

## Coordination with embassies to shoulder responsibility for facilitating departures

**KUWAIT:** Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, along with Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel, on Tuesday held a meeting for the team tasked with organizing return of residents to their countries with Interior Ministry Undersecretary Essam Al-Naham at the ministry headquarters. Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser, Minister Aqeel, Undersecretary Naham and other attending officials, examined the plan for repatriating the illegal residents during the meeting, held at the Foreign Ministry Headquarters.

The officials touched on measures undertaken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, coordinating with embassies of the concerned states so these missions would shoulder the legal responsibility for facilitating departure for their citizens. The meeting involved other officials, namely the head of the border committee Ambassador Majdi Al-Dhafiri, the assistant foreign minister for

Asia Ambassador Ali Al-Saeed, the assistant foreign minister for Africa Ambassador Abdulhamid Al-Failakawi and the assistant foreign minister for the minister bureau affairs Ambassador Dhari Al-Ejran.

The session was also attended by the assistant foreign minister for the minister bureau affairs Saleh Al-Loughani, the assistant foreign minister for development and international cooperation Nasser Al-Sebeeh, the deputy assistant of the foreign minister for consular affairs Anas Al-Shahin and other ministry officials.

The Interior Ministry had 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. While thousands have already left Kuwait, thousands others remain in shelters in the country pending repatriation amidst the global pandemic that shut down air traffic around the world.

The amnesty was issued in view of the circum-

The quarantine site is located at the firemen preparation center, which was sterilized twice by the health ministry and Mubarak Al-Kabeer hazardous material center. Attending the opening ceremony were Deputy Director General for Financial and Administrative Affairs Maj Gen Saleh Al-Ansari, Deputy Director General for Fire Fighting Sector Maj Gen Jamal Albulaihees, Deputy Director General for Human Resources Development Maj Gen Mohammad Al-Shatti, Director of Public Relations Brig Khalil Al-Amir, Director of Firemen Preparation Center Col Abdallah Al-Ansari, and Health Ministry official Dr Ali Al-Radaan.

In other news, KFSD warned elevator companies in a statement Tuesday that strict measures will be taken against any company that fails to comply with the licensing conditions in regards to maintenance as per contracts signed with their customers, noting that companies would face legal action if they do anything beyond that. The warning comes following the appearance of ads on social media in which



**KUWAIT:** (From left) Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and Interior Ministry Undersecretary Essam Al-Naham attend the meeting. —KUNA

stances 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.

## KFSD opens firemen's health quarantine

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** As instructed by Deputy Premier, Interior Minister, State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) Director General Khaled Al-Mikrad opened the firemen's health quarantine, which was prepared in cooperation with the health ministry with a capacity of 100 beds and can be expanded later. The quarantine site has a 24-hour clinic to check firemen and take swabs from those infected or suspected to be infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).



companies offer to enroll volunteers wishing to help rescue any persons that might get trapped in elevators during curfew. Volunteers might be exposed to danger if they deal with such tasks that should only be handled by qualified personnel, it noted.



## Kuwaiti students help Jordanians in coronavirus crisis

**AMMAN:** A number of Kuwaiti students enrolled in Jordanian universities have taken part in the initiative "Watan," launched by the Jordanian doctors association for deployment on the field to face the novel coronavirus. Kuwait's Ambassador to Jordan, Aziz Al-Dihani, said in a statement on Tuesday the Kuwaiti students were helping with their Jordanian peers in treatment and epidemic tracing teams.

Samaa Al-Bloushi, a Kuwaiti medicine student, said she had joined three medical teams since registering in the campaign last March. Bloushi delivers medicines to those in need during curfew hours that extended in some recent periods for 12 hours. She had also taken part in tasks by the epidemic tracers, conducting swab tests in a number of Jordanian regions and provinces.

Her peer, Zayed Al-Enezi, has also participated in the infection tracing missions, delivering the samples to a laboratory in the district of Al-Abdali in the Jordanian capital. Another Kuwaiti medicine student, Ibrahim Al-Bzai, said he had been involved in distribution of medicines in various regions of the kingdom.

Jordan recorded the first coronavirus infection case in early March. In the middle of the month, Amman declared a chain of precautionary measures against the contagion, suspending schools, travel, banning peoples' gatherings in public and imposing curfew. The government has recently adopted a plan for gradual resumption of regular life including work in public sector as of May 26. Authorities have declared nine deaths from the contagion in addition to 629 infections as of Tuesday. —KUNA



In my view

## Corona the Invisible

By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

I know and understand that we are all tired of hearing the word "corona", but do you not agree with me that it is living among us, and we all should be behaving in a way to avoid it? Do you know that this coronavirus cannot live outside a cell for long, regardless for a few hours or days? So it is our behavior that is the most potent medicine against it.

Coronavirus is making governments mobilize all their capabilities to fight it - even military personnel are found in force on streets to help in the war against it. The hidden danger of this enemy is that it fights on two fronts simultaneously with the same power and force - one for being invisible, as people may not be careful enough when they are out gathering in close proximities, and being in markets and shops very close together, to a point that forced authorities to enforce tougher rules to impose a partial then full curfew, in addition to other measures in an attempt to stop it from spreading.

Now we are hearing about new cases in large numbers, and this may be due to earlier contacts or even continued contacts with those who are infected but are asymptomatic. So please do not take anything easy or become bored or complacent towards this pandemic. Let us remember that some countries that declared they were coronavirus free made a U-turn and started to announce new cases! Let us be patient and vigilant while fighting to get the opportunity to declare victory!

There are talks about opening up the country, even if gradually, and as I mentioned about the GCC Health Council booklet in the past two days, there is one part of it that covered behavior in offices. The booklet reminded employers of a few things that they should consider carefully. The employer is advised to have flexible policies towards sick leaves that agree with instructions of public health authorities, while employees should be aware of them. He is also advised to have policies to allow employees to stay home to care for a sick person or care for children.

It asks that no large meetings be held while maintaining a two meter distance between employees and gives instructions to that effect. Again, no shaking hands and making sure sanitizers and masks are available in the office. The employee on the other hand should follow the office's rules and procedures, avoid use of phones, offices and equipment of others, and clean them if necessary before use. Employees must clean surfaces and things that are frequently used including keyboards, phones, door handles and so on.

Finally: "Patience is not the ability to wait, but the

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Local

Kuwait Heritage



KUWAIT: A picture dating back to the 1970s, showing a gathering of people watching a seller and a buyer engaging in a heated argument over orange prices at a fruits' stall in a market in Kuwait. (Source: 'Kuwait Miracle on the Desert,' by David Cooke, New York, 1970. Researched by Mohammed Zakaria Abu El-Ella, Researcher in Heritage, the Ministry of Information)

# COVID-19 did not curtail Kuwait's humanitarian efforts

## Total lockdown made no exception to continue supporting those in need

**KUWAIT:** The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Kuwait announced yesterday its collaboration with Kuwaiti social media influencer, Bader Al-Essa, to raise awareness on the current situation of refugees, highlight their successful entrepreneurship stories, and amplify its Ramadan campaign "Every gift counts" (Khayrak Yefraq), to youth in Kuwait.

The campaign was launched in the beginning of Ramadan by UNHCR in partnership with Tanmeia Charity and was heavily boosted by Bader Al-Essa on his social media platforms to acquaint Kuwaiti youth with the effects of COVID-19 on refugees and UNHCR's humanitarian response.

"The generous support of Kuwait never fails to surprise us. In less than a month, UNHCR have collected donations that would support five percent of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh," said Nader El-Nakib, Head of UNHCR's Private Sector Partnerships Department in Kuwait. "By no means, Kuwaiti youth have proven their humanitarian DNA by supporting our campaign. I would like to thank Bader Al-Essa for offering his social media platforms to highlight the entrepreneurial success stories of Refugees. This cooperation will go beyond the Ramadan campaign," added Nakib.

In another statement, Bader Al-Essa has stressed on the importance of youth engagement in humanitarian causes and utilizing his social media platform as a tool to showcase the current status of refugees to his followers.

"With the numbers of refugees increasing on daily basis and the unmet dire needs of the most vulnerable populations,



Bader Al-Essa



Nader El-Nakib

the general public are becoming numb to the cause given that it has been an ongoing crisis for the past years," explained Essa. "I believe that the Arab population need to find a glimpse of hope and be well acquainted of the refugee situation so we can revive the cause and collectively support those who are currently affected by the situation," added Essa.

The campaign supports the education, food, water, and healthcare programs provided by UNHCR to refugees in Rohingya and Syria. The collaboration between UNHCR and Bader Al-Essa included a series of Instagram LIVE interviews showcasing the needs of refugees, particularly in Lebanon.

samples of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Dr Duwairi highlighted that "while all virus sequences show a slight variation to one another, the genetic sequence gathered from these samples shows a slight similarity to the strain in Wuhan, China and Germany, with some genetic differences. Our researchers have found that the COVID-19 strain found in other European countries is a diversified and mutated version of the virus."

Dr Duwairi continues by stating that everyone is susceptible to the virus. However, older people and those with pre-existing or underlying medical conditions are at a high risk of becoming severely ill with the virus. High risk conditions are dependent on age (65 years or older), diabetes, moderate to severe asthma, serious heart conditions, autoimmune diseases, obesity, liver disease and kidney disease.

"My advice to everyone is to first listen to the information and guidelines given to you by the MoH and the government. Wash your hands regularly. Maintain social distancing. Avoid touching your eyes, face and mouth. Monitor your blood glucose levels to maintain good glucose control. Any infection will raise your glucose levels. Make sure you have a supply of your diabetes medication."



Dr Qais Al-Duwairi

### Diabetes institute develops model to study COVID-19 spread

**KUWAIT:** Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and Kuwait University, recently developed a model to study the spread of coronavirus infection in Kuwait. This model is called the Predictive Mathematical Model SARS COV 2.

Dr Qais Al-Duwairi, Director General of DDI, explained that the Predictive Mathematical Model SARS COV 2 takes into consideration geographic location, or where you live in Kuwait, and demographic information like age, ethnicity, gender, marital status, income, education, and employment. "We use this information to stimulate the current reality in Kuwait and evaluate a virus containment strategy before its application," he said.

Dr Duwairi also stated that this model and its capabilities have been offered to the MoH to support their efforts to contain the virus. DDI has also cooperated with the MoH to carry out genetic sequencing of the COVID-19 virus. Dr Duwairi continues by stating that "This is a part of the active support and cooperation between the ministry and DDI that allows us to utilize our scientific expertise to further study COVID-19."

In collaboration with the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), DDI sequenced four

## Signs

By Dr Teresa Leshner

I was driving home one day when I spotted this sign on the road: "Camera ahead - 80." I thought, how nice of the traffic department to warn us that a camera is ahead and remind us that the speed limit is 80 km/hr. I drove ahead and looked for the camera. Sure enough, about 100 meters from the sign was the camera, barely visible behind a tree branch. I realized that many such signs are placed along the road - they warn us of danger, give us directions or information, prohibit certain actions, and even relate good news such as "sale!" or "opening soon." To all those who invest in signs to help us on our way - thank you.

Not only on the roads are there signs. God said He placed them throughout the universe and within our own selves. But what do they say and where do they lead? For those who think, ponder, and reflect, the signs tell him a lot about the Creator of our world and relate certain facts of our existence. But not everyone is paying attention to the natural phenomena around us and analyzing their meanings. So our Creator did us a great favor by spelling out His signs in a more obvious way. One by one, over 6,000 signs are catalogued in human language in what is known as the Quran. The "signs" share information, give directions, demarcate boundaries, prohibit dangerous actions, relate good news and give very clear warnings. Here is a sample of God's signs from the Quran:

**Information:** God (Himself) bears witness that there is no god but Him, as do the angels and those with knowledge - He is the One upholding justice. There is no god but Him, the Almighty, Most Wise. (3:18)

**Directions:** ...And establish regular prayer for My remembrance. [20:14]

**Prohibitions:** ...Indeed, intoxicants and gambling... are but defilement from the works of Satan, so shun them so that you may be successful. (5:90)

**Good News:** Verily, the dwellers of Paradise that Day, will be busy in joyful things. They and their spouses will be in pleasant shade, reclining on thrones. They will have therein fruits (of all kinds), and all that they will ask for. 'Peace' shall be the word from a Merciful Lord. [36:55-58]

Investment Opportunities: Who is he that

will lend to God a goodly loan so that He may multiply it for him many times over? (2:245). Indeed, the charitable men and the charitable women who have loaned God a goodly loan shall have it multiplied for them by their Lord. So for them, there is a gracious reward awaiting in the Hereafter. (57:18)

**Advice:** Do not turn your cheek to people in contempt, and do not walk upon the earth proudly exultant. Indeed, God loves no one who is smug, boastful. (31:18)

**Warnings:** Indeed, God will not forgive associating any god with Him. But He forgives anything less than this for whomever He so wills. Thus, whoever associates gods with God has truly strayed far astray! (4:116) Truly Hell is waiting - a destination for the transgressors. (78:21-22).

**Corrections:** Righteousness in the sight of God is not the mere turning of your faces toward the East or the West. Rather, true righteousness dwells in one who believes in God and the Last Day, and in the angels, and the Book, and in the prophets; it dwells in one who, despite his love for it, gives of his wealth in charity to close relatives and orphans, and to the indigent and the wayfarer, and to beggars and for the emancipation of slaves; it dwells in one who establishes the Prayer and gives charity, and those who fulfill their covenant when they make a covenant, as well as in those who are patient during periods of affliction and harm and times of conflict. These are the ones who have been truehearted, and it is such as these who are the God-fearing. (2:177)

The signs are presented in various ways and repeated often to make sure the reader understands them and the correlations between them. Some of the signs mention the signs themselves: "(Here) indeed are signs for a people that are wise." (2:164). "Thus does God make clear His signs to you, in order that you may be guided." (3:103). "We will show them Our Signs in the universe, and in their own selves, until it becomes manifest to them that this [Qur'an] is the Truth" (41:53).

To our Creator, who gave us these signs to help us on our way - thank you!

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

# International

THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2020



Super cyclone hits Bangladesh, India

Divorce, harassment, organ donors: China to debate new civil code

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BANGALORE: Commuters and Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) buses drive along a road as bus services resume after the government eased a nationwide lockdown against the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus in Bangalore. —AFP

## Lives not lost: Asia sees gains in lockdowns

### Unexpected gains: Fewer crashes and crimes

**PATHUMTHANI:** Emergency workers usually busy attending accidents on Thailand's roads mill around ambulances parked at a service station - fewer crashes and crimes a welcome outcome for several Asian countries during coronavirus lockdowns. As Asia starts to assess the damage caused by the pandemic, some countries are realizing there have been unforeseen benefits.

Vietnam's nationwide isolation has seen a drop in crime. Hong Kong has hailed an early end to its annual flu season - and now, Thailand is seeing a much-needed win in road safety. "Accidents have gone down quite a lot," said Banjerd Premjit, chief of the Por Tek Tung emergency medical team operating just outside Bangkok. In Pathum Thani province, where his team of three ambulances normally rush to about 15 grisly crashes a night, accidents have dropped by half. He credited Thailand's virus-fuelled measures, including a ban on alcohol sales and a nighttime curfew. "People drink less and they're less reckless on the roads," Banjerd said as

his fellow medics played mobile games while waiting for the next emergency call.

#### Empty coffins

Thailand has one of the highest rates of road fatalities per capita in the world, coming second only to war-torn Libya in 2015. The country brought in its anti-coronavirus measures before the "Songkran" New Year in April, hoping to discourage booze-soaked gatherings. The week-long holiday is marked annually by a jump in traffic accidents as drink-drivers on scooters add to the road carnage. But this year saw a 60 percent decrease nationwide, with the death toll dropping to 167 from 386 people the year before. Even Thailand's coffin makers have seen a dip in demand, with one factory reporting orders are down by a third. "The outbreak has led to a significant decrease in the number of casualties," lamented Thanat Poonau, manager of Suriya Coffin Factory, as workers around him fed plywood to mechanical saws.

Regional neighbors with traffic-clogged megacities are reporting similar trends. Deaths from road accidents in Japan fell by nearly 20 percent in April, while Malaysia saw daily fatalities decrease from 17 to five, according to official news agency Bernama. This year's figures are even promising in India, which normally records 150,000 fatalities each year on its chaotic roads. Police said the death toll in the southwestern state of Kerala sank by 90 percent during the lockdown, compared with the same period last year. "Rapes also fell from 123 to 37 cases during the lockdown," Kerala police spokesman Pramod Kumar told AFP.

#### Less flu, blue skies

When the coronavirus hit Hong Kong in late January, residents scarred by memories of the 2003 SARS outbreak flocked to buy masks and immediately embraced social distancing. With millions practicing better hygiene, doctors noticed the annual winter flu season came to an abrupt end

in February - nine weeks early with less than a third of last year's deaths. On the mainland empty roads and shuttered factories meant killer toxic pollutants dissipated. Scientists estimate China's improved air quality averted more than 12,000 cardiovascular-related deaths, although warned in the Lancet journal their results should be "interpreted with caution".

The environmental gains seen during a global lockdown have scientists and celebrities calling for a "radical transformation" to save the planet instead of a return to normal. But many businesses want the restrictions lifted as soon as possible. Suriya Coffin Factory has had to donate coffins to walk-in customers who cannot afford to put their loved ones to rest, said manager Thanat. A sustained mortality slowdown would almost certainly sound the death knell for their business, he added. "If the outbreak is protracted, we might have to downsize our production even more... we need to cut costs on almost everything." — AFP

## US virus deaths projected to top 113,000 by June

**WASHINGTON:** Coronavirus-related deaths among Americans are projected to surpass 113,000 by mid-June, a modeling average released Tuesday showed, underlining the US status as the nation worst affected by the pandemic. The United States has recorded more than 1.5 million confirmed COVID-19 infections and 91,600 fatalities as of Tuesday, but a projection compiled from nine models from separate institutions predicted roughly 22,000 more Americans would succumb to the disease over the next 25 days.

"The new forecast for cumulative US deaths by June 13 is about 113,000, with a 10 percent chance of seeing fewer than about 107,000 and a 10 percent chance of seeing more than 121,000," the COVID-19 Forecast Hub at the University of Massachusetts said on its website. The specific ensemble forecast average is 113,364 deaths by that date. The latest projections come as most US states take steps - some minor, some more substantial - to re-open their shuttered economies and communities while facing the challenge of instilling confidence among Americans that it is safe to begin returning to normal.

The US government in April released guidelines on phased re-openings that included criteria which individual states were



NEW YORK: Lily Sage Weinrieb transfers remains from a NYC hospital in New York City. —AFP

expected to meet before they began returning to normal, including a downward trajectory of new cases over a 14-day period. Several states have been accused of re-opening despite failing to meet the specific criteria. Hopes of curtailing the pandemic have proven elusive. Two weeks ago, President Donald Trump said the US will

lose "anywhere from 75, 80 to 100,000 people." On April 10 he predicted US virus deaths would be "substantially below the 100,000" figure, and perhaps even as low as half that. The novel coronavirus has killed more than 322,000 people worldwide since it emerged in Wuhan, China late last year. — AFP

## UK virus toll over 41,000, with 10,000 care homes deaths

**LONDON:** Britain's official coronavirus death toll is at least 41,000 with almost 10,000 dead in care homes in England and Wales alone, according to a statistical update released on Tuesday. Some 41,020 deaths where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate were registered across the UK by May 8, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

With hundreds of deaths still being reported each day, it means the current toll, already the highest in Europe and second only to the United States in the global rankings, is likely to be even higher. The government's official rolling tally only records deaths after positive tests, and on Tuesday stood at 35,341, up 545 on the day before. The ONS figures show a sharp fall in coronavirus deaths in the week up to May 8, reinforcing ministers' claims that Britain is past the peak. Deaths in care homes fell at a slower rate than the population at large, and the total number of deaths in care homes in England and Wales now stands at 9,975.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government has come under intense criticism for its handling of the outbreak, notably for the time it took to introduce widespread testing. A

cross-party parliamentary committee on Tuesday criticized the decision to initially concentrate testing in a limited number of laboratories. "From it followed the decision on March 12 to cease testing in the community and retreat to testing principally within hospitals," it said, warning this left care home residents untested. At the government's daily media briefing, England's deputy chief scientific adviser, Angela McLean, admitted that limited capacity had driven strategy on testing.

"It was the best thing to do with the tests that we had. We could not have people in hospital with Covid symptoms not knowing whether or not they had Covid," she said. Health Secretary Matt Hancock earlier told parliament he was encouraged that care home deaths were falling. A total of 62 percent of care homes in England had no reported cases of COVID-19 at all, he added. Just over a quarter (27 percent) of all deaths in England from the virus were in such places, compared with a European average of about half, he told MPs. "We will not rest from doing whatever is humanly possible to protect our care homes from this appalling virus," he said. — AFP

## International

# Brazil COVID-19 deaths surge as pandemic bites in Latin America

## Brazil surpasses 1,000 coronavirus deaths in 24 hours

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Brazil recorded its highest number of coronavirus deaths in a day as Latin America began to feel the full force of the pandemic, while the World Health Organization agreed to investigate its response to the crisis. With infections rapidly approaching five million, deaths topping 320,000 and the global economy devastated, there are fears that the worst is yet to come for the poorer parts of the world as they desperately try to contain the spread of the virus.

