

Jose Torres joins BRAVE CF's campaign

BRAVE Combat Federation is doing its part in the fight against the coronavirus (COVID-19). P12

THE DAILY tribune

Sophie Turner: COVID-19 lockdown is like a prison for Joe Jonas

10 CELEBS



WORLD 8 Use malaria drugs only for virus emergencies

No COVID-19 spread in expat community

TDT | Manama

There is no spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the expatriate community, the Health Ministry assured yesterday.

The Ministry's announcement came after rumors were circulating on social media that COVID-19 was spreading amongst expatriates.

Recently, a group of 47 expatriate workers had tested positive in Bahrain, but authorities were able to respond to the situation quickly and isolate them from the rest of the community.

"Contrary to what was said, there is no spread of the virus amongst expatriates," the Ministry stated. "There are 47 expatriates who tested positive recently after they came in contact with a positive case, but this has not caused a community spread."

"The positive cases were isolated and precautionary steps were taken. We have been in coordination with the company's management and they have not left quarantine."

"They are under observation and we decided to have them in quarantine for two more weeks."

Meanwhile, the Ministry said that a video currently circulating on social media regarding a quarantine and treatment centre located in Sitra does not reflect the procedures and arrangements in place at that particular site.

"MOH is taking all necessary measures to contain COVID-19, and is actively caring for all citizens and residents to safeguard the Kingdom's collective health and safety," it said on its website.

The ministry urged the public to rely only on official sources for all information regarding the coronavirus.

As of last night, the total number of recovered cases in Bahrain reached 337, with a total of 228 active cases, three of which are critical. There have been a total of 34,860 tests administered.

Kingdom's economic development remains on track

Ministry of Finance and National Economy publishes 2019 Bahrain Annual Economic Report

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's economic development remains on track, according to the 2019 Bahrain Annual Economic Report published yesterday by the Ministry of Finance and National Economy.

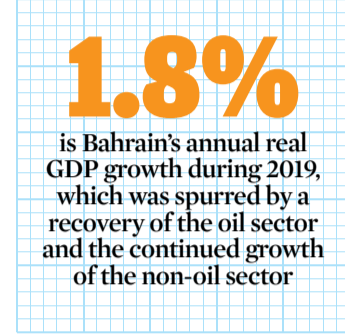
The report incorporates the latest economic data and indicators

and highlights important global and regional economic analysis.

It indicates that Bahrain's economic development is supported by the government's comprehensive fiscal and economic strategy, and the guiding principles of the Economic Vision 2030.

Results show that the Kingdom of Bahrain recorded annual real GDP growth of 1.8 per cent during 2019, spurred by a recovery of the oil sector, which grew by 2.2 per cent and the continued non-oil sector growth of 1.7 per cent, both in real terms.

The hotels and restaurants sector registered the strongest non-



oil sector performance in 2019; growing by 6.8 per cent year-on-year, supported by a 3.8 per cent increase in the number of visitors across the King Fahd Causeway and a 5.5 per cent increase in ar-

rivals via Bahrain International Airport.

The average length of stay for visitors increased by 16.8 per cent, with average daily visitor spending increasing by 1.1 per cent.

Demand for five-star and four-star hotels also saw strong growth in 2019, with occupancy rates reaching 52 per cent and 49 per cent, respectively. Demand for five-star accommodation was particularly strong, increasing by six per cent year-on-year.

The personal and social services sector also registered strong growth in 2019, expanding by 2.9 per cent and bolstered by growth

in the private educational services and private health services sectors.

The construction and manufacturing sectors saw robust expansion of 2.6 per cent and 1.6 per cent, respectively, in 2019, with the manufacturing sector partly supported by the inauguration of Aluminum Bahrain's Line Six Expansion Project.

The report further indicates that financial services remains the Kingdom's largest non-oil sector, contributing 16.5 per cent to GDP, followed by manufacturing at 14.5 per cent and government services at 11.8 per cent.

'Pillars of the health sector'

TDT | Manama

Nurses are an essential pillar of the health sector, given their noble efforts and dedication to serving Bahrain's citizens and residents.

This was asserted yesterday by Health Minister Faeqa bint Said Al Saleh as she made field visits to various healthcare sites accompanied by Ministry of Health undersecretary Dr. Waleed Khalifa Al Manea and assistant undersecretaries.

Minister Al Saleh paid tribute to all nursing staffs, especially

for their commendable contributions in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, which are in line with the directives of the Government's Executive Committee, chaired by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister.

She stressed that they are at the forefront of the battle and that they put the health and safety of everyone as their top priority.

Nurses have their clear imprints in the development and



The Health Minister and other officials during their field visit to BIECC

Health Minister pays tribute to Bahrain's nurses for their noble efforts, dedication in serving the people

"Nurses are at the forefront of the battle to curb the coronavirus, and they put the health and safety of everyone as their top priority."

HEALTH MINISTER FAEQA BINT SAID AL SALEH

modernisation witnessed by Bahrain's health sector, she added, and noted that they are doing their utmost to ensure the comfort of patients while carrying out their humanitar-

ian duties professionally and around the clock.

The Health Minister extend her thanks and appreciation to all nursing teams, in particular marking the World Health Day, which is to be observed worldwide on April 7 under the theme, "Support Nurses and Midwives".

On his part, Al Manea saluted the nursing staff and noted that the designation of 2020 as the nursing year has highlighted their dedicated efforts amidst the global outbreak of COVID-19.

As part of the field visits, the

Health Minister made stops at the COVID-19 examination centres at the Bahrain International Airport, Bahrain International Exhibition and Convention Centre, and at the Accident and Emergency Department at Salmaniya Medical Complex.

The Health Minister, undersecretary and assistant undersecretaries expressed their sincerest thanks and appreciation to all medical professionals, affirming their full support for their tremendous efforts in serving the Kingdom's people.

JUSTICE IS SERVED... ONLINE

Civil, commercial cases now fully electronic

New service allows electronic filing of cases; submitting all defence statements, pleadings, and applications during all stages; and issuance of judgments

TDT | Manama

A major shift in the delivery of justice before Bahrain's courts has been completed.

This was announced yesterday by Cassation Court president and Supreme Judicial Council vice-president Chancellor Abdulla bin Hasan Al Buainain.

He was speaking during a vid-

eo conference with Minister of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments Shaikh Khalid bin Ali Al Khalifa and Information and e-Government Authority (iGA) chief executive officer Mohammed Ali Al Qaed.

Al Buainain said that all procedures of civil and commercial cases of all types and degrees are now fully electronic.

Al Buainain praised the continuous support of the Government Executive Committee, chaired by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister, who had a prominent role in the success of these efforts and achievements. All this comes in line with the comprehensive development



A screenshot of the video conference

goals set by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

Shaikh Khalid expressed his

deep thanks and appreciation to the iGA for their efforts in supporting the implementation

of the electronic system and in providing solid grounds for the advancement of the continuous development and implementation of justice.

In addition, Al Buainain revealed that the new service will allow the electronic filing of cases and submitting all defence statements, pleadings, and applications to the courts during all stages of the case including issuance of judgments. This will include cases in the first degree which was announced recently, as well as the appeal stage before the Appeal and Cassation Courts.

The protection of all constitutional and legal guarantees established for a fair trial are ensured in these electronic procedures.



02 \$1.25billion bond repaid

03 February exports worth BD196million

04 TRA records 89 pc jump in telecom disputes

210 fils (includes VAT)



Lulu Group and Gulf Air bring in second consignment of food



Lulu Group has once again partnered with national carrier Gulf Air to airlift a second consignment of food to the Kingdom. This is part of Lulu Group's commitment to help maintain the food security of Bahrain, and is an initiative spearheaded by #TeamBahrain amidst the global outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19). The special cargo shipment arrived yesterday on a chartered Gulf Air Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner from India, which further solidifies the shared goal between Gulf Air and Lulu Group to serve the people of the Kingdom. Above, the chartered Gulf Air Dreamliner with the second food consignment from Lulu Group

Fresh produce weighing 4,000kg imported



National carrier Gulf Air and Bahraini food supplier All Food Company yesterday imported approximately 4,000kg worth of fresh produce from Europe, using Gulf Air's flagship Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner. Gulf Air and All Food Co., in an initiative spearheaded by Team Bahrain, are working together to ensure that the global outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) does not affect Bahrain's food security. Gulf Air invites Bahraini food suppliers to utilise its cargo operations, which are dedicated to ensuring a stable and safe food supply chain. Left, the consignment of Gulf Air and All Food Co. being offloaded from the plane

BDF chief receives health council president



Bahrain Defence Force (BDF) Commander-in-Chief Field Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa received yesterday Supreme Council for Health president Lt-General Dr. Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa. Shaikh Khalifa lauded the council's considerable efforts to develop and enhance the health services provided to citizens and residents in the Bahrain. Left, Shaikh Khalifa, left, with Dr. Shaikh Mohammed

HM the King ratifies, issues law

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His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa yesterday ratified and issued Law 6 for 2020, amending Paragraph "a" of Article 284 of the Commercial Companies Law issued by Decree Law 21 for 2001.

Article One of the Law stipulates that Paragraph "a" of Article 284 of the Commercial

Companies Law issued by Decree Law 21 for 2001 is replaced by the following paragraph:

"Each partner shall have the right to attend the meetings of the general assembly either in person or by his proxy, provided that the proxy shall not be from among the members of the control board, the company's manager, or among the company's employees. The special proxy shall be in writing and

prepared by the company for this purpose. Each partner shall have a number of votes equal to the shares he owns in the company."

Article Two states that the Prime Minister and the Ministers, each in their capacity, shall implement the provisions of the law that shall come into effect on the day following its publication in the Official Gazette.

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- ▶ Asthma in children
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Dr. NABEEL SALEM
MD, Pediatric Arab Board
Pediatric Fellowship (Germany)
Consultant Pediatrics
(Middle East Hospital, Segaya)

Dr. SHEREEN FAHMY
MBBS, MD
Specialist Pediatrics & Neonatology
(Middle East Medical Center, Hidd)

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\$1.25 billion bond repaid

Successful repayment demonstrates the strength and robustness of the Kingdom's Fiscal Balance Programme

TDT | Manama

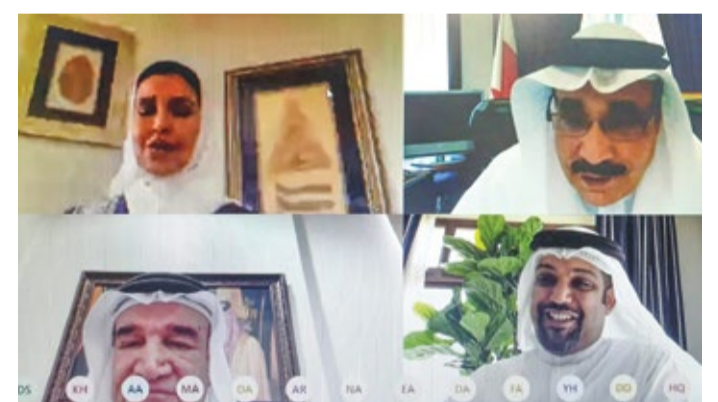
The Ministry of Finance and National Economy announced yesterday that it had repaid an international \$1.25 billion bond that reached maturity on March 31.