There was an alarming surge on Tuesday in Brazil as daily COVID-19 deaths crossed 1,000 for the first time, but far-right President Jair Bolsonaro remains bitterly opposed to lockdowns, having described them as unnecessary over a "little flu". "Our country is going from bad to worse, it is getting worse," said retiree Gilberto Ferreira in Rio de Janeiro. "We have an inefficient government, and the people also do not obey the rules of the pandemic."

Infections in Brazil - already the third-highest globally - were also climbing by the thousands, with the outbreak in the world's sixth-largest country expected to accelerate and not peak until early June. The coronavirus surge in Latin America has forced some areas to suspend their plans to loosen restrictions, with Argentina's second city Cordoba rolling back plans to ease a lockdown because of a spike in infections. There have been warnings about the impact of the pandemic on the least privileged communities, and World Bank chief David Malpass said Tuesday that up to 60 million people could be "pushed into extreme poverty".

In a worrying illustration of the mounting economic pressure, Chile - which is also suffering from a sharp rise in cases - deployed soldiers on the outskirts of its locked-down capital Santiago after clashes with protesters angry about food shortages and job losses. "They don't have jobs, they are locked up in their house, they can't go out to look for work," said Jorge, an unemployed carpenter. "They are forcing the Chilean, the worker, to



**Our country is going from bad to worse**

go out and steal." On the other side of the world, authorities were scrambling to move people to safety while also trying to prevent the spread of the coronavirus as the fiercest cyclone in decades in the Bay of Bengal bore down on millions of people in eastern India and Bangladesh.

### 'Permanent damage'

The grim numbers from Latin America came as the World Health Organization agreed to launch an independent investigation into its handling of the outbreak after scathing attacks from the United States, which is locked in a feud with Beijing over the pandemic. President Donald Trump has threatened to permanently cut US funding to the WHO, accusing the UN body of being a "puppet of China" and helping Beijing cover up the initial outbreak.

China has furiously denied the allegation, saying the US is making such claims to "shirk responsibility and bargain over its international obligations to the WHO". Russia has denounced Trump's threat, and the European Union has also backed the WHO, saying it was "not the time for finger pointing". The row has threatened efforts to coordinate a global response to the pandemic, but the American president has dug in and continued to target China and the WHO as he faces intense domestic pressure to find a way out of the crisis.

The United States is the worst-hit country in the world, with more than 91,000 COVID-19 deaths and 1.5 million cases, and many are wearying of the social distancing measures that have hammered the world's biggest economy and left tens of millions unemployed. Trump is keen to see an end to confinement measures in the US with the presidential election due in November, and his Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin warned the American economy risks suffering "permanent damage" the longer the lockdown continues.

were also killed and 55 others wounded in the overall violence that rocked the city, Kunduz provincial health director Ehsanullah Afzali said. An air strike also hit and partially damaged a clinic in the nearby district of Chardara but there were no reports of casualties, he added. Both the Taliban and Afghan forces have clashed repeatedly in rural areas in recent months, but an attempt to enter a city as large as Kunduz is seen as a serious escalation.

### Attack on mosque

Meanwhile, gunmen stormed a mosque in Khelalzai village in the province of Parwan, north of Kabul, and opened fire on worshippers offering evening prayers. "Seven people have been killed and 12 wounded. The gunmen have fled the area," Parwan police chief Haroon Mubarez told AFP. The ministry of interior confirmed the incident but provided a slightly higher death toll, saying eight had been killed. The latest violence follows a declaration by President Ashraf Ghani last week to resume offensive strikes against the insurgents following a string of brutal attacks. The Taliban responded by vowing to increase assaults against Afghan security forces. The defense ministry said 40 Taliban fighters were killed and 50 others wounded in the Kunduz assault.

Afghan officials and the Taliban frequently exaggerate claims of casualties. The Taliban briefly cap-

address," she said, adding that rumors were spread that she "contracted the virus by sleeping with white people".

Fatou, who was confined to her room until she tested negative, was then forced to spend two weeks in isolation in a hotel despite having no symptoms because the doctors tracking her case had received "anonymous calls", she said. This at least gave her a respite "from the gossip", she said. Some 3,000 kilometers away in Gabon, Jocelyn, a biologist who tests suspect cases in Libreville, said he is subjected to similar discrimination on a daily basis. His team tries to keep a low profile when they visit homes, even if it means endangering their own health. "We put our suits on inside rather than on the front steps," he said. "The Gabonese people panic at the idea of us coming to their homes," he added.

### Psychological cost

In neighbouring Cameroon, a landlord evicted a tenant who tested positive for coronavirus, Yap Boum, an epidemiologist in Yaounde said. The stigma attached to the virus is not unique to Africa. "But here we tend to be more communal, we know our neighbors," Boum said. Many people prefer to keep

had more than 50,000 views on the TikTok video-sharing platform. As coronavirus curbs trap victims under the same roof as abusers, the United Nations has called domestic violence a "shadow pandemic", and the issue has led to a flurry of online campaigns by charities, celebrities and ordinary social media users.

Inundated with positive responses to her video, McGoldrick plans to share more advice posts with backing from the local police youth volunteer group to which she belongs. Some of the anti-abuse posts circulating on social media are proving more controversial, however. There has been criticism of a trend on TikTok in which young women wear lurid fake blood makeup to depict domestic violence scenarios. Critics say such videos could upset victims and often appear more clickbait than



**MANAUS:** Employees work at Viana Funeral services to meet the increased demand, during the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic in Manaus, Brazil, where the City Hall has warned that stock of coffins in the region is likely to run out. —AFP

### Dramatic CO2 drop

Since first emerging in central China late last year, the virus has transformed life and business around the world with its impact felt in multiple ways, from once-busy city centers falling silent to significant environmental changes. Researchers reported Tuesday that global carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels are set to drop by up to seven percent in 2020 because of the pandemic, the sharpest decline since World War II. But the dramatic drop would still "make barely a dent in the ongoing build-up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere", said Richard Betts, head of climate impacts research at Britain's Met Office Hadley Centre.

The sports world is also expected to be strikingly

different from before the pandemic, with mandatory testing, quarantines, strict social distancing guidelines and empty, echoing arenas expected to be the norm for the foreseeable future. German top-flight football has already resumed, and the globally popular English Premier League is conducting mass testing of players and staff in a bid to restart next month. But it faces resistance with players voicing concerns about their well-being and spreading the virus to their families. "I can't get a haircut until mid-July, but I can go and get in a box with 19 people and jump for a header," Troy Deeney of Premier League club Watford said on the Talk The Talk podcast. "I don't know how that works." —AFP

## 8 Afghan soldiers die as troops fight off Taliban attack

**KUNDUZ:** Eight Afghan soldiers were killed on Tuesday while repelling a fierce Taliban attack on Kunduz, a strategic city in northern Afghanistan that had briefly fallen to the militants twice in the past, officials said. In a separate incident north of the capital Kabul, gunmen opened fire on worshippers offering evening prayers at a mosque, killing at least seven people and wounding 12, police said.

Fighting erupted during the night in Kunduz as Taliban fighters attacked several government posts on the outskirts of the city at around 1:00 am Tuesday, a defense ministry statement said. "With the support of air force their attack was repelled," it said, adding the fighting lasted for several hours. Defense Minister Assadullah Khalid, who visited Kunduz later on Tuesday, said the Taliban had "suffered big losses". "Unfortunately, we have also lost eight brave soldiers," he told reporters.

The insurgents managed to briefly capture an Afghan army post during Tuesday's fighting but it was quickly retaken by security forces, army spokesman Hadi Jamal told AFP. Three civilians

## Coronavirus stigma weighing heavily on sub-Saharan Africa

**LIBREVILLE:** Landlords evict people from their homes, nurses are abandoned by their husbands and people are spurned just on suspicion of coming into contact with a COVID-19 patient. Across sub-Saharan Africa, the stigma attached to the coronavirus is so strong that some choose not to seek treatment to avoid facing unbearable hostility. People suspected of having contracted COVID-19 say they are treated like pariahs: singled out at work, in their neighborhoods and even in their homes.

Fatou, a Senegalese woman in her twenties who did not use her real name, described her bitter experience about a month ago after coming into contact with a sick person. She was immediately confined to her room and ostracized by people in her community. "Messages have been circulating on social media with my first name, surname and

## As lockdown fuels abuse, social media users fight back

**LONDON:** When British teenager Kaitlyn McGoldrick heard domestic violence was increasing under lockdown, she posted a video on social media showing victims how to make a silent emergency call to police without their attackers finding out. "I just wanted to get the message out there that there are still places you can go," said McGoldrick, 14, a volunteer police cadet whose post has



**Kabul:** A woman wearing a burqa holds her child as she waits to receive free wheat from the government emergency committee during a government-imposed lockdown on the capital city yesterday. —AFP

Tajikistan border, twice before - in September 2015 and again a year later. An attempt last year failed. During the fight for the city in 2015 US air strikes destroyed a Doctors Without Borders hospital in Kunduz, killing 42 people. The latest attack on the city came a day after the Taliban killed at least seven Afghan intelligence personnel with a car bomb in the eastern province of Ghazni. And last week, gunmen stormed a maternity hospital in Kabul killing 24, including mothers and infants. —AFP



**DAKAR:** Muslim worshippers take their places whilst keeping up with social distancing practices before prayer at the Mosque of the Mourides. —AFP

to themselves when they develop symptoms. Some have died because they delayed seeking medical treatment for fear of being associated with the virus, according to Boum, who is the director of Doctors Without Borders' African research centre. "The psychological aspect must be taken into account if we want to win this battle," he said. —AFP

genuine campaigning. Domestic violence campaign groups have also expressed concerns about posts inviting victims to get in touch for support instead of directing them to more expert advice.

Still, most campaigners say attention-grabbing posts and videos have shone a spotlight on violence within the family, which is often cloaked in shame and fear that stops many victims seeking help. "We need and appreciate attention on this critical and all-too-often hidden issue," Latanya Mapp Frett, chief executive of the Global Fund for Women said. While celebrities from Russian punk band Pussy Riot to Bollywood stars have spoken out in anti-domestic violence campaigns, the vast majority of online posts are shared by ordinary social media users. —Reuters

## Europe slowly exits lockdown

**STOCKHOLM:** Sweden has taken a soft approach to virus restrictions and although its rules are likely to be in place longer than in other countries, officials are adamant their strategy is a winner in the long term. "This fight against COVID-19 is a marathon," Prime Minister Stefan Lofven said recently, adding that his officials "strongly believe" their measures are viable for the long haul.

While people in other European countries have gradually begun returning to their workplaces in recent weeks, Swedes have been strongly advised to continue working from home, and possibly not just for weeks, but for months to come. The European Union has started planning for a phased restart of travel this summer but Sweden has told its residents they will have to holiday at home, extending a non-essential travel advisory until at least July 15 - the middle of the country's main holiday month. Other restrictions on travel, sport and care-home visits are also likely to remain in place even while other countries try to re-emerge from lockdowns.

However, Sweden never imposed full lockdown measures - under-16s have continued to go to school, patrons have not been stopped from going to cafes, bars and restaurants. Although people have been urged to limit contacts and practice social distancing, the restrictions are advisory. "It's apparently reasonably easy to start a lockdown, but stopping it is much more difficult," state epidemiologist Anders Tegnell of the Public Health Agency told AFP. He noted the difficulty of getting people to follow recommendations when "one day you're supposed to do this and the next you're supposed to do something else".

### 'Future model'

Some have accused Sweden of playing Russian roulette with citizens' lives by allowing the virus to circulate slowly in society, with the main goal being to ensure the public healthcare system can keep pace. The consequences are difficult to miss - Sweden's death rate stood at 371 per million inhabitants on Tuesday, roughly eight times the rate in Norway and Finland, according to the Worldometer website. However, although Sweden's hospitals have reported strained conditions, they have not been overwhelmed. At the Danderyd Hospital in Stockholm's north, Klara Bergmark, head of the intensive care unit, told AFP that staff may be tired, but they are preparing to work at a heightened level over the summer and potentially "the whole year". "Endurance is very important here, to be able to do this for a long time," Bergmark said.

Sweden's approach may be tough on some sections of society, but some experts see it as far-sighted, especially as one recent report from the University of Minnesota suggested "significant COVID-19 activity" was likely to be around for at least another two years. "If we wish to get back to a society in which we don't have lockdowns, then society may need to adapt for a medium or potentially a longer period of time," WHO's emergency chief Michael Ryan told a press conference in late April, suggesting Sweden could be a "future model".

"I think there may be lessons to be learnt from our colleagues in Sweden." Unfazed by the criticism of Sweden's strategy, epidemiologist Tegnell said it was still too early to say whether an initial lockdown phase in Sweden - like those in neighboring countries - would have limited its mortality rate. —AFP

## International

# Australia opens up domestic life further as China dispute lingers

## Victoria confirms use of COVID-Safe smartphone tracking app

**MELBOURNE:** Australian officials announced a raft of plans yesterday to speed up the resumption of public life to boost the ailing economy amid a diplomatic spat with major trading partner China. The government is also talking with Australian universities about allowing the return of some international students, a sector that contributes more than A\$30 billion (\$19.6 billion) to domestic coffers.

New South Wales, the country's most populous state, will allow people to resume recreational travel from next month, effectively re-opening tourist regions on its southern coast that were badly damaged by huge bushfires before the epidemic. "We will play our part as the largest state, traditionally the economic powerhouse of the nation, to make sure we generate as much economic activity as possible in a safe environment," NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian said. "We want people to enjoy themselves, to feel free, but at the same time please know that nothing we do is the same during a pandemic."

Australia has reported just over 7,000 infections, including 100 deaths, and has completed around 1.1 million tests among its population of 25 million. Health Minister Greg Hunt said just 11 new cases were logged over the past 24 hours. Australia's states and territories are implementing a three-step federal government plan to unwind lockdown measures that have been in place for two months, but the staggered pace means different restrictions around the country at any

point in time.

South Australia state said it planned to move more quickly to phase two, allowing more people to enjoy eating and drinking in restaurants and bars. Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania, which have all reported low numbers of cases, are keeping state borders closed. The resumption of business and social life across the country comes amid a dispute with China over Australia's leading role in the push for a global inquiry into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic.

China this week supported a comprehensive review by the World Health Organization (WHO), but has been angered by what it views as a more targeted inquiry pushed by Australia. China has attacked Australia's lobbying for an inquiry as "political maneuvering". Beijing last week banned some major Australian meat exporters, citing labeling breaches, and this week placed hefty anti-dumping and anti-subsidy tariffs on barley imports from Australia. "We would be disappointed if there was any process of conflating these issues," Foreign Affairs Minister Marise Payne told Australian Broadcasting Corp radio.

The Chinese embassy in Canberra on Tuesday derided as "a joke" the Australian assertion the WHO resolution, first proposed by the European Union, was a vindication of its push for a global review. An editorial in China's Global Times newspaper yesterday cited an anonymous comment made in a Weibo post that referred to Australia as a "giant



**SYDNEY:** People wearing face masks walk through a shopping district in central Sydney. Almost 100 people have died and 7,000 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Australia, but with new daily infections now in low double digits, the government has been keen to reopen the economy.—AFP

kangaroo that serves the dog of the US." The disagreement could affect universities' plans to lure back pupils. Chinese students account for almost 40% of Australia's international higher education population.

In Victoria, the country's second most populous state, health authorities revealed they were using a controversial smartphone contact tracing app for the

first time to track the movements of an infected person. Almost 6 million Australians have downloaded the COVID-safe app, still short of the 40% of 18 million smartphone users the government has said would make it an effective tool, amid privacy concerns about the use of the data. Authorities have said the use of the app is restricted to state health officials but have so far provided limited detail on its use.—Reuters



### Govt considers return of foreign students

ing". Beijing last week banned some major Australian meat exporters, citing labeling breaches, and this week placed hefty anti-dumping and anti-subsidy tariffs on barley imports from Australia. "We would be disappointed if there was any process of conflating these issues," Foreign Affairs Minister Marise Payne told Australian Broadcasting Corp radio.

## Haunted by virus, China gears up for annual congress

**BEIJING:** China's biggest political event of the year opens tomorrow after months of delay over coronavirus fears, with President Xi Jinping determined to project strength and control over the outbreak despite international criticism and a wounded economy. The 3,000 members of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's legislature, will gather in Beijing this week in highly choreographed meetings to rubber-stamp bills, budgets and personnel moves. The annual gatherings have been occasions for the Communist Party to tout its achievements, set the country's economic agenda and consolidate Xi's power. But this year's congress comes on the back of the biggest challenge of Xi's political life, with a virus that has killed thousands of people, paralyzed the world's second-biggest economy and sparked a bout of online criticism of the government.

The Communist Party put off the "Two Sessions", originally scheduled for March, for the first time since the Cultural Revolution as the country battled the coronavirus, which surfaced in the central city of Wuhan late last year. Since

then, China's official case numbers have dwindled even as millions were infected abroad, with Beijing now positioning itself as a success story and potential savior for the world, offering billions of dollars in aid to fight the virus. "This year's Two Sessions will likely be an occasion for Xi Jinping to declare complete victory in the 'people's war' over the virus," Diana Fu, a professor of political science at the University of Toronto, told AFP.

But the atmosphere will continue to be "solemn and tense" amid fears of new infections, Gu Su, a professor of law and philosophy at Nanjing University, said. The congress is expected to span seven days this year instead of the usual two weeks, state media reported. Government officials who are not NPC representatives have been ordered to use video links and conference calls to observe the meetings instead of attending them in person, according to the official Xinhua news agency. Journalists have been asked to follow most meetings via online video, while those living outside China have not been invited to report on the sessions.



**BEIJING:** A paramilitary police officer wearing a face mask following the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak stands guard outside the media centre before a news conference by the spokesman for the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in Beijing.—AFP

Beijing has sought to turn the pandemic into a propaganda victory despite earlier public discontent about the government's handling of the crisis, with Xi declaring in March that the virus had been "basically curbed". The central government has focused the blame for the pandemic's early spread on local officials in the hardest-hit Hubei province, while state media has played up the contrast between China's gradual return to

normal life and continued chaos abroad in recent weeks.

But economic uncertainty exacerbated by virus shutdowns poses a longer-term threat to the party's legitimacy, analysts said. "I hope the country can support the employment of college students," Feng Anni, a 20-year-old university student in Wuhan, told AFP. "A large number of people of different ages are facing unemployment." —AFP

## 'Super cyclone' bears down on Bangladesh, India

**KHULNA:** Several million people were taking shelter and praying for the best yesterday as the Bay of Bengal's fiercest cyclone in decades roared towards Bangladesh and eastern India, with forecasts of a potentially devastating and deadly storm surge. Authorities have scrambled to evacuate low lying areas in the path of Amphan, which is only the second "super cyclone" to form in the northeastern Indian Ocean since records began.

But their efforts have been hampered by the need to follow strict precautions to prevent the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, with infection numbers still soaring in both countries. "At least 50 people took shelter in my concrete-built house. They came last evening. We gave them food," Abdur Rahim, a Bangladeshi shrimp farmer on the edge of the Sundarbans mangrove forest told AFP. "There is panic. The women are worried... A few months ago Cyclone Bulbul smashed our village, destroying at least 100 homes. We hope Allah will save us this time."

Early yesterday the vast weather system - visible from space - was 125 kilometers offshore with gusts up to 200 kilometers per hour, the equivalent of a category three hurricane, the Indian Meteorological Department said. It was expected to ease slightly but still pack a ferocious punch when it crosses the coasts of West Bengal state and neighboring Bangladesh with gusts up to 185 kph. Bangladeshi forecasters said it would hit around 6:00 pm, with a potential storm surge up to five meters (15 feet). The storm could "cause large-scale and extensive damage", said the head of India's weather office Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, with a surge of several meters.

Storm surges can force a wall of water to cascade several kilometers inland, and are often the biggest killers in any cyclone, typhoon or hurricane. Sanjib Banerjee from West Bengal weather office said that parts of Kolkata could see "severe damage". Early yesterday the sky there was ominously grey. At the coast it was raining and the sea rough. "We have mobilized more than 20,000 policemen, emergency workers and volunteers, boats and buses to evacuate around 300,000 people from coastal villages," state premier Mamata Banerjee



**KHULNA:** Workers unload goods from a truck ahead of the expected landfall of cyclone Amphan, in Khulna yesterday.—AFP

said. "It's a very difficult task when the state is combating the coronavirus pandemic," she said.

### Regular victims

Bangladesh's low-lying coast, home to 30 million people, and India's east are regularly battered by cyclones that have claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in recent decades. The eastern Indian state of Odisha was hit by a super cyclone that left nearly 10,000 dead in 1999, eight years after a typhoon, tornadoes and flooding killed 139,000 in Bangladesh. In 1970 Cyclone Bhola killed half a million. While the storms' frequency and intensity have increased - a phenomenon blamed partly on climate change - deaths have fallen thanks to faster evacuations, better technology and more shelters. But Bangladesh authorities still fear that Amphan will be the most powerful storm front since Cyclone Sidr devastated the country in 2007, killing about 3,500 people and causing billions of dollars in damage.

The country has been feverishly working to bring 2.2 million people to safety, while West Bengal was relocating 300,000 others. The Catholic Relief Services (CRS) aid group said people faced "an impossible choice" of braving the cyclone by staying put, or risking coron-

avirus infection in a shelter. Authorities in both countries said that they were using extra shelter space to reduce crowding, while also making face masks compulsory and providing extra soap and sanitiser. "We are also keeping separate isolation rooms in the shelters for any infected patients," Bangladesh's junior disaster management minister Enamur Rahman said.

### Rohingya refugees

Although outside the predicted direct path of the storm, there are fears for the safety of almost a million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar in southeastern Bangladesh - most living in vast camps and housed in flimsy and makeshift shacks. The first coronavirus cases were reported there last week, and by Tuesday there were six confirmed infections. The UN said emergency items such as food, tarpaulins and water purification tablets had been stockpiled, while authorities said the refugees would be moved to sturdier buildings like schools. "Heavy rains, flooding (and) the destruction of homes and farmland, will increase the likelihood of the virus spreading, particularly in densely populated areas like the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar," ActionAid said. "It will also undoubtedly increase the number of lives and livelihoods already lost to this pandemic." —AFP

## Divorce, harassment, organ donors: China to debate new code

**BEIJING:** Divorce, sexual harassment, organ donations, privacy: China's sweeping first-ever civil code will be debated at its annual parliament meeting in Beijing this week. The rubber-stamp legislature rarely rejects bills, and this law has been in the works since 2017. If adopted, many laws currently regulating aspects of life in China from marriage to adoption will be completely or partially abolished and replaced by the new civil code. Here is a look at key highlights of the proposed law:

### Divorce 'cooling-off period'

A proposed - and controversial - rule to require a spouse suing their partner in court for a divorce to have a "30-day cooling-off period" could be scrapped, a top Chinese official said last week. The current draft of China's civil code says all couples seeking a divorce must "deliberate on their decision" for a month. But this might be amended when China's parliament meets next week, a spokesperson for the legislative affairs committee of the National People's Congress told China Women's Daily, after a massive public backlash against the rule. Several lawmakers have said the cooling-off periods shouldn't apply to cases involving domestic violence, bigamy, marital rape or other rights violations. The waiting period would still apply to couples applying to dissolve their marriage through mutual consent. "Reckless divorces are an increasingly common phenomenon that's not conducive to family stability," the spokesperson said.

### Privacy protections

The code could see China defining for the first time what privacy means for its 1.4 billion citizens. The current draft says private information counts as anything an individual is "not willing to be made known to other persons" and prohibits businesses, individuals - and even the government - from accessing such information without consent. But the current draft civil code leaves loopholes, according to Lester Ross, legal advisor to the American Chamber of Commerce in China and partner at law firm WilmerHale. It does not specifically list information such as an individual's accounts and passwords, medical history, financial data, communications records, marital status or religion as personal information that needs to be protected. A more comprehensive privacy protection law is expected to be drafted within the next five years, Ross said.

### Protection against land grabs

In China, land can only be owned by the state or collective organizations. Private individuals or businesses can only buy the right to use land for up to 70 years. Local governments are allowed to expropriate land or revoke land-use rights for projects that serve the "public interest", and have abused this power in the past. The new private property guidelines have narrowed the interpretation of "public interest" to prevent abusive land grabs. It also makes it mandatory for local governments to make public announcements on "all acts taken by the state in relation to private property", thus making land transactions more transparent.

### Sexual harassment, organ donations

A few other key moves in the civil code include expanding the definition of "sexual harassment" to include being groped at the workplace or being assaulted by a teacher on campus - key demands from China's scuttled #MeToo movement. The code also proposes allowing people to donate the organs of dead relatives. The move comes in response to a massive shortage of organ donors after China stopped the controversial practice of harvesting organs from prisoners. —AFP



# Business

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BANGKOK: A laborer works at a garment factory in Bangkok. Hundreds of thousands of garment workers across Asia have been laid off in the aftermath of coronavirus outbreak. — Reuters

## COVID-19 crushes Asia's garment industry

### Thousands of garment workers across Asia lost jobs

**YANGON/DHAKA/BANGKOK:** Zarchi Lwin pawned her only two gold bangles for \$140 when the owner of the Myanmar factory where she sewed winter coats for British retailer Next Plc shut it down after orders dried up due to the coronavirus. She is one of hundreds of thousands of garment workers across Asia who have been laid off, according to the Workers Rights Consortium, a labour rights campaign group, and are now struggling to survive with little welfare support, mired in debt and in many cases reliant on food handouts.

"If I have a job and an income, I can pay for medical treatment for my mother," Zarchi Lwin, 29, told Reuters from the home she shares with her 56-year-old mother, who has lung disease, in a shanty town on the outskirts of Yangon. "Now no income, no job," she said, fighting back tears. "We don't know what to do."

Next temporarily closed all its stores in Britain in March due to the coronavirus. The company said in a statement it had only cancelled some orders and "endeavoured to be fair" to its suppliers. KGG, the factory where Zarchi Lwin worked, did not respond to requests for comment. Since the 1960s, Asia has grown into the world's garment factory, sending about \$670 billion worth of clothes, shoes and bags a year to Europe, the United States and richer Asian countries, according to the International Labor Organization, a United Nations agency.

After non-essential stores were closed in many countries and people were told to stay at home to prevent further spread of the disease, international retailers from ASOS Plc to New Look said they cancelled orders with garment makers. Factory owners in Myanmar, Bangladesh and Cambodia immediately shut down thousands of factories and sent home workers with little or no pay.

Retailers generally place orders at least three months ahead of delivery and pay for the finished product when it is delivered. Initially most retailers cancelled all outstanding orders, but many adjusted their position in March and April after a public outcry, agreeing to pay for goods that had already been manufactured or were mid-production. To finish pending orders, about half of Bangladesh's 4,000 garment factories have reopened, according to garment manufacturer associations. About 150 of Myanmar's 600 or so factories have shut down, while 200 out of 600 or so are closed in Cambodia.

Many factories that have reopened are struggling to

enforce social distancing and good hygiene practices in often cramped conditions, two union officials told Reuters. "Most of the factories are not complying with the safety guidelines," said Babul Akter, president of the Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation, adding that dozens of garment workers had been infected with the virus. "Just placing hand-washing systems and checking temperatures at the entrances will not help. Inside the factories, when the workers work so closely, how will they maintain safe distancing?"

Some orders have been trickling back. Swedish fashion retailer H&M said it only paused orders for two weeks at the height of the virus outbreak. US-based Walmart Inc, the world's largest retailer, said it placed new orders with Asian manufacturers last month.

“All my dreams are shattered”

Stay or go back home?

Despite the new orders, several garment manufacturers said the low volume of work on the books means many factories in Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Cambodia will not be viable, which means many of the young women who make up the majority of the workforce will no longer have jobs. That leaves them torn between returning to families in the countryside, where there are few employment opportunities, or enduring life in the city in the hope that factories will reopen at full capacity.

The European Union has created a wage fund for workers in Myanmar worth 5 million euros (\$5.3 million) to pay a portion of the salaries of the most vulnerable for three months. Myanmar has promised to cover 40 percent of the salaries of workers whose factories were closed on government orders until they pass inspections for preventing the spread of the coronavirus. More than 58,000 have been laid off, according to the country's garment manufacturer association.

In Bangladesh, one million workers were furloughed or

of tools available that can help." The primary focus of Facebook's "Shops" is to make it easy businesses to have online storefronts to survive during the crisis and ride the online shopping trend into the future, according to Zuckerberg. "We really hope that our commerce solutions help businesses not only survive but thrive during coming months, and adapt to new consumer behavior," said Instagram Shopping product lead Layla Amjadi. Facebook is already involved in e-commerce, with a Marketplace for selling goods and as a venue where businesses court customers through pages at the social network or Instagram.

Businesses have an option to buy Facebook ads to direct customers to their online shops. Sales can be consummated at websites off the social network.

Merchants in the US can use a Facebook checkout service to handle transactions, paying a nominal fee.

Shops will roll out in coming months to some 160 million businesses that already use the social network.

Virtual dressing rooms

Zuckerberg said information about what people buy

laid off by late March, according to the Penn State Center for Global Workers' Rights, although some have since returned to work. About 75,000 have not been paid for March, according to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), which estimates tens of thousands more will not be paid wages owed to them. The government has announced a \$588 million aid package for its export sector to help pay employees. Garment manufacturers, which estimate they have lost almost \$3 billion in exports since the start of April, said the funds are not enough. Foreign-owned firms and joint ventures are not eligible for payments.

In Cambodia, where about 60,000 garment workers have been "suspended," according to the country's manufacturer association, workers have been promised \$70 per month - \$40 from the government and \$30 from the employer - but that amounts to just over a third of the current minimum wage.

In that country's capital, Phnom Penh, 39-year-old Rom Phary said she and her husband had racked up \$550 of debt and interest since she lost her factory job in early March, several times her monthly salary. She said she and her family are living off rice donated by an NGO, the Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights, which is working in Cambodia. Phary said she persuaded her landlord to let her stay rent-free rather than forcing the family to return to relatives in the provinces.

"If we go back, it would be shameful. We don't know what we would do," she said.

"If she died, it would be a relief"

In Myanmar the garment industry was the fastest-growing sector of the economy, accounting for about 10 percent of the country's exports and offering an escape route from extreme poverty for hundreds of thousands of people, many of them migrants from rural areas.

In Dagon Seikkan, an industrial zone on the outskirts of Yangon that is home for many migrant workers, local officials have been giving out rations of free rice to those who have been without jobs for some time. But Zarchi Lwin said she did not qualify as she was employed up until recently. She and her parents left their small village in the central Magwe region six years ago after selling their house to pay for treatment for her brother, who eventually died from kidney disease. At first, they worked as cleaners and lived in a dormitory. Then Zarchi Lwin trained herself to sew clothes and secured a sought-after

job at one of the nearby factories, earning \$146 per month: enough for food, rent of a small wooden shack, and medical treatment. She saved up for a year to buy the bangles she pawned, she said.

Sobbing, she recounted how her mother told her she wants to die in order to lessen the financial burden on the family. "Sometimes I want to kill myself because of this situation," she said. Her father, a guard at a furniture factory, has also lost his income. Before the new coronavirus, garment workers in Yangon and the neighboring province of Bago were sending more than 40 million euros (\$43 million) in remittances to their hometowns and villages across the country each month, said Jacob Clere of SMART Textile and Garments, a European Union-funded project.

"Education for children who would otherwise not have it. Medicine for grandmothers who would otherwise go without. Healthy food. Better shelter," said Clere, describing how that money helped rural communities. Many are now at risk of being forced into early marriage or taking on debt from loan sharks at very high rates, said Mike Slingsby, a regional urban poverty specialist.

High-interest debts

In Bangladesh, the world's second-largest garment maker behind China, 4.1 million workers or 2.5 percent of the population worked in garment factories, many of which are now closed. About 70 percent of Dhaka's garment industry workers left the city to return to their villages, said Tuomo Poutiainen of the International Labour Organization, although he said some have since returned after some factories reopened to finish work on existing contracts.

Orders for June are down 45 percent from a year ago, according to Rubana Huq, president of the BGMEA. Banesa Begum, a 21-year-old worker laid off from a Dhaka factory making clothes for Zara, among other brands, said she had nothing to send to her parents, subsistence farmers in the northern district of Rangpur. "I know they are starving," she said.

Inditex, the owner of Zara, told Reuters it will pay for orders from garment makers, whether finished or in production, according to the original payment schedule.

Begum's salary also paid for her two young brothers to go to school. "I don't know how I'll manage money to continue their study," she said. "All my dreams are shattered." — Reuters

### Facebook to help retailers create online stores

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Facebook on Tuesday unveiled free tools for retailers hit by the pandemic to create online storefronts at the social network and Instagram.

The initiative by the massive social network aims to assist the retail sector, which has been crushed by the coronavirus lockdowns around the world. Merchants can easily set up shops on Facebook and Instagram, customize looks and display products, according to the California-based internet giant.

"This is the biggest step that we've taken yet to enable commerce across our family of apps," Facebook chief executive Mark Zuckerberg said. "If you're running a small business or if you're thinking about starting one even from your living room, you have a whole suite

will be kept private unless shoppers want to tell friends about purchases. Facebook plans to eventually weave Shops into its Messenger and WhatsApp communication platforms.

Facebook is also working on ways to sell products hawked during live video broadcasts, a popular form of content at the social network.

"People have been using live video on our apps to showcase products for years, from shoe stores announcing new sneakers to beauty influencers trying on different lipsticks," Facebook said.

"Now, we're making it easier to shop for products in real time." Facebook is also working on free tools including augmented reality to let shoppers see how they will look in outfits, cosmetics or other items for sale, according to Zuckerberg.

"I hope that we can at least help build some of the infrastructure that businesses need not only in this moment but going forward as well," Zuckerberg said.

"Because even when this period and the lockdowns pass... we're going to continue living more of our lives, and doing business, online." — AFP



A Facebook App logo is displayed on a smartphone in Arlington, Virginia. Facebook reached out to businesses struggling to survive the pandemic with free tools for creating online "Shops" at the social network and Instagram. — AFP

## Business

# Angola's oil exploration evaporates as coronavirus overshadows reforms

## Oil price crash prompts majors to idle all drilling rigs

**LONDON/LAGOS:** The coronavirus pandemic has done in a handful of months what even a 27-year civil war did not: it has brought oil drilling to a halt in Angola, Africa's second-largest oil producer. The consequences could be grave for a poor country that relies heavily on oil revenues and is saddled with debts that exceed its economic output. The halt in oil exploration, which has not been previously reported, could represent a setback for one of the most ambitious economic reform drives on the continent, aimed at cleaning up corruption and attracting foreign money. It comes as Angola seeks buyers in its push to privatize state energy assets, which is central to the reform process.

Angola's prospects looked bright going into 2020. Energy majors increased their exposure to Angola in the wake of reforms to investment laws by President João Lourenço, who took power after almost four decades of rule by Jose Eduardo dos Santos, and greater transparency at Sonangol.

They planned to operate more drilling ships in Angola than anywhere on the continent to tap tantalizing new offshore discoveries this year.

### Then COVID-19 struck

As global demand fell off a cliff amid lockdowns, oil companies lopped billions from planned spending. Angola, with its relatively high-cost offshore fields, was among the first on the chopping block. Reduced demand from the virus's first victim, China - the top destination for Angolan oil - also hit the southern African country hard.

Total, in a bad portent, had already cancelled one drill ship after a March 7 technical problem. The vessel is now parked off the Canary Islands, according to Refinitiv tracking data. The French producer has since idled three other drill ships: Transocean Skyros and Maersk Voyager were sent to docks at the capital Luanda while Seadrill West Gemini lies dormant at Walvis Bay in Namibia, the tracking data shows.

Total did not comment on specific ships, but said it hoped to restart gradually "as soon as the situation allows".

US major Chevron cancelled its contract with rig supplier Valaris, in late March, and parked the drill ship, Valaris 109, in the capital. A Chevron spokesman said it would continue "cost-managed production" at existing fields. Meanwhile, two offshore discoveries which Italy's Eni described as "significant" last year are now on ice, the company told Reuters.

American firm ExxonMobil and Britain's BP, the other oil majors in Angola, have also cancelled planned drilling until at least 2021, according to industry sources. Exxon and BP declined to comment.

### Selling 'the octopus'

Any time would be bad for Angola's drilling to dry up. Yet the crisis comes at a key juncture for its reform drive, which it is counting on to help improve living



In this file photo, Congolese migrants expelled from Angola in a crackdown carry their belongings as they walk to Tshikapa in Kasai province, near the border with Angola. The coronavirus has brought oil drilling to a halt in Angola, Africa's second-largest oil producer. — Reuters

standards for the population of over 32 million. According to the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative's global poverty index, about a third of Angolans live in "severe poverty".

The country is seeking to attract investors for a sweeping privatisation programme of state assets including energy assets like parts of Sonangol, but also a swathe of other interests like ports, banks and telecoms firms. The program, launched last August, had already got off to a rocky start.

Angola has yet to sell any major assets of Sonangol, which its petroleum minister described as a sprawling "octopus". Several assets scheduled for sale last year have meanwhile yet to be tendered, while the only announced purchases have been of a slaughterhouse firm and farm complex which netted \$35 million from local buyers in April. Angola was aiming to shed smaller assets before privatizing 30% of the whole Sonangol group via an IPO in 2022. That timeline, always ambitious, now seems unlikely, according to Nick Branson, senior Africa analyst at Verisk Maplecroft.

"The idea of a Sonangol IPO just seems hopelessly optimistic," he said. "There are so many moving parts and such a lack of appetite for these sort of transactions anyway. Look at how long it took Saudi Aramco," he added, citing the long struggle by Saudi Arabia to privatise their state oil firm amid flagging prices.

Despite its problems, Angola has announced the tendering of state-owned bank BCI and parts of Sonangol's ports and logistics businesses in recent weeks. Gonçalo Falcão, a Brazil-based partner in UK-based law firm Mayer Brown, which advises potential buyers on aspects of the privatisation drive, said the government would not settle for a fire sale.

"It's still to be seen how many competitive bidders emerge," he said, noting the state could postpone tenders if it deems offers too low.

"They're trying to send a message that, okay, we're struggling, but we will continue going forward with our plans because we're a reliable country and we've made a huge effort to make our companies transparent and reduce corruption." — Reuters



### Damaged, docked, dormant

An oil price crash last month to two-decade lows has prompted all international energy majors operating in Angola - Total, Chevron, ExxonMobil, BP and Eni - to idle or ditch their drilling rigs, according to company sources, Refinitiv ship-tracking data and industry experts. France's Total, responsible for almost half of Angola's oil output, told Reuters it would not drill for more oil for now due to the coronavirus crisis, instead focusing on current production. "We have suspended all our drilling activities like all other operators in Angola," it said.

Sarah McLean, senior analyst at IHS Markit, said it was the first time since its records began in 1984 that Angola had not had a single rig drilling. The London-based information provider had expected at least 10 rigs to be operating there by the end of 2020, the highest number for any African nation this year.

The Angolan finance ministry and president's office did not respond to Reuters requests for comment, nor did state oil giant Sonangol, which works in partnership with the foreign oil majors.



CHICAGO, Illinois: Customers shop at a Walmart store on Tuesday in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

## Panic-buying boosts profits at Walmart

**NEW YORK:** Booming demand for groceries and essential items lifted Walmart's first-quarter profits, even as the company struggled during the coronavirus crisis to replenish key items like toilet paper and cleaning supplies, the company said Tuesday.

"Our supply chain is amongst the most capable in the world, but in this environment we have stretched it," said Walmart CEO Doug McMillon, who estimated that US inventories were down about eight percent at the end of the period. "Job number one in the US is to get back in stock," McMillon said on a conference call with analysts.

Walmart's e-commerce business surged a staggering 74 percent in the quarter ending April 30, with homebound customers opting for grocery delivery at home or for click-and-pickup options at stores.

This included an influx of new customers drawn to Walmart's broad product slate, many of whom have become repeat customers, executives said. Shares rose following the results, which topped analyst expectations despite higher costs connected to the COVID-19 crisis such as bonuses for hourly workers.

### Run on bandanas, sewing machines

Profits rose 3.9 percent to \$4.0 billion on an 8.6 percent increase in revenues to \$134.6 billion. Walmart hired 235,000 workers during the quarter in the United States, the majority on a temporary basis to boost its stores and supply chain, McMillon said.

Walmart said the COVID-19 crisis led to \$900 million in additional costs, including spending to equip staff with safety masks and sneeze guards at checkout stations and to launch or expand programs such as curbside pickup and mail-to-home service for pharmacy sales.

Chief Financial Officer Brett Biggs expects expenses to be comparable in the second quarter, saying "there's going to be some expenses that carry on probably for some time." Some items such as cleaning supplies are still below targeted levels, although the company has replenished in some categories, executives said. Prices for meat have also increased due to the temporary shutdown of some US slaughterhouses, although that pressure may ease as the plants are brought back on line.

After the initial run on household staples, Walmart saw consumers throng to sometimes unlikely items that have taken off in the social distancing era.

These include adult bicycles for parents to accompany kids on rides; bandanas and sewing machines for homespun face masks; and supplies for working at home, such as office chairs and laptops.