The ministry said that the successful repayment demonstrates the strength and robustness of the Kingdom's Fiscal Balance Programme, particularly in light of current market conditions caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The programme incorporates plans to enable the Kingdom to service its funding requirements whilst balancing fiscal consolidation with continued economic growth.

The Finance Ministry added that the long-term fiscal plan, launched in October 2018, had intentionally built in backstops and necessary resilience to service Bahrain's financing needs over the course of the programme, including in times of challenging market conditions and economic volatility.

The Kingdom's planned funding needs over the course of the programme are serviced through market access twice



A screenshot of the video conference

yearly, and through funds received from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and the State of Kuwait, as part of the Financial Support Agreement.

The Finance Ministry added that the Kingdom's funding strategy is calibrated to efficiently tap financial markets at optimal times.

Meanwhile, Finance and National Economy Minister Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa yesterday held a video conference with Minister of Labour and Social Development Jameel bin Mohammed Ali Humaidan and members of the Shura Council Services Committee.

Among the issues discussed

was the draft-law to withdraw BD215million from the unemployment fund to pay for the salaries of Bahrainis in the private sector for three months (April to June).

Shaikh Salman underlined the importance of the draft-law, which has been referred to the Shura Council, in supporting citizens in the private sector.

It is a part of measures accompanying the BD4.3 billion stimulus package approved in accordance with Royal directives to unify national efforts to confront the effects of COVID-19, and to protect the health and safety of the citizens and residents.

IFTDO hails Bahrain's measures to combat COVID-19

Board of Directors of leading global non-profit organisation holds remote meeting chaired by elected Board Chairman from Bahrain

TD | Manama

A leading global non-profit organisation has praised the precautionary measures taken by Bahrain in the on-going fight against the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

This was expressed by the Board of Directors of the International Federation of Training and

Development Organisations (IFTDO). They recently held a meeting that was chaired by elected IFTDO Board Chairman Dr. Ibrahim bin Khalifa Al Dossary.

Considering the extraordinary circumstances the world is currently witnessing, the meeting was held remotely and consisted of 15 board members from different countries of the world.

In the meeting, each member was given the opportunity to explain the situation in their respective country.

Dr. Al Dossary took the chance to share the situation in Bahrain and the precautionary measures taken by the Kingdom, as well as the facilitations it offered citizens and residents.



Dr. Al Dossary during the remote meeting

Board members expressed their appreciation of the initiatives, which reflect the wise management of the government in dealing with the pandemic and which represent the awareness of

the people of the Kingdom.

The board then discussed the meeting agenda, in which several programmes were approved, in addition to discussing the possibility of offering human development consultations to the countries that have been affected most by COVID-19.

It has also been agreed to postpone the IFTDO World Conference, which was scheduled to be held in India, until year-end.

Additionally, board members agreed to communicate with NGOs in some poor countries to provide logistic support in order to assist in efforts to combat this pandemic.

It is worth mentioning that IFTDO is a non-profit organisation

registered in the United Nations,

established in Geneva since 1972. A Board of Directors and a Chairman is periodically elected, and the federation includes most of the profitable and non-profit organisations across the world, with around 500,000 members.

Dr Al Dossary was re-elected for the post after winning the majority of the votes in the federation's recent assembly held in Bosnia. During his chairmanship period of IFTDO's Board of Directors, Dr Al Dossary achieved noticeable improvement in different aspects – a matter that is considered as an international gain for the Kingdom of Bahrain and its citizens, thanks to their dedication, devotion and competencies.

TD | Manama

Bahrain had exported BD196million-worth of products during February of this year.

This was revealed in the month's foreign trade report issued by the Information and eGovernment Authority (iGA), which encompassed data on the balance of trade, imports, exports (national origin) and re-exports.

The value of exports of national origin increased by 11 per cent to BD196million during February 2020, compared to BD177million for the same month last year.

The top 10 countries in terms of the value of exports purchased from Bahrain accounted for 85 per cent of the total value, with the remaining countries accounting for 15 per cent.

Saudi Arabia ranked first amongst the countries receiving Bahraini exports of national origin, importing BD57million from Bahrain. Meanwhile, the UAE was second with BD28million and Oman third with BD19million.

Agglomerated Iron and Con-

February exports worth BD196million

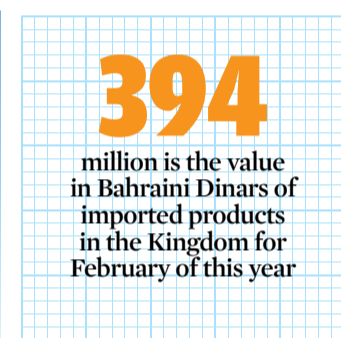
Foreign trade report shows value of exports increased by 11 per cent compared to same month last year

centrates were the top products exported during February with BD29million. Bridges and bridges-sections were second with a value of BD16million, and Aluminum wire not Alloyed third with BD15million.

The total value of re-exports increased by six per cent to reach BD75million during February of this year, compared to BD71million for the same month in 2019.

The top 10 countries accounted for 90 per cent of the re-exported value, while the remaining countries accounted for 10 per cent. The UAE ranked first with BD23million, Saudi was second with BD17million, and the USA came third with BD8million.

Gold ingots emerged as the top product re-exported from Bahrain with BD15million. Four-



wheel-drive vehicles came second with BD8million, and parts for airplanes came third with BD7million.

The value of imports increased by 13 per cent, reaching BD394million during February of 2020 compared to BD350million for the same month the previous year.

The top 10 countries accounted for 68 per cent of the value

of imports, with the remaining countries accounting for 32 per cent.

According to the report, China ranked first when it came to imports to Bahrain, with a total of BD57million. Brazil was second with BD38million and Saudi third with BD30million.

Aluminum oxide was the top product imported into Bahrain with a total value of BD31 million, while non-agglomerated iron ores and concentrates was second with BD24million. Four-wheel-drive vehicles were third with BD15 million.

The trade balance, difference between exports and imports, the value of the deficit of the trade balance reached BD123 million during February of 2020 versus BD102 million for the same month of the previous year, with an increase of 21 per cent.

Fees reduction at public and private schools proposed

TD | Manama

House of Representatives Services Committee chairman Mamdouh Al Saleh confirmed yesterday that MPs are trying to reduce fees in public schools.

This comes after a proposal was submitted by MP Adel Al Asoumi for private schools and kindergartens to decrease their fees by 65 per cent during the leave period, which has been implemented as part of precautionary measures to help contain the coronavirus (COVID-19).

Al Asoumi said that it is only



Al Saleh

right that schools also bear the brunt and not just parents.

"This is an exceptional sit-

uation and everyone is going through a hard time," Al Asoumi explained. "Private schools and kindergartens should understand this and take 35 per cent of the total financial dues in order to cover operating costs only, without profit during this period."

In his proposal, Al Asoumi emphasised the importance of community partnership in such exceptional circumstances.

"Schools are closed at this time and this would result in decreased operating expenses, so there is no need to take the same amount in fees," he said.

"Schools are closed at this time and this would result in decreased operating expenses, so there is no need to take the same amount in fees."

MP ADEL AL ASOUMI

"We are at an exceptional stage, and everyone must cooperate in it and overcome this adversity with minimal damage."

Duo in the dock for using counterfeit bank notes

TD | Manama

The Fourth High Criminal Court recently sentenced a duo to five years' imprisonment and fined them BD1,000 each for forging bank notes and using them in several commercial shops around Bahrain.

The Court also ordered both defendants permanent deportation after they serve their jail terms.

Court files showed that the duo (a Gulf man and an Arab woman) counterfeited several SR500 notes and used them to purchase goods from different shops, and receive the change in genuine Bahraini Dinars.

The case was reported to the police on July 24 last year by their first victim, who informed that the duo cheated him after the female defendant purchased a juicer worth BD8 from the shop he worked at using a fake SR500 bill.

The shopkeeper said that he had returned the remaining amount in Bahraini Dinars as per the request of the woman, who he claimed had also asked to change more Saudi bank

notes.

The victim added that he discovered the notes were forged at a nearby money exchange, and he quickly returned to his shop where he saw the duo were still walking around.

He further told investigators that he was physically assaulted and yelled at by the duo when he confronted them, adding that they walked away from the spot after beating him.

Further investigations revealed that more complaints were lodged against the duo for similar accusations. A second victim informed the police that the female defendant had purchased a BD8 phone cover from his shop, used a counterfeited note to pay, and collected the remaining change in genuine Bahraini Dinars.

A third victim also reported the same to the police. CCTV footage and the confiscated bank notes proved the duo's involvement in the crime.

In the interrogation, the female defendant confessed that her male partner had handed over the counterfeited bank notes to her.

TD | Manama

A leading human rights organisation in Bahrain has called on the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) to urgently consider postponing the monthly payments of Flexi Work Permit holders, in light of the current situation affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Individuals with Flexi Work Permits are required to pay BD30 per month for this facility, which allows them to live freely in the Kingdom and work in any non-specialised occupation without a sponsor.

Bahrain Human Rights

Human rights society calls for deferral of monthly Flexi payments

Watch Society (BHRWS) secretary general Faisal Fulad said that with the coronavirus bringing havoc to all sectors of the economy locally, regionally and globally, Flexi Work Permit holders are amongst the most affected.

"They are people who are earning by hourly or daily wage, contractual, or those terminated because of no business during the outbreak," explained Fulad. "Sad to note that most of them are expatriates earning



Fulad

a low income and holders of Flexi visa.

"It is their cry that the government help and provide them with a flexible payment scheme in this time of crisis, especially with regard to their monthly fees to postpone until economy back to normal.

"It is with our ardent and humble request to ease the hardship and provide a compassionate assistance to these deprived members of the community."

business

TRA records 89 pc jump in telecom disputes

The authority expects disputes in the mobile sector to continue to rise

● **TRA's Consumer Call Center receives over 31,000 calls**

● **TRA operates video call service for subscribers with special needs**

TDI | Manama

Bahrain recorded an 89 per cent jump in telecom disputes in 2019 when compared to that a year ago, the latest Telecommunications Regulatory Authority's statistics said. The authority also said it expects the disputes in the sector to rise as more and more consumers are becoming aware of their rights.

"Mobile services represent the largest segment of disputes consistently, year on year," said Amna Al Ghatam, TRA Manager

of Consumer Affairs.

"Statistically, Mobile subscriptions outnumber every other service in the sector, thus this is expected, paired with the fact that mobile service disputes comprise of mobile data, calls, coverage, billing and roaming, among other factors.

"We welcome and urge consumers to approach us with any issues they face with their telecom services by escalating their disputes through our channels," added Al Ghatam.

60% - mobile disputes

Mobile services recorded the highest number of disputes at 60pc, whereas Broadband made up 24pc, Fixed Line services 11pc and others including calling

cards 5pc.

Out of the 1,604 complaints received in 2019, TRA said it resolved 1,597 of them.

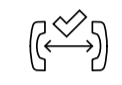
"The rise in the number of complaints reflects that more and more consumers are becoming aware of our role," said TRA Director of Consumer Affairs & Media Shaikh Abdulla Bin Humood Al Khalifa adding, "We take every precaution to ensure that consumers are represented fairly."

The video call service to subscribers with special needs, Shaikh Abdulla said, reflects TRA's effort in such direction.

The service, he said, enables subscribers with special needs to facilitate the communication process and educate them of their rights as consumers in the telecom sector.

He also pointed out that TRA's Consumer Call Center (81188) has received more than 31,000 calls since its inception, with an average of 96pc success rate of responses to the calls.

Telecommunications Regulatory Authority Statistics



95.8%
Average response success rate



31,607
Total number of received calls



97%
Average successful calls answered



1,604
Total Disputes



1,597
Closed Disputes



5%
Others



11%
Fixed Line Services Disputes



24%
Broadband Services Disputes



60%
Mobile Services Disputes

We receive your calls and inquiries on **81188**



Subscribers can raise disputes by contacting the TRA's call centre on 81188, or through the consumer portal on www.tra.org.bh.



Batelco offers extra 10GB of data monthly



Right now, digital connectivity for businesses is more important than ever and we remain focussed on enabling businesses to operate to the max. Therefore, we made the decision to add extra GB's to support business efficiency

BATELCO CEO MIKKEL VINTER

TDI | Manama

Batelco is offering an extra 10GB of Data per month for its mobile Postpaid Business customers for three months, effective from 1st April and valid until the end of June 2020 to support business customers.

The 10GB will be automatically added on top of the customers' existing Mobile Business packages monthly, and will be valid for April, May and June.

This is besides the earliest offer including that of unlimited usage for all Fixed Internet users and Same-Day Home Delivery for devices and services.

The offer aims at helping businesses to continue their operations seamlessly as the

offices of many businesses, especially small to medium companies, are currently closed with staff working remotely from home leading to an increased demand for data.

Commenting, Batelco CEO Mikkel Vinter said, "The current situation calls for the unity of the entire community, and as a proud member of Team Bahrain, Batelco is committed to playing its part in assisting its customers with the introduction of extra benefits and services."

"Right now, digital connectivity for businesses is more important than ever and we remain focussed on enabling businesses to operate to the max. Therefore, we made the decision to add extra GB's to support business efficiency," he added.

Khalifa Bin Salman Port 'moving full steam ahead'

Strict safety measures in place to limit the spread of the COVID-19

TDI | Manama

The Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications (MTT) confirmed that Khalifa Bin Salman Port (KBSP) which handles 99.5 per cent of consumer goods to Bahrain continues to operate at its full capacity, to support the national economy.

The Ministry, in collaboration with the port operator APM Terminals Bahrain, is working actively to maintain critical operations at KBSP by implementing strict health and safety measures to limit the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

Other measures include regular monitoring of Bahrain's and World Health Organisation's (WHO) circulars and guidelines as well as ensuring regular screening of all incoming vessels with MTT.

Incoming vessels are required to declare at least 10 of their last port of calls and previous visits to any of the infected countries, 72 hours before their arrival at KBSP.

The port, as per a circular issued by MTT on 26 February 2020, temporarily suspended crew disembarkation from ships and private jetties and at KBSP until further notice.

Besides, the port, in collaboration with local businesses, is ensuring fast and efficient delivery of all import containers and shipments, including food



items and essential supplies to help Bahrain maintain sufficient food stock for the next six months.

Cruise vessels banned

However, no cruise vessels will be allowed to enter the port until further notices. An MTT circular on 26 February 2020 suspended cruise vessels making the port of calls in Bahrain for two weeks, which was further extended on 8 March 2020.

Temperature screening

APM Terminals Bahrain has also initiated temperature screenings of all employees and customers at various point of entries at the terminal offices including customer services building, main gate, staff gate, and temporary gate pass office. This also includes social distancing measures in addition to the sterilization of port shuttle buses and bus waiting stations.

Control measures include sanitising all public areas and equipment and providing all medical supplies including portable hand sanitisers, gloves, sur-

gical masks, etc.

Work from home

The port has also implemented working from the home policy as well as holding meetings and workshops remotely using electronic applications.

Adopted a strict policy of separation between each shift of critical operators to protect essential resources and limit the impact of any potential infection.

Commenting on the measures, Kamal bin Ahmed Mohammed, Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications

said, "We are working with our partners at APMT to ensure the business continuity of operations in Khalifa Bin Salman Port as it is a vital and important facility as we strive to minimize any negative impact on the supply chain and local trade to support the Kingdom of Bahrain's national economy."

"Our team at the Ports and Maritime Affairs is on hand to help with any customer issues as needed, and we thank all our customers for their cooperation



Kamal bin Ahmed Mohammed, Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications



Susan Hunter

at this time as we work to keep everyone safe."

On this note, Susan Hunter, CEO/Managing Director of APM Terminals Bahrain, said, "We are moving full steam ahead and continue to invest in control measures and contingency plans with operational alternatives, should the needs arise."

For updates or containers movements or general enquiries, customers can call 38885831 or email: combah@apmterminals.com.

Auto industry races to make ventilators

● Repurposing car factories for emergency production has drawn comparisons to World War II

● In Spain, Volkswagen's Seat brand has switched to producing ventilators

● Mercedes has asked its Formula 1 team to get to work

AFP | Paris

The automotive industry is offering its expertise and manpower to the hospital sector as it gears up to build mechanical ventilators during the coronavirus pandemic, an initiative that is being met with some scepticism.

American auto manufacturers General Motors and Ford, French car companies PSA and Renault, Germany's Volkswagen group and Formula 1 engineers have joined the ranks in response to a massive global shortage of the vital piece of medical equipment.

As hospitals around the world face a surge of patients with breathing difficulties from COVID-19, the scarcity of ventilators has forced doctors to make life-or-death decisions.

Repurposing car factories for emergency production has drawn comparisons to World War II, when they were used to build tanks and fighter planes.

But some experts say that in this situation, building critical care ventilators will require different techniques and procedures from what a car factory normally sees.

US President Donald Trump



Mechanical ventilators needed to treat those suffering from respiratory distress due to COVID-19 are in short supply



A mechanical ventilator being developed by Spanish automobile manufacturer SEAT at the company's Martorell factory using a windscreen wiper motor



Mechanical engineers, doctors and the Mercedes Formula 1 team in conjunction with University College London have adapted a device used to help people who have trouble breathing while sleeping to help COVID-19 patients

used wartime economy analogies to justify his appeal to the automobile industry as the country grapples with a mounting number of coronavirus cases. He ultimately used a 1950s law concerning defence production to force one of GM's plants to make ventilators.

In France, meanwhile, a consortium of industrial companies has been created -- including PSA and automotive equipment supplier Valeo -- to manufacture "10,000 ventilators by mid-May", President Emmanuel Macron announced Tuesday.

In Spain, Volkswagen's Seat brand has switched to producing ventilators at its Martorell plant near Barcelona.

The proposed model, which uses the adapted motor of a windscreen wiper, is already undergoing testing with the hopes of gaining formal approval from health authorities, Seat said in a statement.

For its part, Mercedes has asked its Formula 1 team, which was idle due to postponed or cancelled Grand Prix races, to get to work.

The six-time world champion team built a less-invasive respiratory device in order to reserve ventilators -- which require breathing tubes and sedation -- for the most severely affected patients.

The team says it could manufacture some 1,000 units a day with the help of six other UK-based F1 teams which have committed to help build the devices.

A version of the device -- which increases air and oxygen flow into the lungs and is often used to treat sleep apnea -- has already been used in hospitals in Italy and China to help COVID-19 patients.

The "Project Pitlane" mission takes advantage of "the core skills of the F1 industry: rapid design, prototype manufacture, test and skilled assembly," For-

mula 1 said in a statement.

Dependent on suppliers

Some look sceptically on the car industry's entry into the world of medical equipment, however.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, a non-profit organisation founded after the creation of the atomic bomb and which is known for its symbolic "Doomsday Clock", said in a recent article that car manufacturers are not best placed for assembling medical equipment.

"Ventilators might resemble the pumps and air conditioners used in automobiles, but few automakers build their own -- they buy them from specialised producers," the group pointed out.

While carmakers have under-utilised production capacity at the moment, they are still dependent on suppliers who are often overseas, at a moment when supply chains have nearly ground to a halt, it said in its report.

"Facile images of Ford assembly lines building World War II bombers can only get us so far in solving the ventilator problems of today," the group said.

But car manufacturers say they are up to the task.

Renault has put its "techno-centre" outside of Paris, its largest research and development centre in France, to work on developing a prototype using state-of-the-art equipment such as 3D printers

In the world race to get ahead of the coronavirus, time is of the essence.

For Formula 1 and University College London engineers, "it took fewer than 100 hours from the initial meeting to production of the first device," the team said.

This may be a typical lead time in motor racing, but not necessarily in other industries.

Pirelli CEO slams brakes on talk of Brembo merger

Reuters | Milan

The head of Pirelli said there were no plans to merge with Brembo BRMBI.MI after the brakes maker bought a small stake in the Italian tyre maker, downplaying speculation on Wednesday of a tie-up between the two Italian auto brands.

Russia, Saudi not holding oil talks at the moment - Kremlin

Reuters | Moscow

Russia and Saudi Arabia are not holding talks regarding the oil market at the moment and Russian President Vladimir Putin has no immediate plans to have a phone call with Saudi leadership, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said yesterday.

Such talks could be set up quickly if necessary, Peskov said in a statement yesterday.

Carrefour teams up with Uber Eats for lockdown deliveries

Reuters | Paris

French supermarket retailer Carrefour and Uber Eats said yesterday they would launch a new delivery service aimed at helping Parisians buy essential goods and food during the nationwide lockdown triggered by the coronavirus crisis.

German plexiglass firm churns out virus shields

Wiesbaden | Germany

Touted as a simple but effective shield against coronavirus infections, transparent screens have sprung up at supermarket tills and pharmacies across Germany. For plexiglass manufacturer Claus Mueller, business has never been better -- but no one is celebrating.

The Plexiglas Riesner processing plant in Wiesbaden is abuzz with activity as owner Mueller and his workers race to get out the next batch of orders, cutting and bending acrylic sheets to size while the phone rings off the hook.

It's the busiest time in the small company's 114-year history, with requests coming in faster than the supply chain can handle.