The company said it was discontinuing Jet.com, which it acquired in 2016 as Walmart was building up its online sales business. The move reflects the "continued strength of the Walmart.com brand," Walmart said. The retail giant joined the large number of publicly-traded companies to withdraw its annual profit forecast, citing "significant uncertainty" on the duration of the COVID-19 crisis, its effect on consumer confidence and the cadence and duration of government emergency payments to consumers.

Neil Saunders, managing director of GlobalData Retail, said the results compared favorably to those of rival Amazon, which also experienced huge revenue growth, but was hit more significantly by higher costs connected to COVID-19.

"That Walmart has outperformed Amazon, at least in growth terms, underlines both the deficiencies of Amazon in grocery—which generated the bulk of sales this quarter—and Walmart's growing power in the segment," Saunders said.

"Having a wide range of fulfillment options, including delivery to home, collection from store—and by using stores for fulfillment—allowed Walmart to ramp up capacity in a way that many other players struggled to do." Shares rose 2.1 percent to \$130.33 in early trading. — AFP

## UK inflation drops to lowest since 2016

**LONDON:** Britain's inflation rate sank in April to its lowest since August 2016 as the coronavirus pandemic pushed down global oil prices and clothing retailers cut prices, while power tariffs also slid.

The consumer price index dropped to an annual rate of 0.8 percent in April from 1.5 percent in March, official data showed yesterday, broadly in line with economists' expectations in a Reuters poll. Consumer prices fell by 0.2 percent in April alone.

The Bank of England says inflation could fall below 1% in the next few months. BoE Deputy Governor Ben Broadbent said it might go below zero around the end of 2020 although he did not think that would mark the start of a long period of deflation. The Office for National Statistics, which produces the CPI, said earlier this month that inflation readings were likely to be volatile because the coronavirus shutdown has prevented statisticians from getting prices on a wide range of items.

Falls in the cost of household energy bills, transport - which includes petrol - as well as clothing and footwear, gave the biggest hit to prices.

The ONS said clothing retailers, hit by the government's stay-at-home orders for most people in Britain, resorted to more discount sales than usual to try to shift their stock. But there was upward pressure from the price of video games and consoles, board games and children's toys, as well as fresh vegetables, the ONS said.—Reuters

## Egypt: IMF aid to help businesses

**CAIRO:** Egypt's talks with the IMF about a standby loan to help it through the coronavirus pandemic will focus on structural reforms to remove constraints on private businesses, Egypt's planning minister said on Tuesday.

The one-year IMF program would help with any payment gaps businesses face as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Repayment would be spread out over the medium term. Hala Saeed told the American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt on a video conference that it would include financing from bilateral and multilateral sources.

In 2016, Egypt agreed a \$12 billion, three-year Extended Fund Facility program with the International Monetary Fund designed to reduce its fiscal and balance of payment deficits. "The 2016 program was more on the fiscal and monetary side," Saeed said. "After the success of the first phase of reform, we are continuing the structural reform program."

She said Egypt had already been working on structural reforms before the pandemic and had identified six priorities, including digital transformation, industry, agriculture and logistics.—Reuters

## Coronavirus hammers US homebuilding

**WASHINGTON:** US homebuilding dropped by the most on record in April and permits for future construction tumbled, underlining fears that the coronavirus crisis would lead to the deepest economic contraction in the second quarter since the Great Depression. The report from the Commerce Department on Tuesday added to dismal data this month showing a staggering loss of 20.5 million jobs. In addition to a collapse in retail sales and manufacturing production, the data suggests that April was probably the worst month so far in the current economic downturn. "This is an unprecedented recession in that it happened over just two months and this is making it harder for companies and consumers to get their bearings and figure out what to do next," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MUFJ in New York.

Housing starts tumbled 30.2 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 891,000 units last month, the lowest level since early 2015. The percentage decline was the biggest since the government started tracking the series in 1959. Starts dropped 18.6 percent in March. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast housing starts would fall to a pace of 927,000 units in April. Homebuilding fell in all four regions last month. Housing starts plunged 29.7 percent on a year-on-year basis in April.

Though many states considered homebuilding as essential when they enforced lockdown orders in mid-March to curb the spread of COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the coronavirus, disruptions to building material supply chains likely weighed on activity in the last couple of months.

As the country gradually reopens, there are indications the worst of the homebuilding slump is likely over. A survey on Monday showed an increase in

homebuilder confidence in May. With at least 21.4 million people having lost their jobs in March and April, however, the housing market could remain subdued for a while even with mortgage rates near record lows. "Fewer people are going to be interested in buying a home and committing themselves to years of mortgage payments when they are concerned about their job and income prospects," said Mark Vitner, a senior economist at Wells Fargo Securities in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The dollar was trading lower against a basket of currencies, while US Treasury prices were mostly higher. Stocks on Wall Street were mixed after posting hefty gains on Monday amid hopes for a vaccine for COVID-19.

### Record contraction expected

Permits for future home construction plunged 20.8 percent to a rate of 1.074 million units in April, the lowest level since January 2015. The despite the sharp drop, permits are outpacing starts, which bodes well for homebuilding in the coming months. The housing market was back on the recovery path before the coronavirus pandemic struck, after hitting a soft patch that started in the first quarter of 2018 and lasted through the second quarter of 2019. The sector, which has a bigger footprint on the economy, was partly stymied by a chronic shortage of properties for sale. It has expanded for three straight quarters. But as with every other segment of the economy, economists are expecting a steep housing market contraction in the second quarter.

Economists are estimating that gross domestic product (GDP) will shrink at as much as a 43 percent annualized rate in the second quarter, the deepest since the 1930s. The economy contracted at a 4.8 percent pace in the January-March quarter. Single-family homebuilding, which accounts for the largest share of the housing market, dropped 25.4 percent to a rate of 650,000 units in April, the lowest level since March 2015. Single-family building permits declined 24.3 percent to a rate of 669,000 units, also the lowest since March 2015.—Reuters



A residential building construction site is seen, amid the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), in Detroit, Michigan.—Reuters

## Business

# Ooredoo Group recognized among world's top 50 telecoms brands

## Group maintains its world ranking for 4th year in a row

DOHA: Ooredoo Group confirmed yesterday it has maintained its world ranking in the Telecoms 300 2020 report, as one of the top 50 global telecommunications brands for fourth year in a row, with a brand value worth over \$3.5 billion.

As in 2019, the Qatar-based telecommunications provider continued to hold 41st place in the listed Top 50. Ooredoo Group also maintained its Brand Rating status of AA+ for the second consecutive year.



**Brand Rating status of AA+ retained again**



Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani

ty, loyalty, staff satisfaction and corporate reputation – and this strength is then used to calculate the proportion of a business's revenue that is contributed by the brand. Information from each process then informs the rankings of the world's most valuable telecoms brands.

In monitoring the consistent increase in Ooredoo Group's brand value, Brand Finance has watched closely the company's global brand roll-out since 2013. The Doha-based telecommunications operator is now active in 10 markets across the Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Asia.

In 2020, Ooredoo Group has continued to make significant investments across its operations, including an ongoing complete digitalization program and substantial network upgrades. In 5G, the telco leader is a global pioneer, thanks to a series of initiatives, ranging from fibre optic cabling to working with suppliers of cutting-edge handsets. Ooredoo's commitment to complete customer satisfaction has strengthened overall brand value.

Speaking of the 2020 ranking, Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani – Group Chief Executive Officer – Ooredoo, said: "We are delighted to confirm that, once again, we are among the Top 50 global telecommunications brands, recognizing our significant contributions to the industry. Our success in telecommunica-



tions comes from our exemplary leadership team, supported by an innovative board of directors and our visionary leaders in Qatar. The latest recognition of our efforts by industry analysts makes us very proud."

"We will continue to develop our products and services by meeting the needs of new customers and new markets around the world, with novel and innovative technologies. Our ambition is to become data experience leaders wherever our global footprint

reaches, enhancing people's digital lives and ensuring everyone can enjoy the internet through Ooredoo's advanced networks and its many benefits in work, education, and leisure. Proud to lead and navigate the journey towards full commercial 5G, our brand is increasing in reputation and prestige alike. Despite a difficult start to 2020 globally, we aim to consolidate our position as one of the world's top 50 telecoms brands this year," added Sheikh Saud.

## Huawei: A year and beyond

KUWAIT: Huawei held its 17th annual Global Analyst Summit in Shenzhen, both onsite and online. At the event, Huawei was joined by over 2,000 analysts, key opinion leaders, and media representatives from a range of industries, including telecoms, the Internet, and finance. Together, they discussed how the industry can work together to weather the difficult times, achieve win-win outcomes, and accelerate the arrival of the intelligent world.

At the opening of the event, Huawei's Rotating Chairman Guo Ping delivered a keynote speech titled "Huawei: A Year and Beyond". Guo Ping started by sharing Huawei's experience and business results of the past year. He said, "Over the past year, many technologies became unavailable to us. Despite this, Huawei struggled to survive and is striving to move forward."

Huawei has long been an active contributor to the ICT industry. Since it was founded, Huawei has been committed to bringing digital to more people, homes, and organizations, in order to move the world forward. In the past 30-plus years, Huawei has deployed over 1,500 networks in more than 170 countries and regions, serving over 3 billion people worldwide. We also provide smart devices to 600 million consumers. US actions against Huawei will not only harm Huawei, but also harm the experiences of customers and consumers that use Huawei's products and services.

ICT infrastructure is the foundation of the intelligent world. By 2025, the digital economy will represent an industry worth 23 trillion US dollars. The ICT industry still has great potential. Standing at the threshold of the intelligent world, we can see more opportunities than challenges for the ICT industry. Looking ahead, Huawei will continue investing and



SHENZHEN: Huawei's Rotating Chairman Guo Ping delivers a keynote speech titled "Huawei: A Year and Beyond".

innovating in three domains: connectivity, computing, and smart devices. We will work with customers, partners, standards organizations, and all other industry players in domains like supply chain, standards, and talent cultivation, to encourage open collaboration, promote inclusive industry development, and explore the future together.

Guo Ping stated, "Today the world is an integrated collaborative system. The trend of globalization shouldn't and will not likely be reversed. Fragmented standards and supply chains benefit no one, and further fragmentation will have a severe impact on the entire industry. The industry as a whole should work together to strengthen IPR protection, safeguard fair competition, protect unified global standards, and promote a collaborative global supply chain."

The first Huawei Global Analyst Summit took place in 2004, and has been held annually ever since. This year's summit runs from May 18 to 20, with a series of parallel sessions. Attendees include industry experts from around the world, who discuss and share their insights into industry trends, tech trends, and global collaboration.

## S&P Global Platts' Analytics Oil Update

### Today's oil price reflects market optimism

Chris Midgley, Global Director of Analytics, S&P Global Platts, sees today's price reflect optimism in the market, but further upside will most likely be limited due to higher oil stocks and constraints around US supply.

KUWAIT: Ahead of this month's expiry, WTI has seen a rally as shorts in the market get caught struggling to deliver into the market due to logistics constraints around ability to access pipeline. This contrasts with the experience last month, where participants suffered due to an inability to take physical delivery at land-locked Cushing.

Today's price reflect optimism in the market, but further upside will most likely be limited due to higher oil stocks and logistics constraints in US supply leading to some discounting.

#### Supply

Around the world, over \$100bn of capex has been cut. In the US, rig count is down by 62 percent and frack crews are down by 85 percent, highlighting much lower activity. OPEC + has plenty of spare capacity to put more oil onto market if prices recover further as they won't want to stimulate an early US shale rebound. With Oil around \$30/bbl, US shale remains under pressure and we expect further bankruptcy filings as smaller companies struggle to service debt.

Demand is partially recovering, as people return to cars, but other areas such as aviation (jet) will see much longer u-shaped recoveries. The likely drag on the global economy will result in 2021 oil demand being 700,000 b/d below 2019 levels, effectively representing a two-year loss of oil demand growth amounting to 3-4 million b/d compared to pre-COVID19 forecasts.

#### Outlook for global oil supply

Global oil supply plunges in 2Q, then OPEC and non-OPEC supply diverges in 2021. OPEC+ market share strategy to weigh on future prices.

Global oil supply revised significantly lower, particularly 2Q, on the back of 9.7 million b/d OPEC+ cut deal and additional non-OPEC supply reductions that will be required. 3.4 million b/d of shut ins announced to date, but more will be required and will need price signals. For 2021, non-OPEC is set to decline while OPEC+ supply improves. In our view, Saudi Arabia and Russia will pursue a market share strategy, putting enough oil in the market to avoid an accelerated increase in price that could overstimulate US shale or other non-OPEC production. We do not believe Saudi.

#### Outlook for Global Oil Demand

Global economic slump in Q2 continue to be deep. Yet, OECD countries have made progress in mitigating virus spread via lockdowns and are in the process of gradual reopening. Risk of virus spreading in Emerging Markets still present. As a result, the worst year on year drop of demand in April is behind us and the world is embracing a sizable month-on-month recovery in May with an expected growth of over 5 million b/d, led by a "V" shape recovery of gasoline demand.

Demand is now forecast to contract by 8.3 million b/d in 2020 while the aforementioned deep contraction for 2Q is 17.8 million b/d is seen for 2Q though the worst was April with a year on year decline of 22 million b/d.

2021 demand will normalize but stay notably below 2019 levels by some 750,000 b/d, as aviation

and global trade struggle.

Asia also been hit hard by the economic slump despite the opportunity to be first in line to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic among all major regions around the world. India in particular saw the worst year on year demand destruction in history last month, bringing down Asia 2Q's demand down by 4.1 million b/d despite the recovery in a few other Asian countries in May. Demand for the whole year is likely to be 2.5 million b/d below that of 2019.

#### Outlook for Refining and Product Markets

In just over one week, a steady flow of statements from around the world have taken announced oil supply shut ins from 3.4 to 5 million b/d, topped by the US, Canada, and Kazakhstan. Add to that new reports that indicate Russia is cutting production significantly to comply with OPEC+ cuts and last week's crucial announcement that Saudi Arabia would cut an additional 1 million b/d in June, and UAE and Kuwait additional volumes, has further solidified the global oil supply response.

In total, explicit announcements on both shut ins and production cuts across non-OPEC and OPEC+ members suggest global oil supply is on course to drop by at least 12-13 million b/d from April levels to June. There is also supply that is coming down without explicit announcements. Plus supply will be on a declining path through 2021/2022 on falling rigs and lower spending.

This puts global oil supply securely on our forecasted path without extraordinary curtailments. They are enough to keep global oil supply within bounds of storage tank tops and balanced with demand that remains weak for May. Combined with stronger physical differentials and lower freight rates, Platts Analytics believes \$25-30/b is fair value for Dated Brent for the coming months. We are not overly bullish as much anxiety persists, particularly around demand and the impact of opening up from lockdowns on the infection rate. Later in the Fall, there is the potential impact of a second wave of COVID infections that could reverse oil demand improvements expected in coming months just as bloated stocks start to draw. Nevertheless, the current supply losses, OPEC's determination, and trend towards opening up point to stronger oil prices than we believed earlier.

#### Outlook for Oil Prices

Crude prices have improved driven by larger supply cutbacks than initially expected and the prospect for demand recovery as lockdowns ease.

It now seems likely that total oil stocks will stay below capacity limits (just) without additional constraints on production. Platts Analytics sees Dated Brent prices averaging in the \$20-30/b range through the summer as stocks will continue to increase in May and then will remain high, keeping the market in contango.

#### Outlook for NGLs/Petchems

Global NGL supply to be 1.2 million b/d in June 2020 due to OPEC+ cuts, lower refinery runs and shut ins in North America. Res/comm demand and stockpiling appear to be slowing, providing less support for LPG prices. Naphtha production from key Asian countries is expected to be 6.3 million b/d, roughly flat with 2019. Naphtha prices are strengthening as motor gasoline demand slowly returns.

In 2020, ethylene crackers are expected to run at lower utilization rates than we have seen in several years, on the order of 85 percent due to demand loss and new capacity coming online. Aromatics units will also see low utilization rates as gasoline demand slowly returns and new plants start up.

PDH units are those likely to benefit the most during this period of time, as refinery runs are down and FCC units are running in max distillate mode, reducing the supply of refinery grade propylene. We expect utilization rates at PDH plants will be higher than what has been seen in the last several years.



This file photo in Flins-sur-Seine, shows the assembly line that produces both the electric vehicle Renault Zoe and the hybrid vehicle Nissan Micra, the largest Renault production site in France. — AFP

## Renault, Nissan, Mitsubishi to unveil strategy

PARIS: Automakers Renault, Nissan and Mitsubishi have hinted that they may unveil a strategic plan next week to repair their troubled alliance as the coronavirus pandemic lashes the industry.

The three announced on Tuesday they would hold "a joint press conference regarding the progress in Alliance activities" on May 27. They said in January they planned to deepen cooperation as concerns mounted their alliance would split, and they could unveil which companies would take the lead in certain technologies or regions to cut costs.

The more than 20-year partnership between Nissan and Renault, based on cross-shareholdings without a joint structure, was built by Carlos Ghosn

who held senior roles in both companies. Ghosn turned around Nissan's fortunes and then helped build the world's largest automotive group with the addition of Mitsubishi. But the alliance was pushed to the brink following Ghosn's shock arrest in Tokyo in November 2018 on charges of financial misconduct, including under-reporting millions of dollars in salary.

All three firms were struggling even before the coronavirus pandemic, which has caused sales to plunge as governments forced citizens to stay at home to slow the spread of the virus. Nissan plans to unveil restructuring measures on Thursday next week at the same time as its results for its 2019-2020 fiscal year, which are expected to show losses.

The day after, it is Renault's turn, with the automaker having already said in February it aimed to achieve two billion euros (\$2.2 billion) in savings over three years and did not exclude closing factories. The French firm is reportedly planning close four of its factories in France, including one that makes its electric car the Zoe, the Canard Enchaîné weekly said on Tuesday without citing sources. —AFP

# Pests in a pandemic? India plant doctors will see you online now

**CHENNAI:** When Victor Mary's husband decided to travel abroad for work, he left her a plot of land to cultivate in southern India and a new mobile phone that would help them stay in touch. Fresh to farming, Mary found herself struggling after India's coronavirus lockdown began in March, unsure of how to fight the pests attacking her paddy and groundnut crops.

Initially she called her husband in Singapore to ask for advice. But then she realized she could use her phone to dial into an "e-plant clinic", where farmers and experts meet online to discuss crop pests and blight. "I was using the phone to only make WhatsApp calls to my husband and complain about things," Mary told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone from her home in the Pudukkottai district of Tamil Nadu state. "Now I use it to call the plant doctors instead and they help me instantly. I don't have to wait for my husband to finish his work shift," she said.

Like Mary, other farmers across India are learning to remotely access similar plant clinics. They were first started in 2012 by bringing experts to a public location in a village twice a month to look at diseased crop samples and suggest remedies. The roughly 30 physical clinics across five Indian states have now been replaced by online ones. So far seven sessions during the COVID-19 lockdown have seen more than 350 farmers participate from Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Assam and Puducherry. Rising temperatures due to a warming global climate have also increased pest populations, agricultural experts said, adding it was crucial to control pest attacks quickly to help farmers protect their yield.

The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that annually 20% to 40% of crop production worldwide is lost to pests, with plant diseases costing the global economy about \$220 billion and invasive insects about \$70 billion. In India, jasmine flowers, groundnut, eggplant, chilli and rice are some of the

crops currently being affected by pests like bud worm, pod borer and thrips, which have been brought up by farmers in the e-clinics. With an exodus of migrant workers returning home due to the coronavirus pandemic, farmers have been left to tend to their plots alone, slowing down the process of pest control.

"Shortage of labour has increased the chance of pests due to upkeep issues," said Jayashree Balasubramanian, a director at the Chennai-based MS Swaminathan Research Foundation. The charity, which backs the use of modern science for sustainable farming, runs the plant clinics with the non-profit Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI). "If farmers neglect any disease now, their lockdown losses will also impact the next cropping season. They need experts to help them and technology has fast-forwarded its way into their lives," said Balasubramanian.

### Virtual diagnosis

Mary met "plant doctor" Rajkumar Ramasamy for the first time virtually during an e-clinic earlier this month for farmers from Pudukkottai. The mother of two said that, despite a patchy connection, her plant sample was diagnosed and treatment suggested. "I was quite excited to attend this online meeting," she said.

"I felt very happy that I could follow the instructions sent to me via a message and then download (the app) on my phone and connect to the plant doctor. It felt like an achievement," Ramasamy, who has worked with the plant clinic initiative since it began in 2012, was enthusiastic too. "We had not planned to do anything during the lockdown but within days farmers started sending us pictures of their infested plants and asking us for help," he said. "Then a young farmer suggested going online and we sent out a link asking farmers to register. Only 17 registered but on the day



**KERELA:** Varghese Tharakkan prepares ripe jackfruit at an orchard at his Ayur jackfruit farm in Thrissur in the south Indian state of Kerala. Green, spiky and with a strong, sweet smell, the bulky jackfruit has morphed from a backyard nuisance in India's south coast into the meat-substitute darling of vegans and vegetarians in the West.—AFP

of the e-clinic, 48 joined. It was amazing."

Ramasamy and his colleagues have been able to provide timely advice via the web to farmers who showed them samples of sick crops to reduce their losses even during the lockdown, also sharing information on where they could get pesticides. Farmer S Mathiyalagan, 51, needed his son's help to log in and learn how to participate in an online meeting. The chilli farmer said he was nervous, unfamiliar with how to mute and un-mute himself, and not sure if the infected plant he was holding up was visible to the doctors. "But it worked," he said over the phone, adding that he

may need less help from his son next time.

Encouraged by the experiences of Mary and Mathiyalagan, the plant doctors now feel virtual clinics could expand their reach tremendously in the future. "The only thing is to teach farmers how to use technology," Ramasamy said. For example, they need to figure out how to hold the plant in front of the camera without blocking it, so the plant doctors can diagnose the problem, he said. "Once these issues and internet connectivity are resolved, we could reach thousands of farmers, resolving issues in real time," he added. — Reuters

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- ◆ Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery.
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- ◆ Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, including Colorectal Cancer
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- ◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment
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**Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:**

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- ◆ Fellow of American College of Surgery
- ◆ Canadian Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- ◆ American Board of Colo – Rectal Surgery
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- (IFSO) member .
- Faculty member of (BEST).
- Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

**Scope of clinical Practice.**

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- Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
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Dancers of the Ballet du Rhin wear protective face masks during a training session in Mulhouse, eastern France.



Dancers of the Ballet du Rhin have a training session in Mulhouse, eastern France.— AFP photos

## IN CORONAVIRUS-HIT EASTERN FRANCE, MASKED DANCERS GET BACK TO WORK

In Mulhouse in eastern France, particularly hard hit by the coronavirus, professional dancers are getting back to work, practicing pirouettes in their long-abandoned studio - but no pas-de-deux. With an easing of France's strict coronavirus lockdown last week after two months of home confinement, the ballet performers of the Opera National du Rhin must observe strict infection-busting measures, which include no contact or dancing in pairs. They have their temperatures taken upon arrival, leave their shoes outside and must enter in full ballet attire - plus face mask - as the dressing rooms are off limits.

Once inside, black tape on the ground delineates a spot for each dancer, allowing them to keep a safe distance of 3.5 meters as they gracefully go through their paces to piano accompaniment. Every time the dancers touch something - their mask, the barre or their water bottle - they are required to disinfect their hands. Dancer Pierre Doncq, 33, says he has stopped drinking water during practice. "I find it stressful to have to clean my hands each time, to remove my mask

and all that. I prefer to concentrate on what the instructor says," he told AFP. Between two sessions, Doncq had to replace his mask which had become humid from all the heavy breathing.

### 'One can adapt'

He complains that the piece of cloth makes him feel suffocated and hampers his vision. "But honestly, one can adapt," said the dancer, insisting he was pleased to be back at work. The Opera du Rhin in Mulhouse is one of the first in France to resume training after lockdown, and is producing its own masks for its ballet company.

"It is complicated to dance with a mask," said Bruno Bouche, the troupe's artistic director, adding this was "the biggest challenge" in resuming training. Mulhouse, near the Swiss and German borders, was one of the first hotspots of coronavirus infection in France, and remains in the high-alert "red zone" of domestic virus circulation. Many French cases, some of which were exported as far away as South America,



Dancers of the Ballet du Rhin wear protective face masks during a training session in Mulhouse, eastern France.

originated from a week-long church gathering in the city in February, attended by some 2,000 people. Soldiers had to set up a military field hospital in

Mulhouse to relieve overwhelmed hospitals and evacuated patients to other parts of the country.

After their first post-lockdown practice, the dancers leave immediately, alone. No dressing room chatter, no shower. The studio is disinfected from top to bottom between three daily lessons which last an hour each, far shorter than the six or seven hours the dancers were accustomed to before confinement kicked in. But the performers are grateful for even this hour, afraid of losing their form. "Dancing is our life and holding on to a chair or to a wardrobe (to practice) for eight weeks was getting more and more complicated," said Bouche, who offered courses online during confinement. The dancers hope their first post-lockdown performance will be "Chaplin" by German choreographer Mario Schroeder on September 5.— AFP



An Oscars statue is displayed on the red carpet area on the eve of the 92nd Oscars ceremony at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California in this file photo. — AFP

## Oscars may be postponed due to coronavirus

Next year's Oscars could be postponed due to the disruption caused by the coronavirus in Hollywood, trade publication Variety reported Tuesday. The movie industry's biggest night is currently scheduled for February 28. But with theaters shuttered, blockbusters delayed and productions halted, the prize-giving Academy has already been forced to make significant rules changes.

One of multiple anonymous sources told Variety it was now "likely" the ceremony itself will be postponed. No formal proposals or detailed discussions have yet taken place over moving the event, or potential new dates, the report said. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences did not immediately respond to AFP's request for comment. Last month, the Academy - seen as the apex body of the Hollywood film industry - eased eligibility rules, allowing movies that skip the big screen this year to contend for Oscars.

At the time, the body also warned that "additional adjustments to Academy rules, eligibility requirements and scheduling may be required." "As previously announced, the 93rd Oscars telecast is scheduled to air Sunday, February 28, 2021, on ABC. Any updated information about the show will be shared at a later time," it said in the statement last month. Currently, films must be released by December 31 to be considered for the following year's Oscars, which usually take place in February or March.

It was not clear what impact, if any, a delay in the ceremony would have on eligibility rules. The Oscars are the grand finale of a movie award season starting in earnest with the Golden Globes in early January. Other movie award shows have yet to announce delays to their ceremonies, though many have also loosened eligibility rules. Both the Directors Guild of America and Producers Guild of America said Tuesday that streaming titles would be permitted this year. Television's Primetime Emmys ceremony is currently still scheduled to take place in September. The earlier and lower-profile Daytime Emmys has already been replaced with a virtual event. — AFP

## Afghan couples downsize big fat weddings as COVID grips

Afghanistan's coronavirus crisis has freed young couples in Kabul to consider something that once seemed unthinkable: downsizing their weddings. Extravagant ceremonies with thousands of guests packed into huge halls serving multi-course feasts are a traditional rite of passage in the country. Grooms can rack up tens of thousands of dollars in debt, while the opulent wedding halls and their suppliers have long been one of the capital's few economic bright spots. But with Kabul on lockdown as coronavirus cases rise, some people have pared down ceremonies that have been in the works for months. "I have been engaged for the last two years and I was planning to get married in late March," Latif Faramarz told AFP.

The 26-year-old law student had been preparing to spend around \$15,000 and was expecting 1,200 guests but was forced to recalibrate after wedding halls were shuttered in March due to the pandemic. Faramarz drastically cut the guest list to 40 or 50 people and the cost to around \$2,000. "I'm not excited about downsizing my wedding, they come only once in a lifetime, it's a joyous occasion. But I don't have a choice," he said. The saving has however opened up other ways for the couple to spend their money and Faramarz now plans to study abroad with his future wife. "Education is the best tool to climb the ladder and become successful," he said.

### Weddings in a warzone

Upending long-planned celebrations also means depriving Afghans—particularly women—of one of their few opportunities to celebrate en masse. Despite staggering levels of poverty and decades of war, weddings continue to be grand, loud affairs. Families and friends are crammed into segregated dining halls with occasional low-key dancing, while teams of stressed-out waiters ferry in mountains of food that is quickly devoured at the end of the night.

Photographers swarm around the lucky couple as they enter the hall and pose with family. Women relish the chance to don layers of make-up and wear their finest dresses. And outside, armed guards keep a careful watch during the festivities, scanning the perimeter of the garishly lit venues that can often be seen from blocks away. Weddings have been the occasional target of militant attacks, including an Islamic State-claimed bombing in August 2019 that killed at least 80 people. But the threat of violence has done little to temper the appetite for elaborate weddings and the financial reckoning they bring.

The price tag often plunges the poor into debt that they never escape. Grooms are also expected to pay hefty dowries and finance houses or apartments for the bride's family. Shir Ahmad—who asked to use a pseudonym—said he was planning to donate some of the extra cash to the poor after he cut his guest list from 1,000

people to 80. "I wanted to have an extravagant wedding like my brothers, but my dreams have been shattered due to this virus," said Ahmad, who will now likely host his wedding at home. "I will donate the money set aside for the wedding to poor people in Kabul. I think it is not worth having a big party like I wished."

### 'Economic blow'

And while grooms might be saving money, the wedding industry in Kabul has been hit hard, putting thousands of jobs at risk and bleeding millions from the economy. "Our business is suffering," said Nadir Qarghayee, who runs the wedding halls union in Kabul. The city alone is home to 124 halls that employ up to 15,000 people, according to Qarghayee. "It is a big economic blow to all the wedding halls. They have not operated for nearly two months, but they are still paying the rent and the salaries of the personnel and they have no income," he said. Holding wedding gatherings at home comes with its own risk of being caught breaking Kabul's lockdown rules. "I can have my party now but I think nobody will come," said Ghulam Sarwar, after he was forced to delay his marriage. "The government may take action if we have the ceremony and people come together." — AFP



Photo shows a general view of a closed wedding venue during the government-imposed lockdown as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 coronavirus in Kabul. — AFP photos



A shopkeeper displays a dress on a mannequin as he waits for customers during the government-imposed lockdown as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 coronavirus in Kabul.



A closed wedding hall is seen during the government-imposed lockdown as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 coronavirus in Kabul.



Photo shows a general view of a closed wedding venue during the government-imposed lockdown as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 coronavirus in Kabul.



A 29-year-old television anchor Lakshay Narula sips tea at his home in Mumbai. Inspired by Bollywood actors and cricket superstars, Indian men are splashing out on grooming products and subverting macho stereotypes that have long defined ideas of masculinity in the patriarchal country.



A 30-year-old communications executive Suraj Balakrishnan prepares to massage his beard with oil at his home in Mumbai.



Photo shows grooming products in the bathroom of 30-year-old communications executive Suraj Balakrishnan at his home in Mumbai. — AFP Photos

## Waxed chests, face masks, beard oil: India millennials defy gender norms

After exfoliating his face and buffing his nails, Lakshay Narula crossed another grooming frontier - applying hair removal cream to his chest and with it, upending India's rigid gender norms. Inspired by Bollywood actors and cricket superstars, Indian men are splashing out on grooming products and subverting macho stereotypes that have long defined ideas of masculinity in the patriarchal country. "I spend 15 minutes on my hair alone and a day prior to shoots, I exfoliate my face and use traditional herbal face packs," Mumbai-based television anchor Narula told

majority of them male - social media is a key battleground for pushing products challenging symbols of masculinity from an earlier era, like the 1990s Bollywood 'action hero' covered in sweat and grime.

Today, the movies are more likely to feature stars who never have a hair out of place, even as they deploy flying kicks to beat up bad guys. Advertising styling gel, as Bollywood star Ranveer Singh has done, is a natural next step. Veet, a Canadian brand owned by British giant Reckitt Benckiser, turned to heart-throb Kartik Aaryan to flog its hair removal cream to more adventurous customers. Popular actor Ayushmann Khurrana even bought a stake in beauty start-up The Man Company (TMC), whose competitors have recruited social media influencers for endorsements.

### 'Explainer videos'

But creating a market for previously unheard-of products often requires extra effort. "When we launched a charcoal peel-off mask, we made explainer videos" for men unfamiliar with the product, TMC founder Hitesh Dhingra told AFP. The firm also uses Instagram to encourage customers to share selfies with their products, he added. The model seems to be working - Narula says the same friends who earlier mocked his skincare regimen are now asking him for product recommendations. Even the coronavirus pandemic hasn't deterred Narula, who says he is taking advantage of hair salons being closed during the lockdown to try new hairdos for video conferences and work calls. As well as giving him confidence when he goes live on Instagram, "the whole process is very therapeutic amid the rising stress levels," he said.

### Big money

According to research firm EuroMonitor International, India's male grooming industry grew 10 percent between 2017 and 2018, with sales topping 100 billion rupees (\$1.4 billion).



A 29-year-old television anchor Lakshay Narula puts on a face mask at his home in Mumbai.

Traditional consumer giants are also hopping on the bandwagon by investing in grooming start-ups. India's Emami Group conglomerate purchased a 30 percent stake in TMC, while Colgate-Palmolive and Mumbai-based Marico Limited both own stakes in rival start-ups Bombay Shaving Company and Beardo.

N Chandramouli, chief of brand insights agency TRA Research, told AFP large firms were supporting start-ups instead of trying to market their own products "because they feel that these smaller players have a sense of intimacy with the consumer". "A lot of brands are now speaking directly to men," Che Kurrien, editor of GQ India, told AFP. "So, exposure levels are very high, and it's very hard not to get influenced."

With prices starting at 150 rupees (\$2) for face wash, the products are relatively affordable and even self-described "low maintenance" men - those who followed a soap-and-shave routine - have switched gears. "Grooming helps men land better jobs, have better romantic prospects or get access to nightclubs." Mumbai-based communications executive Suraj Balakrishnan, 30, whose regimen includes oils for his beard, body and hair said. "When you look good, you tend to feel

good... looking well-groomed and well-dressed gives you an edge." Savvy entrepreneurs have also latched on to the trend by launching beauty salons targeting men and offering services from facials to manicures to waxing.

### Skin-deep change

Unlike their corporate counterparts, niche grooming brands are not shy about tackling controversial issues. A TMC social media campaign for Valentine's Day featured a gay couple, a man applying lipstick, and a father struggling with body image issues. It garnered 16,000 likes on Instagram - with users applauding the company for shooting down toxic masculinity norms. Like South Korea and Japan, which boast thriving markets for male beauty products, India's grooming industry exists against the backdrop of a notoriously sexist culture. Many wonder whether the changes it posits are merely skin-deep. "We are still in the throes of change," said Balakrishnan. "Grooming physically does not mean you're shifting lifelong attitudes completely. Transition takes time." — AFP



A communications executive Suraj Balakrishnan prepares to leave for work at his home in Mumbai.

AFP. Hair removal cream did not seem like a radical step, the 29-year-old said.

"It felt fantastic," he told AFP, adding that it was time to drop the idea of men "grooming (themselves) only to impress women." "I am a man and am doing it for myself to feel confident." From charcoal face scrubs to beard oils to tinted moisturisers, Indian start-ups are hoping to capture the attention of appearance-conscious professionals like Narula. With one in four Indians owning a smartphone - the

## Researchers find ancient rooms under Jerusalem's Western Wall

Israeli researchers on Tuesday unveiled mysterious underground rooms with an unknown function, carved out of the bedrock near where the Second Jewish Temple is believed to have stood two millennia ago. The discovery was made when Israeli students from a pre-military college were excavating a large, lavish Byzantine-era structure from some 1,400 years ago, below the Western Wall plaza in Jerusalem's Old City. Like other sites inhabited for millennia, parts of Jerusalem contain deep layers of archaeology, the result of societies building on top of earlier structures rather than expending resources to clear ruins. Below the Byzantine structure's mosaic floor, the student diggers hit rock bottom.

"At first we were very disappointed because we found we hit the bedrock, meaning that the material culture, the human activity here in Jerusalem ended," said Barak Monnickendam-Givon, co-director of the excavation for the Israel Antiquities Authority. But upon further examination, the researchers came across a "very big surprise," he said. "What we found here was a rock-cut system - three rooms, all hewn in the bedrock of ancient Jerusalem," and connected via staircases, Monnickendam-Givon said. He dated the rooms to the early Roman period and noted the rarity of such structures in Jewish cities then.

The find is "about 30 metres from the Temple Mount," where the Second Jewish Temple, destroyed by

the Romans in 70 AD stood, he said, and contains elaborate carvings and niches, including for the many oil lamps that would have been used for light. The Temple Mount, Judaism's holiest site, now houses the Haram al-Sharif compound, the third-holiest site in Islam that includes the Al-Aqsa mosque and Dome of the Rock. While researchers have not yet determined the function of the rooms, Monnickendam-Givon said they could have been underground food storage for a building that "didn't survive." Or they could also have been a separate facility for preparing food for the city's priests or the temple's pilgrims and visitors.

"We're finding cooking vessels used to cook daily meals, oil lamps, storage jars that people (used to) store their wheat and barley or olive oil here," he said, noting they "don't have any firm link to the temple itself." The excavation was part of a larger project to create an underground expanse showcasing various eras and finds, while prayers continue above at ground level. "There's a general plan here that all of what's now the Western Wall plaza will stand on columns and we're going to excavate below," Monnickendam-Givon said. "There'll be a division between the liturgical activity, where people are praying, and tourists who will walk here with the archaeological findings," he said. — AFP

## Spotify gets exclusive deal on Joe Rogan, the most popular podcast

Spotify has obtained exclusive rights to "The Joe Rogan Experience," the most downloaded podcast in the United States, the Swedish online streaming giant said Tuesday. Spotify did not say how much they paid, but according to the Wall Street Journal they plunked down more than \$100 million in a multi-year licensing deal, which will be available to both paid service subscribers and users of the platform's free version. "It will remain FREE, and it will be the exact same show," Rogan, 52, told fans on his Instagram account, adding that the deal goes into effect at the end of 2020. "It's just a licensing deal, so Spotify won't have any creative control over the show."

The exclusive rights include both the podcast and the filmed version on Rogan's YouTube account, which routinely has more than one million views per episode. Rogan began his show in 2009, in the early days of podcasting, and over the years built a loyal audience. "The Joe Rogan Experience" is a free-flowing show, often going on for more than three hours, during which the animated host has an open-ended conversation with his guest. In 2019, Rogan's show was the most downloaded podcast on Apple devices.

Rogan is unique in the podcasting world: a comedian, a former kickboxer and Taekwondo champion, his guests run the gamut from

mixed martial artists to entrepreneurs, scientists, athletes and health advocates to celebrity actors. For a little over a year, Spotify has slowly been moving into the podcast world. In early 2019, it bought the podcasting company Gimlet Studios for around \$230 million, as well as the production interface Anchor for more than \$100 million. And in February, Spotify acquired The Ringer, a sports and entertainment production studio, for between \$141 million and \$195 million, depending on several variables. — AFP

## Facebook to help struggling retailers create online stores

Facebook on Tuesday unveiled free tools for retailers hit by the pandemic to create online storefronts at the social network and Instagram. The initiative by the massive social network aims to assist the retail sector, which has been crushed by the coronavirus lockdowns around the world. Merchants can easily set up shops on Facebook and Instagram, customize looks and display products, according to the California-based internet giant. "This is the biggest step that we've taken yet to enable commerce across our family of apps," Facebook chief executive Mark Zuckerberg said.

"If you're running a small business or if you're thinking about starting one even from your living room, you have a whole suite of tools available that can help." The primary focus of Facebook's "Shops" is to make it easy businesses to have online storefronts to survive during the crisis and ride the online shopping trend into the future, according to Zuckerberg. "We really hope that our com-



Reverend Sarah Scherschligt, Pastor at the Peace Lutheran church, is seen on Facebook from the basement of her home in Falls Church, Virginia. — AFP

merce solutions help businesses not only survive but thrive during coming months, and adapt to new consumer behavior," said Instagram Shopping product lead Layla Amjadi.

Facebook is already involved in e-commerce, with a Marketplace for selling goods and as a venue where businesses court customers through pages at the social network or Instagram. Businesses have an option to buy Facebook ads to direct customers to their online shops. Sales can be consummated at websites off the social network. Merchants in the US can use a Facebook checkout service to handle transactions, pay-

ing a nominal fee. Shops will roll out in coming months to some 160 million businesses that already use the social network.

### Virtual dressing rooms

Zuckerberg said information about what people buy will be kept private unless shoppers want to tell friends about purchases. Facebook plans to eventually weave Shops into its Messenger and WhatsApp communication platforms. Facebook is also working on ways to sell products hawked during live video broadcasts, a popular form of content at the social network.

"People have been using live video on our apps to showcase products for years, from shoe stores announcing new sneakers to beauty influencers trying on different lipsticks," Facebook said. "Now, we're making it easier to shop for products in real time." Facebook is also working on free tools including augmented reality to let shoppers see how they will look in outfits, cosmetics or other items for sale, according to Zuckerberg. "I hope that we can at least help build some of the infrastructure that businesses need not only in this moment but going forward as well," Zuckerberg said. "Because even when this period and the lockdowns pass... we're going to continue living more of our lives, and doing business, online." — AFP

# Coronavirus gives Trump big stage for pet medical theories

WASHINGTON: America, Dr Trump will see you now. While US President Donald Trump admits he's not actually a doctor, he's long been convinced of his scientific talents – and the coronavirus pandemic has given him the ultimate stage to test his theories. The Republican leader's announcement Monday that he has been taking hydroxychloroquine for almost two weeks as a preventative measure against COVID-19 was a shock.