"We have endless work but the reason is very sad, so we can't be euphoric about it," Mueller tells AFP.

Demand for "sneeze guards" has surged as companies scramble to protect employees from a deadly virus that is transmitted through droplets from an infected person's mouth or nose, putting at risk those whose jobs don't allow them to keep the recommended two-metre (six-foot) distance.

"It's the sensible thing to do if



Workers cut and bend each piece of the clear plastic into the shape needed

close contact can't be avoided," says Mueller.

In the space of mere weeks, German shoppers have become used to the sight of plexiglass barriers separating them from cashiers in grocery stores, among the few retailers that remain open.

Elsewhere too, supermarket chains are opting for the relatively affordable and easy to install screens, from Carrefour

in France to Walmart in the United States.

Mueller says his sales have doubled in March compared with pre-virus times, boosted by business from hospitals, pharmacies, hotels, banks, and doctors' offices.

The company is also working on a large order destined for local Aldi supermarkets, with the jovial Mueller regularly rolling up his sleeves to pitch in

with the three employees on the workshop floor.

Running low

But he is fast running out of stock, and estimates he only has enough to keep going for another week or two.

"It seems the whole market in Germany is coming to a standstill," Mueller says.

While plexiglass is often used as shorthand for any acryl-

ic sheets, Mueller points out that the high-quality Plexiglas (spelled with a single "s") that he mostly works with is a registered trademark.

And his Plexiglas wholesaler has warned that deliveries of raw materials are grinding to a halt as the virus disrupts global production lines, with many factories shutting down or putting workers on reduced hours.

"We're not expecting new deliveries until early May," Mueller says.

April will likely be spent filling regular orders for long-time industrial customers.

"After earning double in one month, the pressure is off and we can get by for a bit," Mueller says, declining to give numbers.

"We won't go bust, unlike many other companies," he sighs, expressing concern for a friend whose snack bar has been hit hard by Germany's lockdown measures.

According to research firm 360 Market Updates, the global market for acrylic sheets was worth \$5.3 billion (4.8 billion euros) in 2019 and is forecast to grow to \$7.1 billion by 2024.

'Feel safer'

The Plexiglas Riesner company started out as a family glass-cutting business before

founder Karl Riesner's son switched to cheaper and easier to manipulate plexiglass in 1957.

Mueller took over the firm in 2004 after stumbling across it on a government website that connects entrepreneurs with small and medium-size "Mittelstand" companies, considered the backbone of Europe's top economy, in need of successors.

"I ran the numbers and knew I could make it work," he recalls.

Looking past the coronavirus crisis, Mueller expects demand for plexiglass from food retailers will drop off, and predicts that many will eventually remove the screens.

But he can see plexiglass becoming a fixture in pharmacies and doctors' reception areas.

One of his customers, pharmacist Iris Erdelmeier, says she feels more comfortable working behind the plastic safeguard while the pandemic rages, with plexiglass dividers installed at all three of her pharmacy's tills.

"We feel much safer with the protective screens. They also protect our patients in case we ourselves were to be infected without showing symptoms," she says.

"Customers have actually told us they like the screens, and have suggested we keep them permanently."

Who is the free rider on the OPEC+ journey?

FAISAL FAEQ

The journey of the OPEC+ group to cut oil production began in January 2017 and lasted until the end of March 2020.

This entailed 39 months of collaborated efforts among 24 oil producers outside and inside OPEC.

It amounted to total output cuts of some 1.2 million barrels a day, where OPEC producers agreed to cut 800,000 barrels per day (bpd) and non-OPEC producers by 400,000 bpd. Within this, Saudi Arabia reduced output by 500,000 bpd and Russia by 230,000 bpd.

At the end of 2019, the agreement was amended to deepen the output cuts by 500,000 bpd to 1.7 million bpd through the end of March 2020.

Who then shouldered most of the burden of the OPEC+ production reduction?

Since the very start of the agreement, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has absorbed the lion's share of the cuts.

It assumed more than 41 percent of the total OPEC cuts, even though its production share was just 31 percent.

Its motivation has always been to ensure the security of energy supplies and balance in oil markets for the good of the global economy.

Russia's commitment to comply with the OPEC+ output cuts



The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has absorbed the lion's share of the cuts.

was shaky and questionable from the outset, as some resistance came from the Russian oil companies who tried to hinder these efforts.

Russia also claimed it was dif-

ficult to reduce production due to the harsh climate and geological conditions of many production areas during the winter season.

Production figures shows that

on average, Moscow produced about 70,000 bpd more than it should under the OPEC+ agreement.

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia committed more than it

Maintaining Banking System Safety amid th

BY TOBIAS ADRIAN AND ADITYA NARAIN

Today we face economic upheaval potentially more severe than we witnessed during the global financial crisis. The coronavirus pandemic is a different kind of shock. Never before have modern economies shut down at the drop of a hat. From one week to the next, many workers lost their jobs and paychecks. Restaurants, hotels, and airplanes all emptied. And consumers and businesses now face steep losses in income—and potentially widespread bankruptcies.

Pressure on the banking system is growing and higher defaults on debt are imminent. And many now expect a shock to the financial sector similar in magnitude to the 2008 crisis.

The question on the minds of policymakers is how they should prepare for this.

Just over a decade ago, global policy makers came together in an unprecedented display of coordination to launch the development of a revamped regulatory framework for the financial sector. They significantly raised the minimum standards for the quality and quantity of bank capital and

liquidity and succeeded in building a more resilient banking system designed to hold buffers above the minimum that could be safely drawn down in stressed conditions.

In the current crisis, national authorities are taking a host of measures to provide fiscal support, and central banks are opening new liquidity lines. How should bank supervisors respond to ensure continued trust and confidence in the banking system?

Banking system prescription

Like the health experts, bank supervisors are responding to a fast-moving and extraordinary situation. Supervisors must combine the tools from their playbooks for dealing with natural disasters, operational risk events, and bank stress episodes. With its global vantage point, and drawing from past experience, the IMF can offer some additional guidance on the way forward.

Don't change the rules. Doing this in the midst of a crisis will likely cause more confusion. Likewise, be prepared to give banks time to meet rules if they fall short, and hold off on implementing new initia-

Like the health experts, bank supervisors are responding to a fast-moving and extraordinary situation. Supervisors must combine the tools from their playbooks for dealing with natural disasters, operational risk events, and bank stress episodes.

tives—banks should remain focused on maintaining ongoing operations, given the increased difficulties of conducting such operations remotely.

Use the buffers. Regulators have to communicate clearly that capital and liquidity buffers should support continued bank lending, without adverse consequences for bank management. Banks built these buffers well above Basel minimum standards to manage strains on liquidity and revenue loss from missed loan repayments.

Encourage loan modification. Supervisors should clearly communicate to banks to be proactive in rescheduling their

loan portfolio for those borrowers and sectors that have been hard hit by the severe, but temporary, shock. They should also remind banks about flexible credit risk management and the accounting standards for impairment in these situations. Accounting bodies have helpfully stepped in to clarify to auditors how such modifications should be viewed once the economy begins to recover.

Don't hide the losses. Banks, investors, shareholders and even taxpayers have to bear them. Transparency helps prepare all stakeholders; surprises only worsen their response, as was proven during the 2008 crisis.

Clarify regulatory treatment of support measures. Clarifying upfront how banks and regulators should treat fiscal measures, including measures directly targeted at borrowers, credit guarantees, payment holidays, direct transfers and subsidies—beyond any current guidance in the Basel capital framework—would help with overall transparency.

Strengthen communication. Encourage continuous dialogue between supervisors and banks, especially in this unprecedented situation of working remotely with colleagues, customers, and supervisors.

Typically, reporting requirements in key areas, such as liquidity and creditor positions, are enhanced in a crisis, but given operational disruptions, deferring other reporting requirements less material to assessments of financial health may make sense.

Coordinate across borders. Banking is a global business. Broad coordination among national regulators at the international level is imperative. This crisis will pass eventually, and the effects may take time to dissipate, but preserving the integrity of the international framework will be crucial for the credibility and integrity of the global financial system. International bodies like the Financial Stability Board and the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision are working night and day to do just this.

Will it be enough?

Simply put, it may be too early to tell. At this point, conditions in many countries are as severe as the adverse scenario of the stress tests that banking regulators commonly use to assess the strength of their banking systems.

And it might get worse. All of this assumes that eco-

nomics activity could suffer this year, but we should consider more adverse circumstances, we should rethink our playbooks. Some banking s-

1989

Soviet leader **Mikhail Gorbachev** arrives in Havana, Cuba, to meet with Fidel Castro in an attempt to mend strained relations.



1989

ASUS corporation was founded.

1990

Rita Johnston becomes the first female Premier of a Canadian province when she succeeds William Vander Zalm (who had resigned) as Premier of British Columbia.

1992

In New York, Mafia boss **John Gotti** is convicted of murder and racketeering and is later sentenced to life in prison.



Production figures shows that on average, Moscow produced about 70,000 bpd more than it should under the OPEC+ agreement.

mitment to reduce production was approximately 70 percent when it produced 11.2 million bpd.

When comparing the latest oil production data for the month of February 2020, we find that Saudi Arabia reduced its production by 180 percent at 9.7 million bpd while Russia reduced only 44 percent at 11.3 million bpd.

With all that leniency, Russia called for changing the method of measuring its production levels to exclude condensate before the December 2019 OPEC+ meeting. Condensate wasn't originally considered in the output cuts, representing around 800,000 bpd of the total Russian oil production.

Even Russia's compliance in the months of May, June, and July of 2019 was not voluntary but was due to the Druzhba pipe-

line oil-contamination crisis that pushed production below its OPEC+ target, after several European countries halted imports of Russian oil.

Has the US benefited from the agreement? The US was not a part of the OPEC+ journey but benefited the most from the efforts to balance the market and reduce the supply glut, which maintained oil prices at levels that helped the US shale oil industry to prosper.

This has led US oil production to rise from 8.8 million bpd in 2016 prior to the OPEC+ agreement to a record level of 13 million bpd after 39 months of the agreement, and the majority of this increase in production came from the Permian Basin, whose production rose from 2 million bpd in 2016 to more than 5 million bpd (exceeding Iraqi production).

Has the US threatened the OPEC+ market share? Average oil exports from the US have skyrocketed from 520,000 bpd in 2016 before the OPEC+ agreement to an average of 3 million bpd in 2019.

The overall increase in shale oil production went to export because it is not a desirable crude oil quality favored by US refineries.

However, shale oil producers were able to sell it at huge discounts to the Asian market where the majority of OPEC production is exported.

The COVID-19 Crisis

ld restart late have to be recapitalized or even have to also restructured. The IMF has deep experience in helping countries rebuild distressed banking systems through its technical assistance programs, and will stand ready to help.