While Trump claimed to have "heard a lot of good stories," the anti-malaria drug has not been cleared for such use and US regulators warn it can be highly dangerous. On the other hand, the announcement was no surprise: Trump often goes his own way when it comes to science, even mid-pandemic. In April, he mused during a press conference with top health officials whether disinfectants used to kill germs on surfaces could also be injected into coronavirus patients.

"Is there a way we can do something like that by injection inside, or almost a cleaning?" he asked his stunned audience. The next day, Trump said he'd been speaking sarcastically, though there was no hint of sarcasm in his voice. The president's idiosyncratic approach is most visible on the issue of masks. Long after government doctors recommended wearing masks as a globally accepted way of slowing the viral spread, Trump and his staff went without.

This month, after two White House employees with access to Trump got the coronavirus, the order finally went out for everyone to cover up. Except Trump. He even pointedly declined to be seen in a mask while touring a mask-making factory in Arizona.

## Super genius

Trump's strong opinions on scientific matters are wide ranging. He scorns renewable energy and says

that wind turbines cause cancer. During a solar eclipse in 2017, he ignored doctors' advice and looked directly, without sunglasses, into the sun. He has little time for the nearly unanimous world scientific position on manmade global warming and pulled America out of the Paris climate agreement.

The colorful, overweight real estate entrepreneur has declared thumbs down for exercise, saying that his elderly friends who worked out all now are "going for knee replacements, hip replacements". In some quarters, Trump draws mockery, but his supporters often nod in agreement as they listen to his theories during rallies.

Trump credits "good genes" for his self-declared medical savvy, specifically from a "great super-genius" uncle, John Trump, who taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "I like this stuff. I really get it," the president said in March during a visit to laboratories at the Centers for Disease Control, early in the pandemic crisis. "Every one of these doctors said, 'how do you know so much about this?'" he claimed. "Maybe I have a natural ability. Maybe I should have done that instead of running for president."

## A way with doctors

Where Trump has undisputed success is in getting exactly the reports he needs after check-ups with his doctors. This dates all the way back to 1968 when Trump, then an athletic-looking young man, was diagnosed with bone spurs in his heels, leading to exemption from the military draft to fight in Vietnam. Trump has said he doesn't remember which doctor examined him. A 2018 New York Times article quoted the family of a podiatrist who rented property from the future president's father saying that the diagnosis was given as "a favor".



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump and Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue attend an event about the food supply chain during the coronavirus pandemic in the Roosevelt Room of the White House on Tuesday. — AFP

Other than golf, 73-year-old Trump does no exercise and loves fast food. He has heart disease and is clinically obese. But the official health reports since his 2016 election campaign have been glowing. "If elected, Mr Trump, I can state unequivocally, will be the healthiest individual ever elected to the presidency," his then-personal physician, Harold Bornstein, wrote in 2015. Lab results were "astoundingly excellent".

Bornstein later recanted, saying in 2018 that Trump "dictated that whole letter". "I just made it up as I went along," he told CNN. By then, Trump was in the White House and the sterling reports kept coming in. "It's called genetics. I don't know. Some people have just great genes," his then White House physician Ronny Jackson said in 2018. "I told the president that if he had a healthier diet over the last 20 years, he might live to be 200 years old." — AFP

## Unsung heroes? How hoverflies play key pollination role

TOKYO: That bee you see buzzing from flower to flower might actually be an undercover operator: A hoverfly. And a team of scientists wants you to stop taking them for granted. The decline of bee populations in mass die-offs, sometimes called colony collapse disorder, has made headlines in recent years.

Experts blame mites, viruses and pesticides for the phenomenon, which threatens

the global food supply chain because bees fertilize three out of every four crops grown around the world. Now a team of scientists is hoping the increased attention on the importance of pollination to our natural habitat will cast a light on the often-overlooked role of the hoverfly.

"When people talk about pollinators, they often think of the domesticated honeybee that has been part of our lives for thousands of years," said Karl Wotton, a senior lecturer at the University of Exeter's College of Life and Environmental Sciences. "Hoverflies, in contrast, don't have this history, and bees often get undue credit from the casual observer as many hoverfly species are easily mistaken for bees," he told AFP.

Writing in the Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences journal, Wotton and his team argue the insects are sometimes even more effective pollinators

than bumblebees and that their role in fertilizing and protecting crops is often underestimated. "Hoverflies show immense potential as alternative managed pollinators," the article argues. "In addition, hoverflies provide ecosystem functions not seen in bees, such as crop protection from pests, recycling of organic matter and long-distance pollen transfer."

The humble hoverfly – frequently confused for a bee or wasp but exhibiting the levitating flight pattern that inspires its name – exists on every continent except Antarctica and a few remote islands. There are around 6,000 species, which tend to range over much larger distances than their pollinator counterparts, carrying pollen much further afield. This means they are capable of fertilizing isolated plants and doing so in climates that are unsuitable for bees and other pollinators. — AFP



MOSCOW: In this file photo taken on May 10, 2014, a European hoverfly collects nectar on a bud of a cherry tree. — AFP

## Unpaid foreign maids stranded...

Continued from Page 1

from its closed airport yesterday, at first for Ethiopians and mostly male migrants from Egypt.

Outside the Ethiopian consulate on Monday, Sofia was among dozens of Ethiopian women and Lebanese employers trying to secure seats on yesterday's flight. But Lebanese security forces turned them away at the door, telling them to return in nine days and employers that they would have to pay for the flight. Among the crowd, Lebanese employer Eva Awad said she could no longer afford to keep her domestic helper. "We can't find dollars anymore, so she needs to go home," she said, adding that she intended to pay her maid in full.

Nearby, an Ethiopian woman cried next to her suitcase, saying she had not been paid in half a year, had no passport after being thrown out, and had nowhere to sleep. A member of the security forces said the consulate's shelter was full, at least until the flight out yesterday. Consular staff did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

An estimated 250,000 domestic workers live in Lebanon, the large majority Ethiopian, many in conditions condemned by rights groups. A sponsorship system known as "kafala" excludes maids, nannies and carers from Lebanon's labor law, and leaves them at the mercy of their employers, who pay wages as low as \$150 a month.

With staff obtained at high fees from recruitment agencies even before being paid wages, and unhappy workers unable to resign without their employer's permission, some have likened the system to slavery. Activists say calls for help have increased in recent weeks, especially as live-in workers have been in lockdown with families.

"The level of desperation has just gone through the roof. There has been a vast increase in the num-

ber of people contacting us about unpaid salaries," a case worker for activist group This is Lebanon said. She said a number had been sent back to their agencies with few prospects for re-employment.

In recent months, at least two people have posted ads to sell their foreign helper on Facebook, sparking outrage from activists and a statement from the labour ministry condemning human trafficking. Ali Al-Amine, head of the recruitment agency syndicate, said agencies had received increasing numbers of calls from employers struggling to pay salaries in dollars. "If people are employed by the Lebanese state, their income in Lebanese pounds is hardly enough for them to support themselves," he said. But "if the contract was in dollars, we tell them they need to give her what is rightfully hers", he said.

The labor ministry says it has launched a hotline. Immigration has waived fines for those who have overstayed their residency from November, a security source said. After Sofia was thrown out with nothing but the clothes on her back, fellow Ethiopian worker Ala, 29, found her crying in the street and persuaded her own Lebanese employer to take her in. "There are people who are very good, who pay for your travel and treat you like family," Ala said.

The non-governmental Eгна Legna association has also taken in stranded women, according to founder Banchi Yimer. They will now join freelance domestic workers struggling to survive without work during the pandemic. As the lockdown started, "thousands of domestic workers and their kids needed medical and food aid", said Yimer, who used to work as a domestic helper in Lebanon but is now in Canada.

In recent weeks, she and friends have raised more than \$12,000 through crowdfunding to provide food and rent for hundreds of their colleagues. But Yimer is worried about the thousands they cannot reach, donations running out, and the mounting number of people being dropped at the consulate door. "I'm so scared even to sleep," she said. — AFP

yesterday that Kuwait is close to abolishing the sponsor (kafeel) system, which is being blamed as the main cause of visa trading and labor problems.

In the meantime, the health ministry has started assessing the first 10 days of the total lockdown in the country amid encouraging signs that the pandemic could have reached its peak and the number of cases may start to decline soon. But looking at strict measures announced by many regional countries to expand curfews during the Eid Al-Fitr holidays starting from Sunday, Kuwait is unlikely to ease the total curfew before Eid.

But the ministry of Islamic affairs has allowed mosques to turn on their loudspeakers during the Eid prayers but maintained a total ban on prayers at mosques. Loudspeakers will be turned on for about 30 minutes to broadcast the Eid takbeers.

## 30 years after unity, Yemen...

Continued from Page 1

Either "fragmentation" as already in place or a "federal nation" resulting from a political agreement which seems a remote possibility, he told AFP.

Yemen's unity was the result of "revolutionary transformations", Baidhani said. The Zaidi monarchy in North Yemen was overthrown in a 1962 coup by nationalist officers. South Yemen, for its part, gained independence in 1967 after a four-year armed revolt against the British, which controlled the key port city of Aden. The political rhetoric of nationalists in the north and socialists in the south – which in 1970 became the only communist state in the Arab world – focused on unification.

That was achieved in 1990 despite a host of obstacles, including border clashes between the two states' forces in 1979. Ali Abdullah Saleh, who ruled the north since 1978, became president and Ali Salem Al-Beidh from the south was the vice president. But the honeymoon was short-lived, as officials in the south felt they had been sidelined from power. An attempt by the south to break away in 1994 sparked a brief civil war that ended with it being overrun by northern troops.

According to Hussein Hanachi, director of the Aden Centre for Studies, unification was founded on shaky foundations. "It was then destroyed after the ruling class in the north transformed the situation into

one of military occupation after the 1994 conflict," he told AFP. Hanachi was referring to the dismantling of southern enterprises in favor of northern businessmen and to the distribution of land to supporters of the president.

Saleh clung on to power despite the rise of jihadist groups, economic hardships and ongoing violence. The first real challenge to his rule came with the eruption in 2011 of Arab Spring-inspired protests that brought thousands of Yemenis onto the streets. Saleh finally ceded power in February 2012 after 33 years in charge and his deputy, Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, took over. Saleh was killed in 2017 by his former Houthi rebel allies.

In 2014, the Houthis seized vast swathes of the country including the capital, prompting the intervention of the Saudi-led coalition to support the government. Since then, tens of thousands of people, mostly civilians, have been killed in a conflict that has triggered what the United Nations terms the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The country is also faced with the coronavirus pandemic which has so far officially killed 20 people, widely considered a vast underestimate given Yemen's collapsing healthcare system.

A power struggle in the south between the government and separatists – part of the anti-Houthi camp – has further complicated the situation. Just last month, the STC declared self-rule in southern Yemen. "Yemeni unity in its current state has ceased to exist," Maged Al-Madhaji, executive director of the Sanaa Center for Strategic Studies, told AFP. "The war has created a new reality on the ground," he said. — AFP

the curfew must give the other (or others) a choice between accepting it or agree to a divorce (if they so wish)," he said, according to Kuwait's Al-Rai newspaper.

Another committee member, Issa Zeki, told the daily that a man can "make it up" to his other wives by spending more nights at their homes after the lifting of restrictions to "equal the number" spent with each wife. He suggested that the man blindly draw one of the wives' names to simplify the decision of which one to spend the quarantine period with. Abu Othman said he tries to spend equal numbers of nights in both homes, saying he considers himself lucky that the two women live in the same area.

The other men are not so lucky, such as Abu Abdulaziz, 35, who now lives with his parents, second wife and two children in Jahra. His first wife and their three children reside in Saad Al-Abdullah, about 15 km away. "For the first time, I haven't seen some of my children," Abu Abdulaziz told AFP, adding that his first wife was "understanding". However, Abu Abdulaziz's first wife, who requested anonymity, said that despite trying to be understanding, she was struggling on her own amid the current situation. "He could have chosen to stay with me," she said. — AFP

## Municipality to dismiss half of...

Continued from Page 1

employment only when they are more qualified, otherwise the society will pay the price for poor services in health and education.

MP Adnan Abdulsamad said that replacement of expatriates is important but it should be implemented in accordance with an objective and scientific plan to achieve good results. It must also be supported by a prudent political plan. A senior aide to the minister of social affairs said in press statements



Stars

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medium

Yesterday's Solution								
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4	9	3	7	6	8	1	2	5
3	7	2	6	4	9	8	5	1
8	4	5	1	3	7	2	9	6
9	1	6	2	8	5	7	3	4

very hard

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

It's a good day to try relaxation techniques that are a little bit out of the ordinary. Who knows? Maybe you'll even learn something from these unorthodox methods. Because of social distancing, you may have to explore these new practices remotely, yet they can do wonders for restoring your energy, which has been in short supply lately. Give it a try. As the good doctor said, "This won't hurt a bit."



Libra (September 23-October 22)

There's an excellent day on the horizon, Libra. If you're feeling uncertain in your love life, you'll find the courage to discuss these matters with your mate. Even if more time is needed to settle things, make good use of these clear communication channels. You won't be disappointed (and neither will your mate). Dating, unfortunately, appears to be on hold until lockdown is over? unless you're creative about it!



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Currently, you're in the midst of some profound questioning about your emotional attitudes. You'll probably find yourself totally free of inhibitions, much to your delight. Despite your newly opened mind, however, there's still the problem of safe social distancing. Lively conversations and heightened imaginations will have to do for now. Sheltering in place can't end soon enough for you!



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Tune into your growing interest in new technologies, Scorpio. What you once considered almost impossibly futuristic now seems much closer to reality. Now that the world is sheltering in place, don't hesitate to fully embrace the technology that makes it possible to stay connected, work, shop, and socialize remotely. You are by definition a pioneer, so it's full speed ahead to these new frontiers!



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Long confinement does strange and wonderful things to the mind. If your companions seem a bit too stodgy, jostle them out of complacency. You may enjoy experimenting with a bit of naughtiness. For example, how will the people in your life react if you flout certain social taboos, such as talking openly about sex? Since you're comfortable with the subject, why not have fun stretching the limits of convention?



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

For a while, various planetary configurations have been pushing you to become aware that you're a global citizen rather than just another resident in a city or neighborhood. If there's any upside to the current pandemic, Sagittarius, it's that you truly grasp your role in society at large. Is it any wonder that you're also attracted to large-scale movements? It's time to get involved!



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

It's likely that you've been a bit of a loner lately, a situation amplified by enforced social distance. You've been looking at things differently from everyone else, rejecting the individualistic viewpoint in favor of a more global one. Today, you'll achieve a new phase in this process. You may attain some summit of consciousness from which you finally have the ability to forgive a cruel or at least indifferent world!



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

The current configuration of the planets makes you the bearer of a new philosophy, Capricorn. This doesn't mean that you'll become New Age, but you'll see the wisdom of ideas that have evolved from that school of thought. Attending virtual conferences given by the leading minds of the day is less of a commitment than showing up in person. As you seek answers, be careful about embracing any one "truth" too quickly.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Is there a material need that's weighing on your spirit right now, Leo? If you can't solve the problem alone, why not discuss it with your friends? They may have some ideas. Today, the word "impossible" has been banished from the English language. Take advantage of the opportunity to look for solutions in unlikely places.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You're right to feel that you've made real progress in your relationships, Aquarius. "Evolution" best defines your current path. It's OK to be proud of yourself, because the work you're doing as an individual is the best way for you to contribute to the development of society. This way of taking action is no less important than the work done by global organizations. Even in lockdown, your community needs you.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

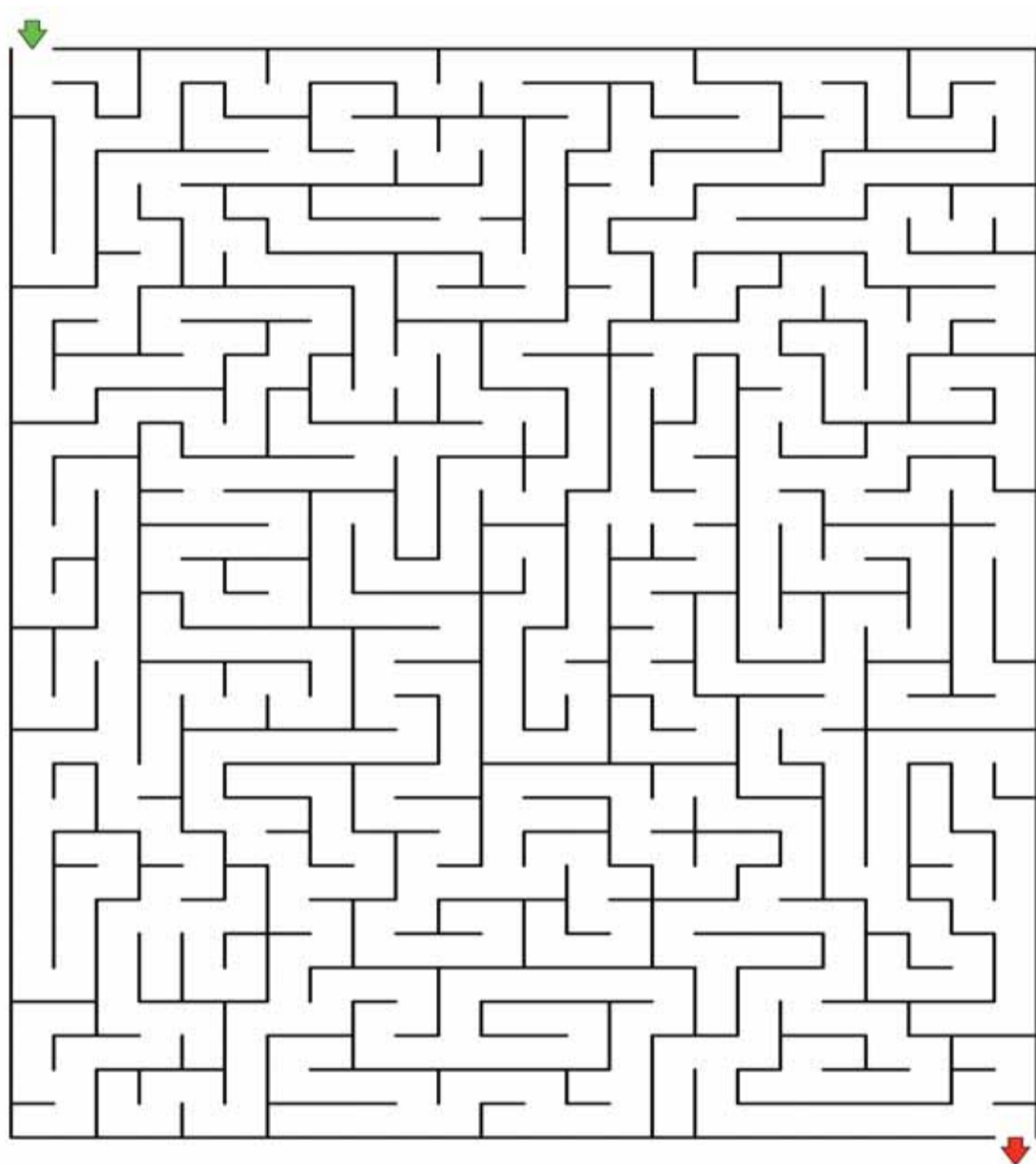
Today's prospects should suit the dynamic, idealistic being that you are, especially right now. There will be some criticism in the air, and of course you'd never miss an opportunity to punctuate your comments with your famous irony. Your viewpoints on corporate rigidity and conformist attitudes are well known, but today your sense of humor prevails and people will listen to you with pleasure!



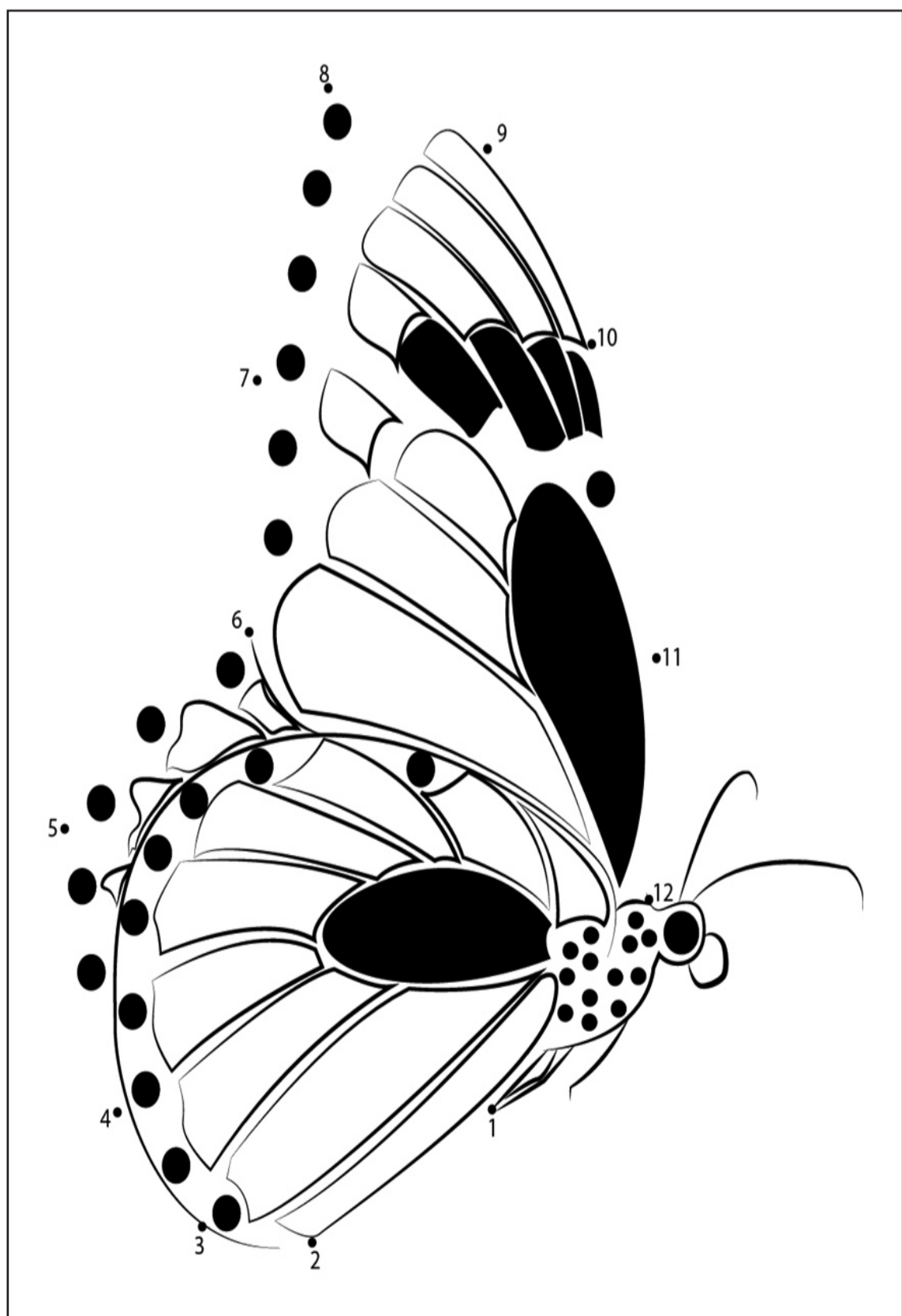
Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Why not radically change the way you behave toward others, Pisces? You're in the process of establishing relationships that are more solid and enriching, with far fewer risks involved. This wasn't always the case with you. When you don't try so hard to seduce and impress, you'll get a lot more likes and followers. Just be yourself to gain approval? why didn't this occur to you sooner?

Find the way



Join the dots



Word Search



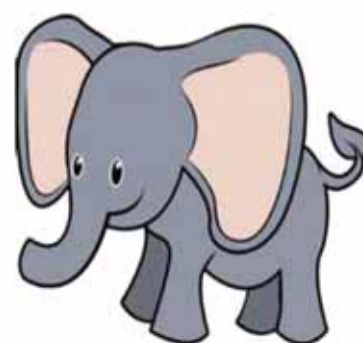
African Animals  
Word Search

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

- AARDVARK
- BABOON
- BAT
- BONOBO
- BUFFALO
- CHEETAH
- CHIMPANZEE
- CROCODILE
- ELEPHANT
- GAZELLE
- GELADA
- GENET
- GIRAFFE
- GORILLA
- HARTEBEEST
- HEDGEHOG
- HIPPOTAMUS
- HONEY BADGER
- HYENA
- HYRAX
- IMPALA
- JACKAL
- LEOPARD
- LION
- MANDRILL
- MEERKAT
- MONGOOSE
- OSTRICH
- PANGOLIN
- PORCUPINE
- RHINOCEROS
- SABLE

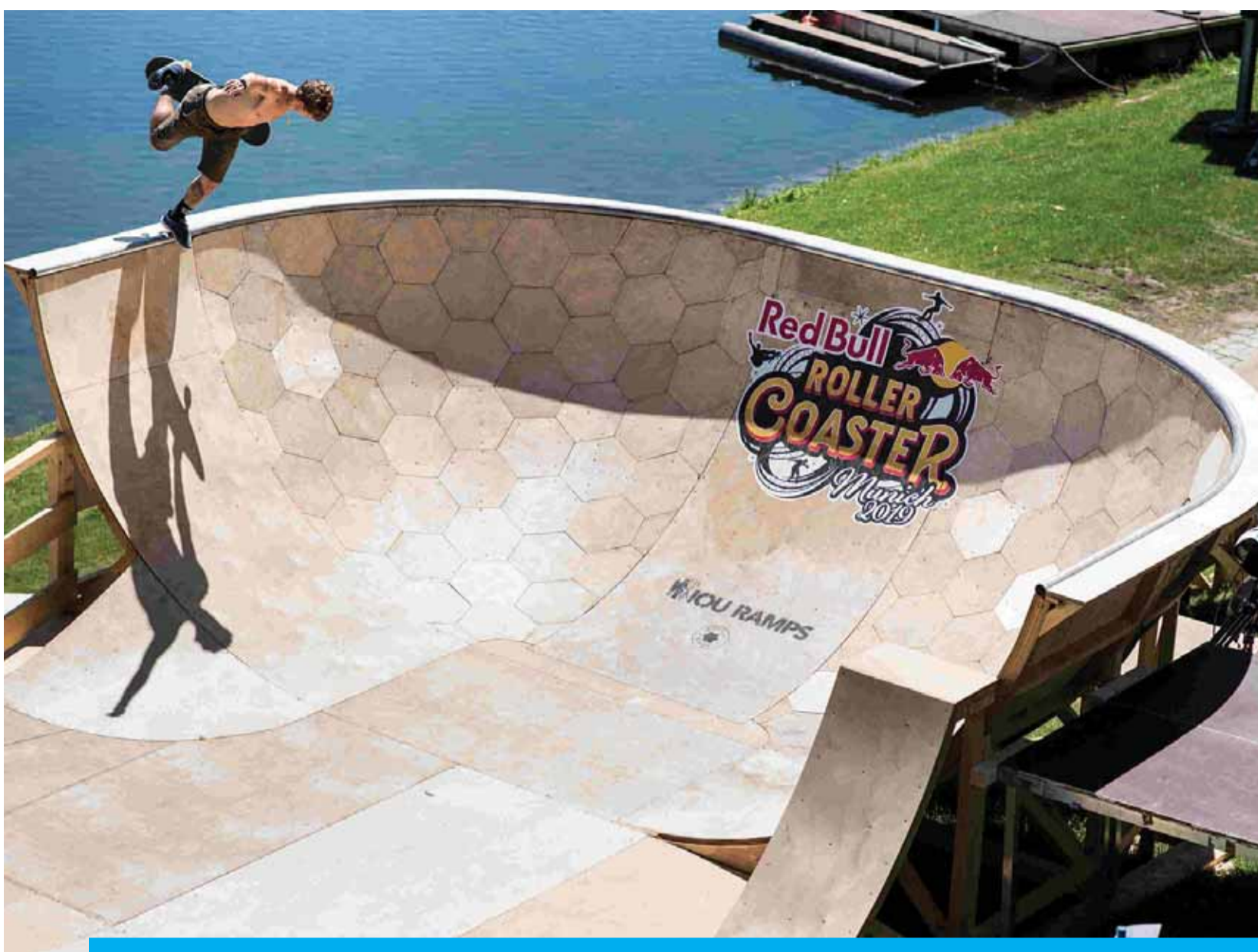
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X	N	H	G	N	M	P	F	W	L	A	X	M	D	U	A	L	L	J	A	N	P	W
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- SERVAL
- SPRINGHARE
- VULTURE
- WARTHOG
- WATERBUCK
- WILDBEEST
- ZEBRA



## Sports

Photo of the day



MUNICH: Jaime Mateu performs at the Munich Mash 2019 Red Bull Roller Coaster in Munich, Germany. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

## No British Grand Prix without quarantine exemptions: F1

LONDON: A British Grand Prix would be "impossible" this year if elite sport is not exempt from 14-day quarantine restrictions when entering the United Kingdom, Formula One said on Tuesday.

Silverstone is planning to host two races behind closed doors this summer, subject to government approval, to make up for some of the lost time in the 2020 F1 season with 10 races already either cancelled or postponed.

Silverstone managing director Stuart Pringle says an agreement in principle has been reached with Formula One to hold the races at the central England circuit, immediately after the season begins in Austria. However, the UK government's coronavirus recovery strategy document set out an intention to introduce a 14-day quarantine rule for international arrivals.

"A 14-day quarantine would make it impossible to have a British Grand Prix this year," a Formula One spokesperson told AFP.

"Additionally it has a major impact on literally tens of thousands of jobs linked to F1 and supply chains.

"We would be travelling back to the UK on F1-only occupied aircraft and all staff would be tested making a quarantine totally unnecessary. "If all elite sport is to return to TV then exemptions must be provided."

Seven of the 10 teams on the grid have bases in England. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson told parliament last week the return of sport on television would "provide a much-needed boost to national morale".

F1 organisers are hoping to start the season with the Austrian Grand Prix on July 5 behind closed doors, followed by a second race at the same venue a week later.

It was hoped Silverstone could then host two races in the final two weekends in July.

Should quarantine measures not be lifted for elite sport then they could also have a major impact on the participation of British sides in European football competition. —AFP

# NFL expands Rooney Rule to boost diversity, backs off incentive proposal

## Brady conducts two-hour workout with new NFL teammates

LOS ANGELES: NFL teams must interview at least two minority candidates when looking to fill a head coaching position under a resolution passed on Tuesday by team owners that is designed to increase diversity, the league said.

Under the expanded Rooney Rule, clubs will also be required to interview at least one minority candidate for coordinator positions and at least one external minority candidate for the senior football operations or general manager position.

Clubs must also include minorities or female applicants in the interview processes for a variety of senior level front office positions including club president as well as senior executives in communications, finance, human resources and legal.

The NFL said the league will also adhere to the requirements. "The NFL is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, which I believe is critical to our continued success," NFL commissioner Roger Goodell said.

"While we have seen positive strides in our coaching ranks over the years aided by the Rooney Rule, we recognize, after the last two seasons, that we can and must do more," he said.

"The policy changes made today are bold and demonstrate the commitment of our ownership to increase diversity in leadership positions throughout the league." The Rooney Rule, named after former NFL diversity committee chairman Dan Rooney, was originally introduced in the NFL in 2003 and obliged clubs to interview at least one minority candidate for every senior head coach role.

Of the five head-coaching vacancies this offsea-

son, just one went to a minority candidate and only three of the past 20 head-coaching openings were filled by a person of color, according to NFL.com.

The owners on Tuesday failed to pass a resolution that would have rewarded teams that hired minorities with improved positions in the NFL Draft. Critics had said the proposal could have led to tensions between coaches across the league and could give off the perception that someone was hired to improve the team's draft prospects and not because he or she was the best candidate for the job.

Meanwhile, six-time Super Bowl champion quarterback Tom Brady worked out with his new Tampa Bay Buccaneers teammates for about two hours in early morning drills at a Tampa prep school Tuesday.

Brady, who spent 20 seasons with the New England Patriots before signing with the Bucs in March, was shown in photographs by the Tampa Bay Times wearing a helmet and shoulder pads with an orange jersey, although not one bearing his traditional number 12.

According to the newspaper, Brady displayed solid arm strength and directed many of his new receivers, walking through routes at times to show where on the field he liked having his targets make cuts in the 7-9 a.m. session.

Buccaneers receivers running deep routes and taking passes from Brady included Mike Evans and Scotty Miller, with running back Dare Ogunbowale, tight ends Cameron Brate and O.J. Howard and quarterbacks Ryan Griffin and Blaine Gabbert also on hand.

Brady, who signed a two-year NFL deal worth



TAMPA BAY: File photo taken on December 28, 2019, Tom Brady #12 of the New England Patriots calls out plays during a game against the Miami Dolphins. Brady worked out with his new Tampa Bay Buccaneers teammates for about two hours in early morning drills at a Tampa prep school. —AFP

\$50 million with Tampa Bay, took shotgun snaps from Bucs center Ryan Jensen before launching his spirals in humid conditions as he tries to learn coach Bruce Arians' offensive schemes.

NFL training facilities have been closed due to the coronavirus pandemic but that didn't stop Brady from starting to develop a rhythm with his new teammates on an artificial turf field at Berkeley Prep, closed to students due to the virus outbreak.

Blacks employers.

All Blacks team mate Tana Umaga saw Nonu as a potential all-time great just months after making his Super Rugby and test debut in 2003, but he failed to cement a regular starting spot during Graham Henry's early coaching tenure.

Limited to a bit part role with the All Blacks and then snubbed for the 2007 World Cup squad, Nonu infuriated fans by agreeing to join an Australian rugby league club.

However, he never finalised the contract and was given an All Blacks lifeline when assistant coach Wayne Smith convinced Henry to make him their first-choice inside centre in 2008.

Despite the stability Nonu attained as a regular in the All Blacks midfield he continued to polarise.

In 2011, Hurricanes coach Mark Hammett reportedly clashed with Nonu over his attitude and influence over the younger squad members and told him to find another team.

While he appeared disinterested at Super Rugby level over the next three seasons, those lacklustre performances were not repeated with the All Blacks.

After the workout, Brady spent about half an hour with his new teammates sitting in the stands and building chemistry he hopes will pay off with a trip to the Super Bowl, set for next February in Tampa.

Brady is set to play in a charity made-for-television golf event Sunday with former NFL quarterback Peyton Manning and US golf stars Phil Mickelson and Tiger Woods. —Agencies

## NFL's Baker, Dunbar plead not guilty to robbery charges

MIAMI: NFL cornerbacks Quinton Dunbar and DeAndre Baker have formally pleaded not guilty to charges of armed robbery in Florida. Seattle Seahawks defender Dunbar formally entered his plea in Broward County Circuit Court on Tuesday, a day after the New York Giants' Baker pleaded not guilty. Both men's attorneys have asked for a jury trial, and Dunbar's lawyer, Michael Grieco, said he thought his client's next court hearing could come within weeks.

Grieco told the Seattle Times that he continued to hope the case against his client would be dropped, saying he had produced five affidavits from four victims and one witness who say that Dunbar did not take part in any criminal activity.

Broward County prosecutor Aaron Passy, however, called the affidavits "suspect". Both Dunbar and Baker are facing four charges of armed robbery in connection with an alleged May 13 incident at a party at a home in Miramar, near Miami, where witnesses told the police the two took thousands of dollars in cash, expensive watches and other valuables from guests. —AFP

## Ma'a Nonu, counted among the greats of New Zealand rugby

WELLINGTON: Nine seconds of supreme balance and explosive power in the 2015 World Cup final underscores exactly why Ma'a Nonu is counted among the greats of New Zealand rugby.

Nonu, who turns 38 on Thursday, was painted early on as selfish and one-dimensional, a player more concerned with style than substance for daring to wear eyeliner and dying his dreadlocks blonde.

His difficult relationship with the media saw few develop a complete understanding of him, but his team mates have described him as intensely loyal and having a sharp sense of humour.

He has also been known to turn up unannounced at his former secondary school to help with coaching and also played for his local club in Wellington at every opportunity, often to the annoyance of his All

He was consistently one of the better players in the side having developed strong distribution skills, an adept short kicking game and ability to help organise the defence.

But it was his try in the 2015 World Cup final against Australia that demonstrated all the attacking attributes that prompted Umaga to believe he was destined for greatness.

His ability to spot space and exploit it, explosive speed off the mark, superb balance, a massive sidestep off both feet and enough top-end pace to hold off outside backs led to the All Blacks establishing a 21-3 lead shortly after halftime.

Nonu simply described the try as "lucky" having received "a good pass" from Sonny Bill Williams.

That quiet, self-effacing reply as he went into international retirement was an indication that Nonu always believed in the 'team first' ethos that both Henry and his successor Steve Hansen expected of players.

"The time I have had with these players has been special," Nonu added after his 103rd and final test.

"Life goes on but we'll always be brothers." —Reuters



Positive strides

## Sports

# Horace Grant: Jordan lied in 'The Last Dance' documentary

## If MJ had a grudge with me, let's settle this like men

**NEW YORK:** Horace Grant, who won three NBA championship rings with the Chicago Bulls, wasn't pleased with the way he was portrayed by former teammate Michael Jordan in ESPN's "The Last Dance" documentary.

The 10-hour film, which focused on the 1990s Bulls in general and Jordan in particular, concluded its run Sunday night on ESPN.

In the documentary, Jordan alleged that Grant was the source of Sam Smith's book "The Jordan Rules," which painted Jordan in an unflattering light.

Grant responded Tuesday in an interview with Chicago's ESPN 1000 radio, "Lie, lie, lie. ... If MJ had a grudge with me, let's settle this like men. Let's talk about it. Or we can settle it another way. But yet and still, he goes out and puts this lie out that I was the source behind (the book).

"Sam and I have always been great friends. We're still great friends. But the sanctity of that locker room, I would never put anything personal out there. The mere fact that Sam Smith was an investigative reporter. That he had to have two sources, two, to write a book, I guess. Why would MJ just point me out?"

"It's only a grudge, man. I'm telling you, it was only a grudge. And I think he proved that during this so-called documentary. When if you say something about him, he's going to cut you off, he's going to try to destroy your character."

Grant said Jordan has a penchant for holding grudges, pointing out that Jordan is no longer on good terms with former friend Charles Barkley.

"My point is, he said that I was the snitch, but yet and still after 35 years he brings up his rookie year

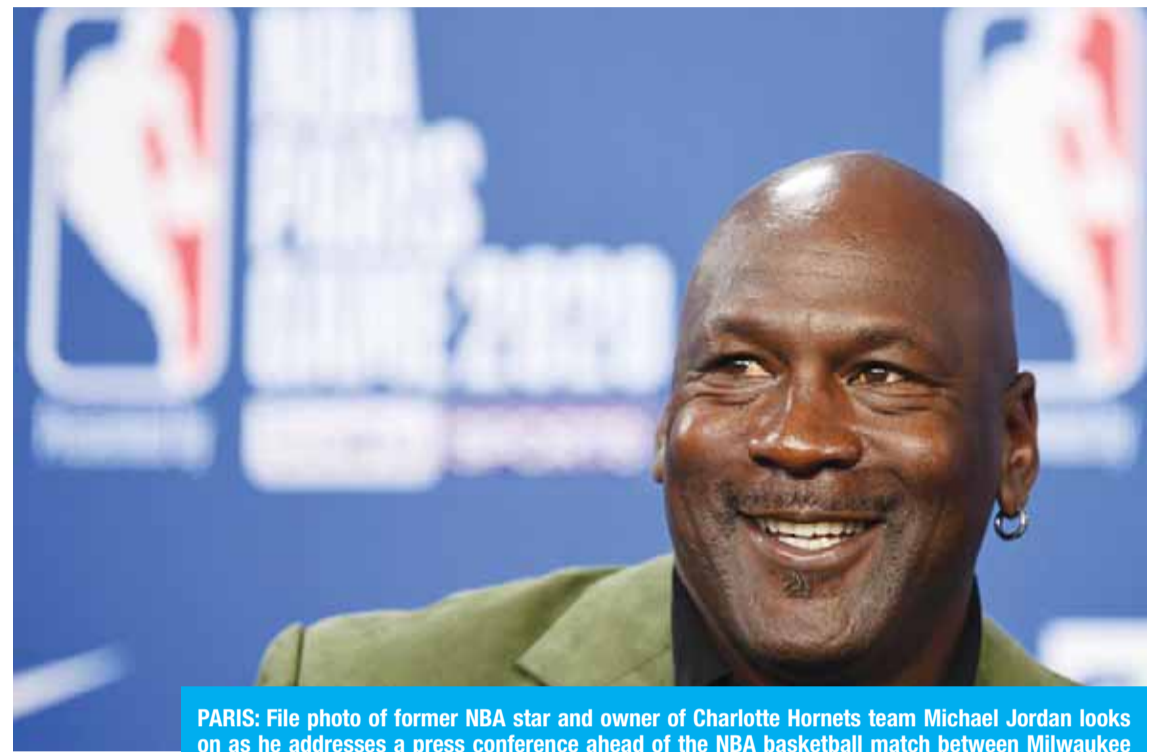
going into one of his teammates' rooms and seeing coke, and weed and women," Grant said. "My point is: Why the hell did he want to bring that up? What's that got to do with anything? I mean, if you want to call somebody a snitch, that's a damn snitch right there."