TOP 4 TWEETS

01

My proposal to the politically correct Automobile Companies would lower the average price of a car to consumers by more than \$3500, while at the same time making the cars substantially safer. Engines would run smoother. Positive impact on the environment! Foolish executives!
@realDonaldTrump

02

The amazing employees of our network service providers have answered the call enabling our Nation to work, learn & entertain remotely at unprecedented rates in response to #COVID19Today @POTUS spoke to industry leaders to thank them for mtg the demand so we can be #TogetherApart
@IvankaTrump

03

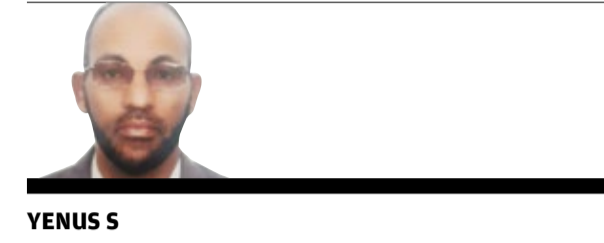
We are continuing to work closely with Governors across the Country as we respond to the Coronavirus together as a Nation. The health of the American people is our top priority.
@Mike_Pence

04

Many American companies have answered President @realDonaldTrump's call to action, joining the national war on the #Coronavirus. Together, as TEAM USA, we will beat this invisible enemy.
@PressSec

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)

Peddlers of sedition...



At the moment all the attention of the world community is focused on containing Covid -19 infection. Governments are sharing information, resources and cooperating in all fields on how to deal with the pandemic. Unfortunately, some governments are trying to use the occasion to interfere in the internal affairs of countries, deliberately sowing the seeds of sedition and chaos.

Bahrain government like all others is taking good care of its citizens against the coronavirus infection whether they are inside or outside the country. While there is low rate of human to human transmission of the virus in Bahrain, most of the positive cases are found on passengers coming from Iran and other countries. In its attempt to bring the citizens currently stranded in Iran, Bahrain has left no stone unturned to solve the crisis the citizens are facing. However, there are some international rules that govern such repatriation procedures to follow known as The International Covid -19 Repatriation Programme (ICRP). This process ensures safe return of passengers from foreign lands and includes the provision of the right medical attention after arrival. Those requiring quarantining and isolating are separated before joining the family and the society.

In line with this international procedure, Bahrain is doing its level best to bring back its citizens from Iran. Challenges remain, however. The lack of direct flights from some destinations in Iran to Bahrain, disagreements with the chartered airlines assigned to carry the citizens back to Bahrain seem some of the factors that are slowing the repatriation process. These loopholes turned out to be good opportunities for some political peddlers to sow seeds of discord between the government and its people.

Iran's media have and continue to vomit poisonous venoms on the subject. They are trying to depict the technical delays as a deliberate government action which is absolutely unacceptable by any standard. No country has committed such a crazy mistake on its citizens as far as it is governed by international rules and regulations.

Qatar's anti Bahrain campaign continues unabated. This time it is interfering in the scheduled flights of citizens from Iran to Bahrain and that it is doing without following the ICRP rules and regulations which puts the health of the passengers, the crew and people they may meet on arrival at risk. This blatant action needs to be condemned. Above all its Bahrain issue and the Qataris have no business to put their hands on. Time will not allow rogue governments trying to score political gains where countries are busy dealing with the economic fallouts and strain in medical services due to the coronavirus infection.

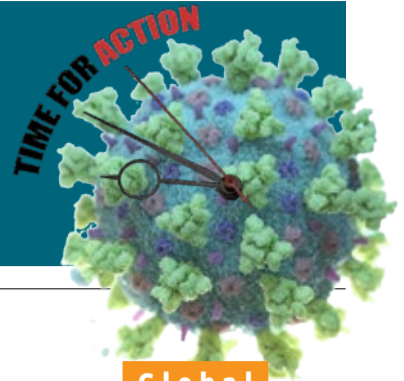
During the times of thick and thin Bahrainis rally behind their government and the social cohesion among the society remains stronger than ever. Qatar's attempt to break the social fabric and Iran's political machinations of the technical delays are simply exercises in futility.

His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa has reiterated that the safety of citizens is government's top priority. He said that it has and never will abandon its citizens wherever they are and will continue to work to repatriate stranded citizens due to the current crisis or any other reason. Speaking after the recent arrivals of those stranded citizens from Iran, the Premier has reiterated that Bahrain government never accepts under any pretext whatsoever, any citizen being subjected to any harm.

The coronavirus crisis has brought longtime political enemies on the same page. Cooperation among countries of different political and economic orientations have become the new normal. The differences have been put aside and saving lives are given top priority. Unfortunately, our neighbours namely Qatar and Iran seem to lag behind the international community's expectations and continue to exercise political profiteering business out of this crisis.

Despite the gewgaws of enemies of the state, the government will continue to look after its citizens wherever they are and work hard to bring them back to Bahrain as soon as possible.

world



Global

Covid-19 Cases:

893,995

Deaths

45,050

Recovered:

189,470

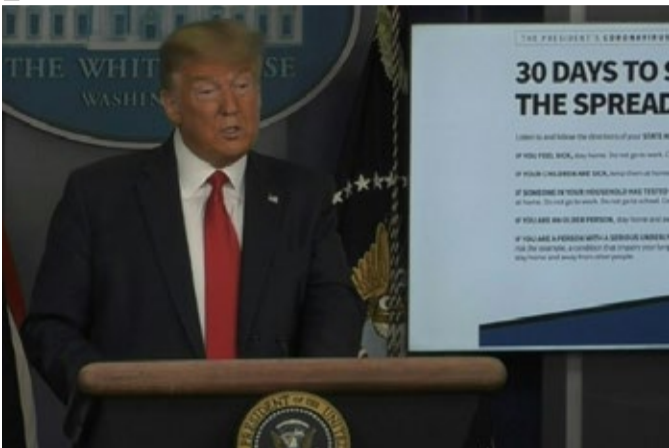
Active cases

659,475

Closed cases

234,520

US headed for 'very, very painful two weeks'



US President Donald Trump addresses a daily coronavirus briefing at the White House

AFP | Washington

President Donald Trump on Tuesday warned of a "very painful" two weeks as the United States wrestles with a coronavirus surge that the White House warns could kill as many as 240,000 Americans.

"This is going to be a very painful, a very, very painful two weeks," Trump told a press conference at the White House.

Trump described the pandemic as "a plague."

"I want every American to be prepared for the hard days that lie ahead," he said.

Top health experts said that the decision to maintain strict social distancing was the only way to stop the easily transmitted virus, even if this has caused massive disruption to the economy with three quarters of Americans under some form of lockdown.

"There's no magic vaccine or therapy. It's just behaviors, each of our behaviors translating into something that changes the course of this viral pandemic over the next 30 days," Deborah Birx, coronavirus response coordinator at the White House, said.

Birx displayed a chart at the press conference charting a range of 100,000 to 240,000 deaths in the United States, when current efforts at mitigation are taken into account.

Infectious diseases specialist Anthony Fauci told the press conference that "mitigation is actually working" and that authorities are "doing everything we can to get it (the death toll) significantly below that."

Trump's clear statement contrasted with numerous

Projections that at least 100,000 people will have been killed by the coronavirus in the United States, even if social distancing measures are carried out, appear to have prompted a major shift in Trump's outlook

recent times when he made the argument himself that the pandemic was comparable to the annual spread of flu.

He appeared to favor this thinking while questioning the need to shut down the US economy through social distancing measures and travel bans.

On March 9, for example, Trump noted that tens of thousands of Americans die from the flu annually.

"Nothing is shut down, life & the economy go on," he tweeted. "At this moment there are 546 confirmed cases of CoronaVirus, with 22 deaths. Think about that!"

Just a week ago, Trump told Fox News in an interview that despite deaths of about 36,000 people a year on average from flu, "we've never closed down the country for the flu."

"So you say to yourself, 'What is this all about?'"

On Tuesday, he said that with no social distancing, the projections ran as high as 2.2 million deaths.

"If we did nothing, if we just carried on with our life," he said, "you would have seen people dying on airplanes, you would have seen people dying in hotel lobbies. You would have seen death all over."

Use malaria drugs only for virus emergencies

AFP | Paris

Anti-malarial drugs chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine should only be used to treat COVID-19 in clinical trials or in case of "national emergency", the European Medicine Agency warned yesterday.

Around the world, countries are expanding access to the two compounds, which are used to treat malaria and are known to have anti-viral properties.

The medicines have shown early promise against the COVID-19 illness in early studies in France and China.

But the EMA cautioned that the drugs should not be used to treat COVID-19 cases unless absolutely necessary.

"It is very important that patients and healthcare professionals only use chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine for their authorised uses or as part of clinical trials or national emergency-use programmes for the treatment of COVID-19," it said.

Both drugs have a number of potentially serious side effects, especially when taken in high



Around the world, countries are expanding access to the two compounds, which are used to treat malaria and are known to have anti-viral properties

doses or administered in tandem with other medications.

"They must not be used without a prescription and without supervision by a doctor; prescriptions should not be given outside their authorised uses except in the setting of a clinical trial or nationally agreed protocols," the EMA said in a statement.

There are also fears of shortages particularly of chloro-

quine, the less risky of the two medicines that is also used to treat arthritis.

Several countries are conducting clinical trials for the drugs as part of their campaigns to quell the COVID-19 pandemic.

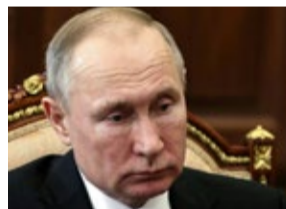
Putin working remotely after meeting infected doctor: Kremlin

AFP | Moscow

Russian leader Vladimir Putin has decided to handle his duties remotely, the Kremlin said yesterday, after the head of the country's main coronavirus hospital tested positive following a meeting with the president.

Denis Protsenko, who met with Putin last week as the Russian leader visited the Kommunarka hospital in Moscow, said Tuesday he had been infected with the coronavirus but was feeling well.

"The president prefers these days to work remotely," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists, shortly before Putin was due to hold a



Russian President Vladimir Putin is handling his duties remotely, the Kremlin has said

cabinet meeting by video-conference.

"We are taking all precautionary measures," he said, adding that Putin was at the presidential residence in Novo-Ogaryovo outside Moscow.

Putin donned a bright yellow hazmat suit for the visit last Tuesday to the hospital. He was also seen talking to Protsenko without any protective

gear but the Kremlin said there is no reason for concern about the president's health. "All of those who were with the president at Kommunarka are being tested daily for the coronavirus," Peskov added, after saying on Tuesday that "everything is fine" with Putin.

Asked if Putin continued to shake hands with those he is meeting, Peskov said: "Of course everyone is now social distancing."

Almost 70 percent of Russia's 147 million population has been ordered into strict confinement over the pandemic, following a first announcement by the mayor of Moscow on Sunday.

Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	New deaths	Total Deaths
USA	191,133	+80	4,133
Italy	110,574	+727	13,155
Spain	102,136	+589	9,053
China	81,554	+7	3,312
Germany	74,508	+46	821
France	52,128		3,523
Iran	47,593	+138	3,036
UK	29,474	+563	2,352
Switzerland	17,137	+28	461
Belgium	13,964	+123	828
Netherlands	13,614	+134	1,173
Turkey	13,531		214
Austria	10,553	+18	146
S. Korea	9,887	+3	165
Canada	8,612		101
Portugal	8,251	+27	187
Sweden	4,947	+59	239
Denmark	3,092	+14	104
Indonesia	1,677	+21	157
India	1,637	+10	45
Dom. Rep	1,284	+6	57
Mexico	1,215	+1	29
Serbia	1,060	+5	28
Estonia	779	+1	5
Morocco	638	+1	37
Hungary	525	+4	20
Lebanon	479	+2	14
Moldova	423	+1	5
Bulgaria	422	+1	9
Cyprus	320	+1	9
Senegal	190	+1	1
Honduras	172	+3	10

Figures as of closing

Aussie Lamborghini driver blames speeding on corona

AFP | Sydney

An Australian allegedly caught driving a Lamborghini at nearly twice the speed limit in Sydney claimed he was rushing to hospital to be tested for coronavirus, police said yesterday.

The man was undergoing mandatory self-isolation after being pulled over for allegedly driving 160 kilometres (100 miles) per hour in a 90 km/h zone on Monday.

He was fined for speeding and had his licence suspended.

Police urged Australians who suspect they may have COVID-19 to call their nearest medical service first.



Representative picture

"Drivers shouldn't break the road rules under any circumstances," Assistant Commissioner Michael Corbo said.

"If you think you may have symptoms of COVID-19 and want to seek help from a doctor or hospital, call ahead of time to book an appointment. "If you are experiencing a medical emergency, contact triple zero."

Police said the 35-year-old man had been tested for coronavirus and was now undergoing mandatory self-isolation.

It was unclear whether or not he had tested positive.

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases	Serious, Critical	Tot cases/1m pop
Bahrain	569		4		337	228	3	333
Saudi Arabia	1,720	+157	16	+6	264	1,440	31	49
UAE	664		6		61	597	2	67
Kuwait	317	+28			80	237	13	74
Oman	210	+18	1		34	175	3	41
Jordan	274		5		30	239	5	27
Iraq	694		50		170	474		17
Egypt	710		46		157	507		7

UN warns of world's worst crisis since WWII

● Italy and Spain account for three in every four deaths on the continent

AFP | Madrid

The coronavirus pandemic has claimed more than 30,000 lives in Europe alone, a global tally showed yesterday, in what the head of the United Nations has described as humanity's worst crisis since World War II.

Italy and Spain bore the brunt of the crisis, accounting for three in every four deaths on the continent, as the grim tally hit another milestone even though half of the planet's population is already under some form of lockdown in a battle to halt contagion.

Spain reported a record 864 deaths in 24 hours, pushing the country's number of fatalities past 9,000.

The toll is only dwarfed by Italy's, where the virus has killed nearly 12,500 people.

Since emerging in China in December, COVID-19 has spread across the globe, claiming over 43,000 lives and infecting more than 860,000 people, according to an AFP tally.

President Donald Trump has warned of a "very, very painful two weeks" as the United States registered its deadliest 24 hours of what he called a "plague".

In a scramble to halt the contagion, governments have shut schools, most shops, and ordered millions of people to work from home.

Cancellations of key events on the global calendar have swept both the sports and cultural worlds, with the Edinburgh arts festival the latest to be scrapped. For UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the extraordinary upheaval spurred by the virus presents a real danger to the relative peace the world has seen over the last few decades.

The disease "represents a threat to everybody in the world and... an economic impact that will bring a recession that probably has no parallel in the recent past," he said.

"The combination of the two



Nigeria's economic hub Lagos is also under lockdown, its streets emptied



Indian traffic police wearing coronavirus-themed helmets pretend to attack a motorcyclist in Bangalore

facts and the risk that it contributes to enhanced instability, enhanced unrest, and enhanced conflict are things that make us believe that this is the most challenging crisis we have faced since the Second World War."

Economic desperation

With most business activity grinding to a halt for an undetermined period of time, scenes of economic desperation and unrest were emerging across the globe.

In Italy, queues were lengthening at soup kitchens while some supermarkets were reportedly pillaged.

Half a million more people now need help to afford meals, Italy's biggest union for the agriculture sector Coldiretti said, adding to the 2.7 million already in need last year.

"Usually we serve 152,525 people. But now we've 70,000 more requests," confirmed Roberto Tuorto, who runs a food aid association.

It was crucial to "ensure that the economic crisis unleashed by the virus doesn't become a security crisis," he warned.

The economic pain of lockdowns is especially acute in poorer nations.

In Tunisia several hundred protested a week-old lockdown that has disproportionately hit the poor.

"Never mind coronavirus, we're going to die anyway! Let us work!" shouted one protester in the demonstration on the outskirts of the capital Tunis.

Africa's biggest city Lagos was just into its second full day of lockdown on Wednesday -- but with some of the world's biggest slums, home to millions who live hand-to-mouth, containment will be a challenge.

Sharpening tone

Wary of a collapse of the world's economy, the globe's leading central bankers have pumped billions of liquidity into the system.

Last week, G20 leaders in turn said they were injecting \$5 trillion into the global economy to head off a feared deep recession.

But with the spread of the virus far from abating, stock markets fell again in Asia and Europe on Wednesday.

In the European Union, the terms of a rescue plan threatened to divide the bloc.

Worst-hit Italy and Spain are leading a push for a shared debt instrument -- dubbed "coronabonds", but talk of shared debt is a red line for Germany and other northern countries.

The tone sharpened this week, with some Italian politicians even taking out an advertisement in a major German newspaper to remind Europe's biggest economy of WWII debts to jolt it into action.

Asymptomatic cases

Researchers said China's decision to shutter Wuhan, ground zero for the pandemic, may have prevented hundreds of thousands of new cases.

"Our analysis suggests that without the Wuhan travel ban and the national emergency response there would have been more than 700,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases outside of Wuhan" by mid February, said Oxford University's Christopher Dye.

At the same time, focus is now turning to how asymptomatic cases may be fuelling the spread.

China on Wednesday said it has more than 1,300 asymptomatic coronavirus cases, the first time it has released such data following public concern over people who have tested positive but are not showing symptoms.

Experts agree that asymptomatic patients are likely to be infectious, but it remains unknown how responsible they are for spreading the deadly virus.

Chinese respiratory expert Zhong Nanshan said in a state media interview last week that asymptomatic carriers could potentially infect "3 to 3.5 people each".

Germany and France were also ramping up testing of the population to establish how many already have immunity.

Latest developments

Tributes poured in yesterday for former Marseille president Pape Diouf, who has died aged 68 after contracting the coronavirus. Diouf, who became the first ever black president of a top European football club, died on Tuesday in Dakar, his family told.



The captain of the US nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt told the Pentagon that new coronavirus is spreading uncontrollably through his ship and called for immediate help to quarantine its crew. But Defense Secretary Mark Esper on Tuesday ruled out evacuating the ship, whose plight bears similarities to that on civilian cruise ships where the COVID-19 illness spread.

Japan's Fujifilm has begun clinical trials to test the effectiveness of its anti-flu drug Avigan in treating patients with the new coronavirus, after reports of promising results in China. Trials in China have suggested Avigan could play a role in shortening the recovery time for patients infected with coronavirus.



The prison system in the largest US state of California plans to release about 3,500 non-violent inmates early to help mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 illness, officials said.

German sportsgear maker Adidas yesterday said it had made "a mistake" when it decided not to pay rent on its shuttered shops in April, after the move sparked a widespread outcry.

A famous Kuwaiti actress has sparked a furore by calling for expatriates to be expelled from the oil-rich nation so that locals can be sure of having a hospital bed if they fall ill with coronavirus.



Hayat al-Fahad, 71, who is known for playing a range of roles in Arabic dramas, told a local television station that foreigners in the country should be kicked out during the health crisis. "We are fed up. If we get sick, there are no hospitals (for us)," she said during a telephone interview on Tuesday. "Why, if their countries do not want them, should we deal with them? Aren't people supposed to leave during crises? We should send them out... put them in the desert. I am not against humanity, but we have reached a stage where we're fed up."

Iran warned the US Wednesday that it was leading the Middle East to disaster in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic after it deployed Patriot air defence missiles to Iraq.

Rupert Murdoch's Australian flagship media group News Corp announced Wednesday it will stop printing around 60 regional newspapers, as the troubled sector received a fresh blow from a COVID-19 advertising downturn. News Corp said papers in the states of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia would cease printing and move online.

Around 4,000 South Koreans working for the US military in their country were put on unpaid leave Wednesday as Seoul and Washington bicker over funding for US forces.

An 11-year-old girl has become the youngest person in Indonesia to die after contracting the virus, with health authorities saying her death was likely linked to also having dengue fever.

Taiwan -- which has been praised for its handling of the outbreak -- will donate 10 million surgical masks and other supplies to medical workers in countries hit hard by the virus, President Tsai Ing-wen said.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern launched a reporting service called Price Watch on Monday which she said received almost 1,000 emails in its first day of operation. "The most common complaint was... the high price of cauliflower, with some emails quoting NZ\$13 (US\$7.70) each," she told reporters yesterday. "Prices of hand sanitiser, bread, meat, facemasks and garlic also featured."



A Kashmiri villager faked his death and travelled more than a hundred miles in an ambulance with four others in a desperate bid to circumvent India's virus lockdown and return home, police said yesterday. Hakim Din was being treated for a minor head injury at a hospital in Jammu when an ambulance driver suggested the 70-year-old fake his death to get past checkpoints, police said. The region's Superintendent of Police, Ramesh Angral, said the four men and the driver travelled more than 160 kilometres (100 miles) in the ambulance, passing many checkpoints using a fake death certificate from the hospital. "The ambulance was stopped at the last checkpoint before they could reach home," Angral.

UK gov't promises more virus tests as death toll jumps. Britain has so far carried out a total of 153,000 tests, while Germany is testing 70,000 people a day. As of March 30, there were 455 deaths in Germany.

Japan will ban entry of foreigners from 73 countries and ask everyone arriving from abroad to quarantine for two weeks in its struggle to contain the coronavirus, with a senior minister warning the country had been pushed "to the brink". Medical experts advising Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told a news conference on Wednesday that the rapid spread of contagion was severely straining hospitals in the capital Tokyo, in Osaka and some other prefectures, and that quick action was vital.

Britain's Prince Charles, who has recovered after testing positive for coronavirus, praised the country's healthcare workers on Wednesday and said it was a strange and distressing time for the nation. Heir-to-the throne Charles, 71, came out of self-isolation on Monday after suffering mild symptoms, with his office saying he was in good health.



British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's photographer has coronavirus symptoms and is self-isolating, the Sun newspaper reported on Tuesday, days after he visited a temporary field hospital set up to treat patients infected with the virus.



Man found dead on Thai train tests positive for Corona

AFP | Bangkok

A man found dead on a passenger train in Thailand has tested positive for the coronavirus, officials said yesterday, as the country's death toll from the contagion more than triples from a week ago.

The 57 year old, who had just returned from Pakistan and was travelling from Bangkok to the southern province of Narathiwat, was seen "coughing and vomiting" before boarding the train on Monday, State Railway of Thailand said.

His body was found in front of a bathroom during the journey. Other passengers were evacuated from the carriage which was then disconnected from



The State Railway of Thailand shows workers wearing protective gear as they disinfect a train carriage following the death of a passenger

the rest of the train and disinfecting by workers wearing protective suits. A post-humous test showed he had COVID-19.

The names of the 15 passengers who were seated in his carriage were passed to health authorities to track down.

It is not clear when the man

arrived back in Thailand. He was carrying a health certificate issued by a doctor in Pakistan on March 26 stating he did not have the virus and was fit to fly.

A state of emergency that took effect last Wednesday barred entry into the kingdom except for diplomats and Thais.

Anyone arriving in the country must have a health certificate and spend 14 days in self-quarantine.

The number of infections in Thailand has soared past 1,700 -- up more than 60 percent from a week ago -- and the death toll has more than tripled to 13.

The government has come under criticism for not acting quickly enough to curb the spread of the virus.

Bangkok authorities announced yesterday all city parks will be off limits, while convenience stores and food stalls will have to be closed between midnight and 5:00 am.

But unlike neighbouring Laos, there are still no orders for residents to stay at home.

Lindsay Lohan



celebs

Joe Jonas and Sophie Turner

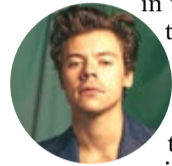


COVID-19 effect: Harry Styles stranded in California

Los Angeles

Singer Harry Styles has shared that he is "stuck" in California and is unable to fly home to the UK due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

During an interview to Roman Kemp on his "Capital FM breakfast" show, the "Fine Line" singer revealed how he is unable to be with his family in this difficult time, reports [dailymail.co.uk](#).



Harry Styles

"I'm actually in California, I got stuck. I was supposed to be coming home then it all got a bit sketchy with the flights," Styles said.

The update comes after his decision to postpone his tour due to the global health crisis. Love On Tour was due to kick off in April 2020 in the UK, but Styles cancelled it. However, he has since shared his revised schedule on Instagram for 2021 that will see the tour kick off in Italy.

Ajay Devgn gives Rs 51 lakh for industry workers amid COVID-19 crisis

Mumbai

Actor Ajay Devgn will be donating Rs 51 lakh to Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) to aid daily wage film workers, who have been left without jobs due to the lockdown amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.



Ajay Devgn

Confirming the news, Ashok Dubey, general secretary of FWICE, said: "Ajay Devgn has pledged to donate Rs 51 lakh to FWICE."

"I'm glad that people like Ajay and Rohit (Shetty) are helping the daily wage workers who need it the most during the downtime. We have received more enquiries from others wanting to provide monetary help. We are providing them the account details. I hope more and more people come forward to help daily wage workers," Dubey added.

Lindsay Lohan working on music comeback

Los Angeles

Actress Lindsay Lohan is making a return to music after a 12-year hiatus.

The former child star-turned-singer and businesswoman posted a 30-second clip to her social media accounts, captioning it "I'm back!" and a pre-save link, reports [variety.com](#).

The teaser shows a television, flashing between moments from Lohan's career as her name is echoed by news anchors. In the clip, Lohan is also seen on the news, at red carpets, partying in Greece, being harassed by paparazzi and dancing in the music video for her 2004 hit "Rumors".

The voices and videos speed up, the television explodes and a smiley face logo flashes across the screen as Lohan says, "I'm back".

Back in August 2019, Lohan similarly teased a new single titled "Xanax". She previewed the track on Virgin Radio Dubai's "The Kris Fade Show" and even posted part of the music video to Instagram. Soon, it disappeared and the song was never officially released.

Lohan first ventured into music in 2002. Her starring role in "Freaky Friday" resulted in her first single "Ultimate", but it was the four songs she recorded for the 2003 film "Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen" that brought her pop stardom.

Jennifer Lopez-backed yoga chain to help build immunity during global lockdown

Los Angeles

Singer-actress Jennifer Lopez-backed yoga chain, will launch a 14-day Immunity Builder Program across 25 countries like Germany, France, China and the US. The virtual yoga sessions will help people remain calm and fit along with boosting their immunity during the lockdown due to coronavirus outbreak.



Jennifer Lopez

"In the current situation, I am glad that SARVA that comes from the birthplace of yoga with its vision of combining authenticity along with modernity, is making yoga accessible to audiences of all ages, languages, and geographies using the power of technology and I am sure this is something that could make a difference to the lives of people around the world," said Lopez.

Los Angeles

Reality TV star Kim Kardashian and her family had to turn to their iPhones to film the season finale owing to the coronavirus lockdown, reports [aceshowbiz.com](#).

Production on the current 18th season of the series was shut down just before Kim and her relatives were able to shoot the last episode.

Sophie Turner: COVID-19 lockdown is like a prison for Joe Jonas

Los Angeles

"Game Of Thrones" star Sophie Turner is "kind of loving" being in quarantine with pop star husband Joe Jonas.

Turner, who is reportedly pregnant with her first child, opened up about how she's coping during crisis in an interview with Conan O'Brien on "CONAN At Home", reports [aceshowbiz.com](#).

"I'm kind of loving it. I'm an introvert, I'm a homebody, if I could stay at home all day I would, so this is great for me,"

Turner said when asked how she's managing with social distancing.

She added that the only time she leaves the house is when she has to go walk their dog.

Turner says currently everything is working in her favour.

"Joe and I... everything seems to be working out in my favour here because Joe is a real social butterfly and I struggle to lock him down and just spend time with me. It's like a prison for him, but it's great for me," she added.

Disha draws inspiration from Sofia Vergara for new video

Mumbai

Bollywood actress Disha Patani took inspiration from Hollywood star Sofia Vergara's character Gloria from the popular sitcom "Modern Family" for a new video.

Disha took to Instagram, where she was seen mouthing a dialogue from the show.

The clip begins with the "Malang"



Disha Patani

star mouthing the dialogue:

"People are always asking me, Gloria, When will you make baby? When Will I make Baby? I don't make baby, I am a baby."

She captioned the video with a "funny face" emoji.

Bollywood actor and Disha's rumoured beau Tiger Shroff's mother Ayesha took to the comment section, where she dropped a few "laughing emoji".

'Keeping Up with Kardashians' season finale shot using iPhones amid lockdown



Kim said on a video chat with comedian Jimmy Fallon in an episode of The Tonight Show: At Home Edition, that the finale would serve as an isolation diary.

"We filmed the entire season except for the last episode. So now that

we've shut down production, it'll be all of us in quarantine filmed separately by ourselves. We have tripods set up, and our iPhones, and the whole last episode will be what we do in quarantine... I literally have no idea what everyone else has been doing!" she said.

Kim said that she had broken her self-isolation to get her youngest sister Kylie Jenner, to help her get camera-ready for the remote Tonight Show chat, conducted at the home of their mother Kris Jenner.

Priyanka Chopra to donate \$100,000 to women doing their bit in health crisis

Los Angeles

Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas has decided to donate \$100,000 along with the organisation BON VIV Spiked Seltzer to the women out there who are working for the betterment of society amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Taking to her Instagram Story, Priyanka revealed that she was supposed to launch a promotional campaign with the brand in the next few weeks, but due to the coronavirus pandemic, she decided to halt the plan. She will now use the resources for the four women who are in need.



Priyanka Chopra

She posted a video in which is seen requesting her users to nominate such women.

Dwayne Johnson confirms 'Hobbs & Shaw' sequel

Los Angeles

Hollywood star Dwayne Johnson has revealed that a "Hobbs & Shaw" sequel is in development, and he is excited about it.

During a recent Instagram Live Q&A, Johnson confirmed the news about the follow up to "Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw", which minted \$759 million worldwide, reports [daily-mail.co.uk](#).

"We are developing now the next film, the next ('Hobbs & Shaw;') movie, and I'm pretty excited about it," said the 47-year-old star, who appeared in the successful "Fast & Furious" spin-off alongside Jason Statham last year.



Dwayne Johnson

SUDOKU

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8		5		2	1			
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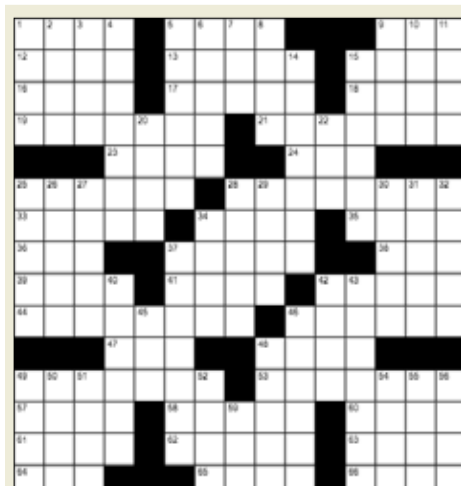
Yesterday's solution

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

How to play

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

CROSSWORD



Across

1- Hill toy; 5- Nightclub of song; 9- Russian fighter; 12- Arrived; 13- Butler's love; 15- Art movement; 16- Omnium-gatherum; 17- Tears down; 18- "A Death in the Family" author James; 19- Soldier; 21- Reclusive; 23- Endoskeletal component; 24- Drop the ball; 25- Eye membrane; 28- Addictive substance; 33- Main artery; 34- Sensitivity; 35- "Peter Pan" pooch; 36- This... stickup!; 37- Scruffs; 38- Sprinted; 39- Ailing; 41- Mountain range in central Europe; 42- Danny's daughter; 44- Doorway; 46- Sock pattern; 47- Question; 48- Busy as...; 49- Quick visual inspection; 53- Atheistic; 57- "Judith" composer; 58- Newsboy's cry; 60- Zeno's home; 61- Intend; 62- More current; 63- Search; 64- Awfully long time; 65- Like some dorms; 66- Cong. meeting;

Down

1- Garbage boat; 2- In... land; 3- Islamic ruler; 4- Re-enter the atmosphere; 5- Crownlike object; 6- Chicago's airport; 7- La... Bolivia; 8- Geographical expanse; 9- Biblical gift bearers; 10- Thought; 11- Scottish Celt; 14- Maintains; 15- Brand of polyester fiber; 20- New Rochelle college; 22- Tolkien ogre; 25- Worker's reward; 26- Red fluorescent dye; 27- Area of land; 28- One of the two equal sections of a cone; 29- Breezes through; 30- Loiter; 31- Total; 32- Boat often made of birchbark, canvas, or fiberglass; 34- Apply powder to oneself; 37- Durable yellow fabric; 40- Mythical sea monster; 42- TV horse; 43- Eternal; 45- Nitwit; 46- On deck, perhaps; 48- Give consent; 49- Gammy; 50- Hydrox rival; 51-... even keel; 52- Corp. VIP, briefly; 54- Gen. Robert...; 55- Goes out with; 56- Fifth Avenue store; 59- Tango need;

Yesterday's solution

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

SPORTS
sports

Wimbledon cancelled for first time since WWII

AFP | London

Wimbledon organisers yesterday scrapped the oldest Grand Slam tennis tournament for the first time since World War II as the coronavirus wreaks further havoc on the global sporting calendar.