Grant said of his overall assessment of "The Last Dance," "(It was) entertaining, but we know, who was there as teammates, that about 90 percent of it — I don't know if I can say it on air, but B.S. in terms of the realness of it. It wasn't real — because a lot of things (Jordan) said to some of his teammates, that his teammates went back at him. But all of that was kind of edited out of the documentary, if you want to call it a documentary."

Grant, now 54, played in Chicago from 1987-88 to 1993-94, helping the teams win NBA titles in 1990-91, '91-92 and '92-93. Jordan left the Bulls for a year to play minor league baseball, then returned and won three more championships in 1995-96, '96-'97 and '97-98.

After leaving the Bulls, Grant played two stints for Orlando (1994-95 to 1998-99 and 2001-02 to 2002-03), helping the Magic knock the Bulls out in the second round of the playoffs after Jordan's return in 1994-95. Grant also played for the Seattle SuperSonics (1999-2000) and the Los Angeles Lakers (2000-01 and 2003-04), winning another championship with the Lakers in 2000-01.

"The Last Dance's" portrayal of the Bulls' 1993-94 season without Jordan particularly bothered Grant. He was especially upset by the depiction of the famous incident in which Scottie Pippen refused to participate



PARIS: File photo of former NBA star and owner of Charlotte Hornets team Michael Jordan looks on as he addresses a press conference ahead of the NBA basketball match between Milwaukee Bucks and Charlotte Hornets at The AccorHotels Arena in Paris on January 24, 2020 —AFP

for the last 1.8 seconds of a playoff game against the New York Knicks, reportedly because a play was called up for Toni Kukoc instead of him to shoot.

"I have never seen a quote unquote No. 2 guy, as decorated as Scottie Pippen, portrayed so badly," Grant said. "In terms of the migraine, in terms of the 1.8 seconds, (Jordan calling him) selfish, I have never seen this in all of my life. And the respect of, Pip was out there in Game 6 (of the '98 Finals), could barely walk, getting knocked down on his

back. Tried to do whatever he could to help that team. My point is, why was that 1.8 seconds in the documentary, so-called documentary, about Pip?"

"MJ wasn't even on the team. Why was that in there? We handled that that year really well as a team." Grant finished his career with averages of 11.2 points and 8.1 rebounds across 1,165 games (1,037 starts). He earned his only All-Star appearance during the 1993-94 season, averaging 15.1 points, 11.0 rebounds and 3.4 assists. —Reuters



### Destroy your character

## Klopp backs Liverpool to manage without 'Anfield boost'

**LONDON:** Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp believes his runaway leaders will cope without the "best kick in you're a..." of their Anfield crowd should the Premier League season resume.

English top-flight players are set to be back in training this week after a Premier League meeting on Monday gave the go-ahead to the first stage of the return to play protocols.

If matches do eventually take place again this season, they will be behind closed doors and possibly at neutral venues. Liverpool were left 25 points clear at the top of the table when the coronavirus saw the season suspended in March.

They now need just two more wins to claim a first English title in 30 years and German boss Klopp, having watched his native Bundesliga resume last weekend without spectators at matches, is confident his players can motivate themselves without a crowd. "The competition will make the intensity," he told Liverpool's website. "So it's not about 'oh, Liverpool have to win two games'. "By the way, we have to win two games when we start — it's not 'only two', it's two. We have to win them."

### 'PERFECT PACKAGE'

Former Borussia Dortmund manager Klopp added: "We have to do it, unfortunately, without the best boost in the world and the best kick in you're a... in the right moment in the world, from the Anfield crowd. "But that's how it is. It's 100 percent (that) the perfect package of football is a full, packed Anfield stadium, two really good teams, big fight, super goals and at the end Liverpool win. That's the perfect matchday."

## Serie A group training gets green light

**MILAN:** Italy's Serie A teams have been given the green light to resume group training but will have to wait until May 28 to know whether the season can resume, Sports Minister Vincenzo Spadafora said on Tuesday.

Spadafora told Italian television that government scientists had accepted the Italian football federation's (FIGC) revised health protocol. "The Scientific Technical Committee have approved the FIGC protocol for the resumption of team training," Spadafora told Rai. "It is excellent news, collective training can now resume."

Spadafora said he has scheduled a meeting on May 28 with FIGC president Gabriele Gravina and Lega Serie A chief Paolo Dal Pino to decide on the return to competition.

"We will then decide if and when Serie A will restart," he said. "The important thing will be to restart with the firm intention of completing the championship, then the federations will decide the modalities and formats

to be adopted."

The minister said that a controversial measure of isolating team members for two weeks at club facilities to limit the risk of contagion has been withdrawn. If a player tests positive he will be quarantined for two weeks, while the team will be placed in isolation, and monitored, but can continue to train together.

FIGC president Gravina welcomed a "decisive step on the path of restarting football in Italy".

Gravina said that FIGC Medical Scientific Commission were now working on the protocol for the return to competition. The Italian season has been on hold since March 9 amid the pandemic which has killed more than 32,000 people in Italy. Serie A teams have been training individually since May 4, with a government decree suspending all competition until June 14.

Italian players' union president Damiano Tommasi said Tuesday that footballers would need at least a month training before returning to competition.

"Even if some talk about six, at least four weeks would be needed to avoid injuries," said the former Italy and Roma midfielder. "Caution comes first because at this point you need real certainties from a medical and health point of view." —AFP



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Brazilian goalkeeper Alisson Becker arrives at Melwood in Liverpool, north west England for a training session on May 19, 2020, as training resumes for the first time since the English Premier League was halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. —AFP

"So, a lot of these things are possible but Anfield will not be packed for a while... We love that but we cannot have it. "And it looks like it will be possible — and it is in Germany already possible — to play behind closed doors. "All the physical numbers of the games in Germany were incredibly high, so like 117 or 118 km running, without anybody shouting at you that you have to run. Just because you want it, because you do it for your team-mates."

"That's exactly what we have to do as well." Players are now allowed to train in small, socially-distant sessions not lasting longer than 75 minutes.

"From a physical point of view, the boys are in a good shape, I think. Then we have to start getting used to the pitch, football boots and balls again," said Klopp. "For the body that's a big challenge because these little turns and stuff like this, these football-specific things, they make all the difference," explained the Reds' manager.

"It's like when you come back from an injury, the boys are fit really early from an endurance point of view — they could run a marathon probably — but the moment you start playing football, you can see how different it is." —AFP

## Bundesliga restart draws criticism from sports community

**BERLIN:** The restart of the Bundesliga last weekend has drawn criticism from the sports community in football-mad Germany with world champion rower Oliver Zeidler branding it "a joke" and criticised an "insane system". "It's a joke," Zeidler told AFP subsidiary SID. "If children cannot go to daycare and caterers are not allowed to use their full capacity, then allowing millionaires on the pitch sends the wrong signal."

The 23-year-old, the 2019 world champion in single sculls, said he would like fans to turn their backs on the "insane system" and the "increasingly drifting parallel world" in which football exists. The German Bundesliga became the first top European league to resume after the restart plan was approved by Angela Merkel's government. Regular testing of players, games played behind closed doors and replacements wearing face masks are part of the strict hygiene measures.

Germany currently has 175,210 cases of the coronavirus, which has so far claimed over 8,000 lives. However, Bundesliga clubs want the season completed by June 30 in order to claim 300

million euros (\$327 million) in television money. While other sports are in the dark about when they can resume competitions, the restart of top tier football is controversial. Zeidler says he is allowed to train "relatively normally" again, as Germany relaxes restrictions.

However, he feels the current situation is just confirmation of the preferential treatment football enjoys in Germany. Reigning Olympic javelin champion Thomas Roeherl agrees. "It seems that it's more important to politicians that the ball is allowed to roll than all sports being treated the same," Roeherl, who won Olympic gold for Germany in Rio de Janeiro, told Sport1 last month. However, top sprinter Gina Lueckenkemper says the Bundesliga's restart gives most Germans the sense of a return to normality more than any other sport can.

"Even the ancient Romans knew how to make people happy: food and games," Lueckenkemper, the 2018 European 100m silver medallist, told SID. Nevertheless, the 23-year-old finds criticism of the league's restart "justified and sensible". Fencer Max Hartung said the return of football gives other sports hope of a restart. "When you see that football is being played again, it makes your fingers itch to go back to the planche," said the 30-year-old, who was part of the Germany team which won the 2014 world title. —AFP

## Warriors, Raptors stay unbeaten in NBA 2K League

**LOS ANGELES:** Behind a big scoring night from Charlie "CB13" Bostwick and a massive rebounding effort from Malik "Slaughter" Leisinger, unbeaten Warriors Gaming Squad swept winless Lakers Gaming 2-0 on Tuesday to remain tied for first place in the NBA 2K League.

The Warriors improved to 5-0, level with Raptors Uprising GC, who topped Knicks Gaming 2-0 on Tuesday. The league's other top teams, Mavs Gaming (4-0) and Blazer5 Gaming (2-0), were both idle Tuesday.

Both of the other matches on the opening night of Week 3 also resulted in 2-0 sweeps, with Pacers Gaming defeating 76ers GC, and Wizards District Gaming spoiling Pistons GT's season debut. Originally scheduled to begin its season March 24, the NBA 2K League postponed play due to the coronavirus pandemic. On April 27, the league announced an initial six-week, online-only schedule, with all 23 teams playing eight total matches from their home markets. Action finally began May 5.

Each match is a best-of-three, with the outcome of each three-game series counting as one win or one loss in the standings. The Warriors opened Tuesday with a 69-60 win over the Lakers thanks to 29 points from CB13 plus 16 points and 25 rebounds from Slaughter.

The second game was a 105-47 destruction, with CB13 amassing 53 points and 10 assists while Slaughter piled up 10 points, 23 boards and seven assists. Sten "SAV" Valge-Saar scored 27 points in each game for the Lakers (0-5). Kenneth "Kenny Got Work" Hailey was the catalyst for the Raptors, recording 37 points and five steals in a series-opening, 83-65 victory over the Knicks. Eric "Timelycook" Donald had 26 points for the Raptors while the Knicks' Christopher "Duck" Charles had 24 points and 10 assists.

The Raptors won the second game 78-72 behind 32 points and nine assists from Kenny Got Work plus 28 points from Maurice "ReeceMode" Flowers. Duck's 31 points and seven assists weren't enough for the Knicks.

Jomar "Jomar" Varela-Escapa contributed 16 points, 13 rebounds, five steals and five blocked shots as the Pacers defeated the winless 76ers 64-47 in Game 1. Ethan "Radiant" White scored 20 points for the 76ers.

The Pacers sealed the series with a 61-54 win as Nicolas "Swizurk" Grech scored a team-high 16 points while Jomar had 10 points and 12 rebounds. Rashann "Scretty" Petty had 19 points for the 76ers, who got 16 points and 19 boards from Alexander "Steez" Bernstein.

Rookie John "JBM" Mascone scored 25 points in the Wizards' opening 60-50 win over the Pistons. Ryan "Dayfri" Conger added 14 points and 17 points for the winners while Ramo "Ramo" Radoncic notched 14 points, 13 boards and six assists for the losers.

The Wizards doubled up the Pistons 82-41 in the second game as JBM had 27 points, Justin "Just\_Awkward" Howell scored 23 points and Dayfri put up 13 points, 19 rebounds and seven assists. Devin "DevGoss" Gossett led the Pistons with 13 points. —Reuters

**18** NFL expands Rooney Rule to boost diversity, backs off incentive proposal



**19** Horace Grant: Jordan lied in 'The Last Dance' documentary

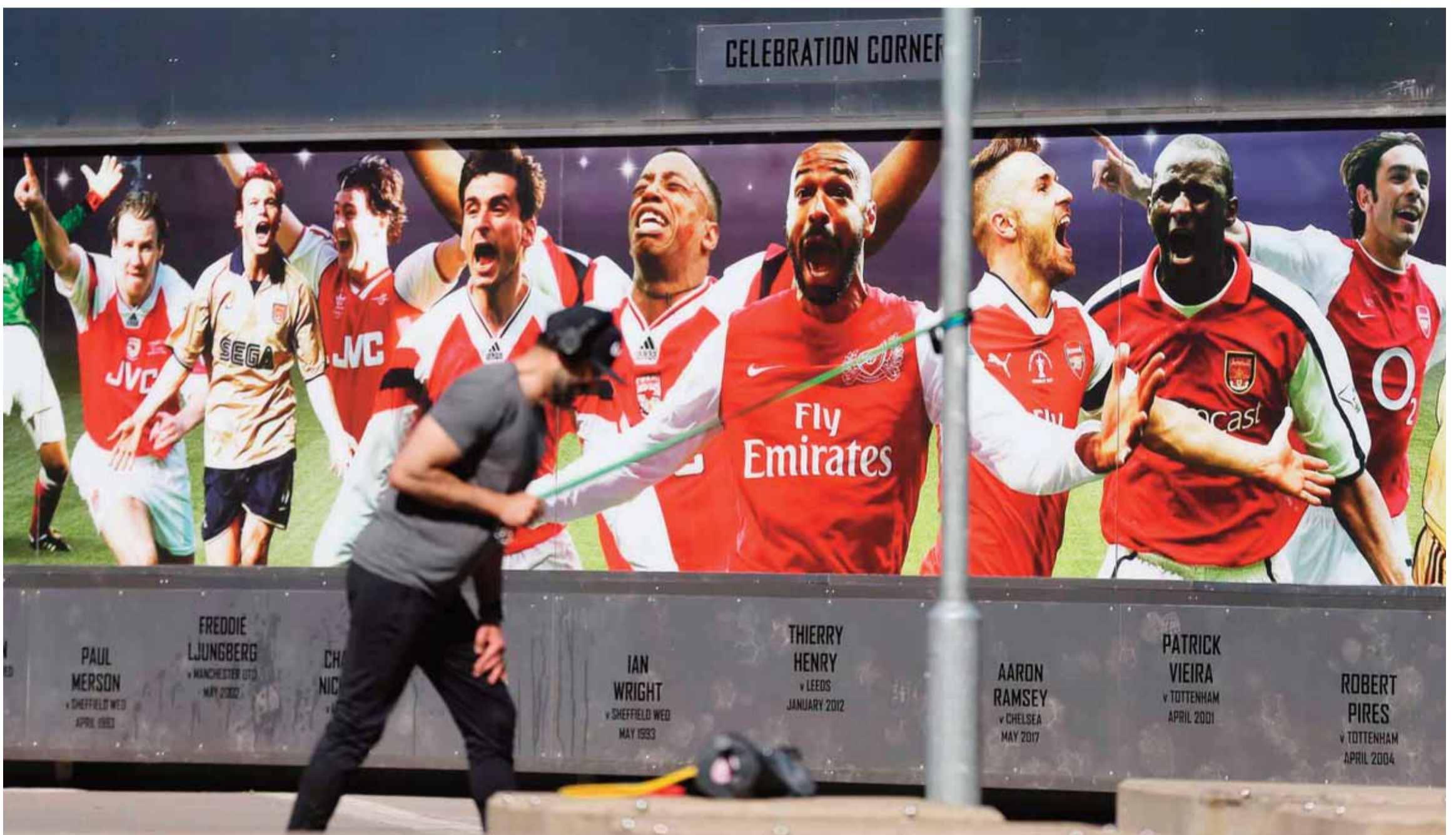


**19** Klopp backs Liverpool to manage without 'Anfield boost'



## Premier League confirms six positive cases

Burnley's Ian Woan tested positive for coronavirus



LONDON: A man exercises outside the Emirates stadium, the home ground of English Premier League football team Arsenal, in north London on May 19, 2020, as training resumes for the first time since the Premier League was halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. — AFP

LONDON: Burnley assistant manager Ian Woan was named Tuesday as one of six individuals at three Premier League clubs to have tested positive for the coronavirus.

The results came after the Premier League announced earlier Tuesday that it had tested a total of 748 players and club staff for COVID-19 on Sunday and Monday.

Premier League officials did not name the individuals concerned but a Burnley statement said: "Burnley Football Club can confirm that after completing a COVID-19 test on Sunday, 17th May, assistant manager Ian Woan has tested positive."

"In line with strict Premier League requirements and following a positive test, Ian will now self-isolate for a period of seven days, with a view to being

tested again week commencing Monday, 25th May.

"Ian is asymptomatic and is currently safe and well at home. He will remain in close communication with club personnel regarding his re-engagement in training once he is clear of the virus."

Premier League clubs began returning to training in small groups on Tuesday after protocols on safety measures were signed off on Monday.

Brighton have previously confirmed three positive cases among their squad at different stages of the pandemic, while positive tests for Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta and Chelsea winger Callum Hudson-Odoi played a major role in the decision to suspend matches on March 13.

The number of positive cases represents just 0.8 percent of those tested and is consistent with similar

infected, the protocol said.

Anyone in the player's personal circle who has recently been in contact with them will be examined, while analysts will use the league's programme Mediacoach to see which other players the footballer came into contact with.

The protocol added that any player who was in close contact with the infected player for more than five minutes will be tested, as studies suggest the risk of infection increases when someone is in contact with someone for over 15 minutes.

**The protocol also states that:**

- Players and officials will be tested 24 hours before each match and have their temperature taken when arriving at the stadium.
- Balls will be distributed around the perimeter of the pitch and will be constantly disinfected.
- Players will be ordered to disinfect their hands before and after the warm-up.
- All players and coaching staff must wear masks and gloves upon arrival at the stadium.
- There will be no pre-match handshakes.
- Managers will hold post-match news conferences via video link. — Reuters

widespread testing conducted by other major leagues hoping to complete the season.

Germany's top two divisions registered 10 positive cases out of 1,724 tests two weeks ago ahead of their return to action last weekend.

Five players from Spain's top two divisions tested positive last week before La Liga's return to group training. Premier League clubs are aiming for a return to action by the middle of next month, but face resistance from players concerned over their welfare.

Watford captain Troy Deeney has said he will not return to training this week due to fears he could pass the virus on to his five-month-old son.

"I can't get a haircut until mid-July, but I can go and get in a box with 19 people and jump for a

header," said Deeney on the Talk The Talk podcast.

"I don't know how that works. No one could answer the questions, not because they didn't want to, but because they don't know the information."

Newcastle left-back Danny Rose claimed players were being treated like "guinea pigs or lab rats". Rose's manager Steve Bruce said the majority of his players are in favour of a return to training and praised "meticulous" planning on behalf of the Premier League to make the environment as safe as possible.

However, Bruce has also questioned the limited preparation time players could have between returning to contact training and competitive matches, warning his squad could "fall down like a pack of cards" with injuries. — AFP

## La Liga to use video analysis

MADRID: La Liga will use a video analysis programme to help it determine if a player is likely to have infected a team mate or opponent if they test positive for the coronavirus once the season restarts, according to a draft protocol drawn up by the league.

The protocol, seen by Reuters, was sent out to clubs in Spain's top two divisions on Monday and is an updated version of the document clubs received earlier this month.

Teams in Spain's top two divisions began training in groups of up to 10 players from Monday, while La Liga president Javier Tebas has said he hopes the season can resume from June 12.

Tebas has said the league's safety measures meant the chance of a player being infected during a game was "practically zero". If a player tests positive after a match, they will be isolated while the facility they are staying in will be cleaned and dis-

## Fury 'mentally happy', eyes Klitschko-like reign

LONDON: Tyson Fury said he is no longer boxing for fame, money or titles but that stepping into the ring keeps him "mentally happy" as he targets a long reign as the world heavyweight champion.

Fury stunned boxing fans in 2015 when he defeated Wladimir Klitschko for the IBF, WBA and WBO belts, but he later struggled with mental health, drinking and drug use which derailed his career.

Fury, who overwhelmed Deontay Wilder in February to seize the WBC crown with a seventh round stoppage, said in March that he would only fight twice more but the 31-year-old now plans to follow in Klitschko's footsteps and fight till he is 40.

"I'm happy with where I am in my career... If I never have another boxing fight, I'll be happy. I've completed the game, I've won every single belt in boxing," Fury told Sky Sports <https://www.skysports.com/boxing/news/12183/11990545/tyson-fury-warns-he-wants-dominant-world-title-reign-like-wladimir-klitschko>, adding he was happy to keep taking on contenders.

"Klitschko did it until he was 40. A lot of the great champions are continuing and continuing. I ain't boxing for money, I ain't boxing for fame, I ain't boxing for a belt. I'm boxing because it keeps me mentally happy and I like to do it.

"Nothing to prove to anybody. Not one thing to prove at all, but I box now, because I love boxing and I've been doing it all my life. Why walk away?" Klitschko, considered one of the greatest boxers of all time, reigned as heavyweight champion for a total of 12 years and beat a record 23 opponents in title fights.

With Anthony Joshua holding the WBA, WBO and IBF titles, a unification bout between the British pair is on the cards but Fury is set to fight Wilder in a rematch first while Joshua is due to take on Bulgarian Kubrat Pulev this year.

The Las Vegas rematch between Fury and Wilder was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and now looks unlikely to happen before November or December at the earliest, with promoters stating they would not fight behind closed doors. — Reuters