The cancellation of the only grasscourt major at the All England Club leaves the season in disarray, with no tennis due to be played until mid-July.

"Devastated," tweeted eight-time champion Roger Federer, while Serena Williams, who has won the tournament seven times, said she was shocked by the momentous decision.

Wimbledon was due to run for two weeks from June 29, with Novak Djokovic and Simona Halep set to defend their singles titles.

But tournament chiefs bowed to the inevitable yesterday, saying in a statement that they had made the decision with "great regret".

All England Club chairman Ian Hewitt said the decision had not been taken lightly.

"It has weighed heavily on our minds that the staging of The Championships has only been interrupted previously by world wars," he said.

"But, following thorough and



A general view of The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, best known as the venue for the Wimbledon Championships

extensive consideration of all scenarios, we believe that it is a measure of this global crisis that it is ultimately the right decision to cancel this year's Championships."

Halep tweeted her disappointment.

"So sad to hear @Wimbledon won't take place this year," she said. "Last year's final will forever be one of the happiest days of my life! But we are going through something bigger than tennis and Wimbledon will be back! And it means I have even longer to look forward to de-

fending my title."

The decision to cancel the tournament was widely expected, with the world struggling to contain the spread of COVID-19, which has infected more than 840,000 people worldwide and killed over 40,000.

It also prompted the ATP and WTA to cancel the grasscourt swing in the build-up to Wimbledon, meaning the tennis season will not recommence until July 13 at the earliest.

The US Tennis Association responded by saying the US Open was still due to take place as

planned, from August 31 to September 13.

"At this time the USTA still plans to host the US Open as scheduled, and we continue to hone plans to stage the tournament," it said in a statement.

"The USTA is carefully monitoring the rapidly-changing environment surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, and is preparing for all contingencies."

Organisers had earlier ruled out playing Wimbledon behind closed doors and postponing the event would also have created its own problems, with shorter days later in the English summer.



Following thorough and extensive consideration of all scenarios, we believe that it is a measure of this global crisis that it is ultimately the right decision to cancel this year's Championships

IAN HEWITT

Beijing 2022 Olympics face 'special situation' after Tokyo delay

AFP | Beijing

Beijing 2022 organisers said they face "a special situation" after the postponement of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics means less than six months between the Summer and Winter Games.

The Tokyo Olympics are now scheduled to run from July 23 to August 8, 2021 after they were put back a year because of the coronavirus pandemic.

However, with the Beijing Winter Games beginning on February 4, 2022 there is the unusual challenge of almost back-to-back Olympics.

"The new dates of the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games mean we are faced with a special situation where the Summer Games and Winter Games are to be held in half-a-year," a Beijing 2022 official told Xinhua news agency.



A general view of Olympic rings sculpture at the national 'Birds Nest' stadium in Beijing

"We will have a detailed assessment of how the new dates of Tokyo 2020 will affect the Beijing 2022 Games.

"In the meantime, will keep close communication with the IOC (International Olympic Committee) and the Olympic family to handle the situation properly and push forward our preparation in all aspects."

Beijing will become the first city to host both the Summer and Winter Games, having held the 2008 Olympics.

Olympic flame passed into Fukushima's safekeeping

Reuters | Tokyo

Tokyo 2020 organisers left the Olympic flame in the hands of Fukushima Prefecture yesterday where it will be on display in a lantern for the next month after the Games were postponed for a year due to the coronavirus outbreak.

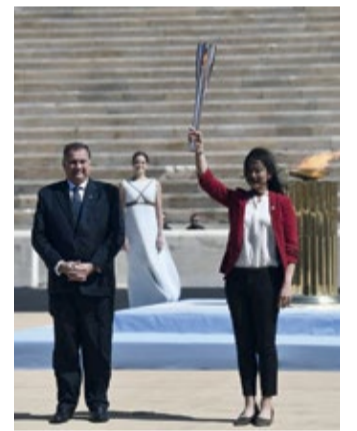
The handover took place at a subdued ceremony at the J-Village National Training Centre in Fukushima, which was originally set to be the starting point of the torch relay.

Only Tokyo 2020 COO Yukihiro Numomura made the trip north from the organising committee.

"This is a (symbol of) hope for the world to celebrate the best of human beings through Tokyo 2020 after we overcome the serious coronavirus," said Numomura to start the ceremony.

He then handed the Olympic flame to Makoto Noji from the Fukushima government.

"I strongly believe that the Olympic flame departure from the J-Village next year will be a strong message that we can



Former Japanese swimmer Imoto Naoko (R) holds the Olympic torch next to Greek Sports Minister Spyros Capralos (L) during the Olympic flame handover ceremony (file photo)

overcome whatever difficulty," said Noji.

"(It is a) symbol of hope - after we overcome this coronavirus disease we are now facing, with the people, not only from Japan, but from all over the world."

The flame will stay on display in the J-Village until April 30 before being moved to Tokyo. Organisers have not yet decided where in the Japanese capital it will be displayed.

Silverstone holding out until end of April on British GP

Reuters | London

British Grand Prix organisers have set an end of April deadline to decide whether the country's Formula One race goes ahead as scheduled in July or becomes another casualty of the coronavirus.

The race, a highlight of a British sporting summer that looks likely to be wiped out by the pandemic, has been the best attended on the F1 calendar in recent seasons with a total crowd of 351,000 last year.



General view of a Union Jack flag being carried out on to the track by service personnel before the race in 2019 (file photo)

The Sunday turnout at the former World War Two airfield in central England was 141,000 in 2019, with the race close to home for seven of the sport's 10 teams including six times world champion Lewis Hamilton's Mercedes.

Britain's Hamilton won at Silverstone last year for a record sixth time. Britain has strict social distancing measures in place at present, with all sport on hold and the authorities asking everyone to stay at home except for essential travel.

UEFA postpone all international matches scheduled for June

● UEFA has suspended all Champions League and Europa League matches "until further notice" due to the coronavirus pandemic

AFP | Paris

UEFA have made a move towards clearing the decks for the return of club football by announcing yesterday that all international matches that had been pushed back to June have now been postponed

until further notice.

"This includes the play-off matches for UEFA EURO 2020 and qualifying matches for UEFA Women's EURO 2021," said European football's governing body in a statement.

"All other UEFA competition matches, including the centralised international friendly matches, remain postponed until further notice."

The decision followed a videoconference with Europe's 55 member federations as part of discussions on how to adapt the fixture calendar in the face of the ongoing coronavirus crisis.



A man looks on as the UEFA Champions League trophy is displayed at the UEFA headquarters

The play-off semi-finals and finals that are supposed to decide the last four qualifying berths for the next European Championship were initially postponed at the end of March and pencilled in provisionally for June.

That was "subject to a review of the situation" amid uncertainty over how the pandemic will develop and whether many European countries currently in lockdown will be able to return to some kind of normality.

However, UEFA has also stated a determination to finish all domestic and club competitions by June 30.

While that currently looks ambitious at the very least, clearing the international fixtures from the same month does buy some more time as they aim to complete the Champions League and Europa League competitions as well as domestic leagues.

Carrying the season on beyond that date runs the risk of clubs losing their out-of-contract players before matches have been completed, unless a solution can be found.

The impact of the pandemic on Europe has already forced UEFA to put Euro 2020 back 12 months.

Jose Torres joins BRAVE CF's campaign

TDT | Manama

BRAVE Combat Federation is doing its part in the fight against the coronavirus (COVID-19).

As the coronavirus continues to put a halt on life around the world and the number of confirmed cases and deaths continue to increase with each day, the Bahrain-based mixed martial arts (MMA) promotion became the first organization in the sport to launch such a campaign geared towards stopping the spread of the coronavirus as well as raising awareness. The campaign is under the KHK Heroes Foundation.

This international social media awareness campaign also has the support of BRAVE's fighters.

For one, BRAVE has launched programming displaying content such as full fights on its YouTube and Facebook pages. It has also posted workouts for the quarantined from fighters themselves and videos on safe greetings.

Among the fighters showing support for the campaign is top Flyweight Jose "Shorty" Torres. The two-time amateur world champion was set to compete in a tournament at BRAVE CF's upcoming shows, but the events were postponed because of the worldwide pandemic. While the American Top Team fighter (9-1 professional MMA record) was naturally disappointed, health and safety ultimately come first.

"BRAVE 35, BRAVE 36 and BRAVE 37 are all postponed and on a to-be-announced basis be-



Jose 'Shorty' Torres speaks during an event

cause of the COVID-19 coronavirus worldwide pandemic," Torres said. "BRAVE Combat Federation is a worldwide promotion.

”
We travel everywhere. And not just specific countries, but the world is freaking out. Guys, we definitely need to stay calm

JOSE TORRES

that's why BRAVE is asking us to use the hashtag #UnitedWeFight because we're all fighters in the long run.

"Please check up on people, especially the elderly, people

who could easily be affected. BRAVE tried their best to try and make these fights happen but then it looked at travel bans, fighters not being able to compete, health risk and even the fans not being able to show up. They do this for the fans. It is a very smart thing that they cooperated with the government, local communities, everyone helping with this COVID-19 virus."

Like everyone else, Torres is hoping things eventually subside and the world can go back to normal. That includes the BRAVE CF fight schedule resuming once again.

Until that happens, BRAVE CF will continue to spread awareness and promote safe practices to combat the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

Newlands aftermath helped Australia improve behaviour - Paine

Reuters | Melbourne

Player behaviour has significantly improved throughout Australian cricket after 2018 Newlands scandal and the scrutiny that followed the episode, test captain Tim Paine said.

Australia's ill-tempered tour of South Africa exploded in a ball-tampering scandal in Cape Town two years ago, leading to a review of the team culture among other measures.

Paine and coach Justin Langer, who replaced Darren Lehmann after the episode, have since worked on improving the team's on-field behaviour.

Fast bowler James Pattinson and batsman Marcus Stoinis were sanctioned by Cricket Australia for abusing opponents in domestic cricket last year but Paine saw them as aberrations.

"You're looking at one or two very isolated instances, one with Patto and one in the Big Bash," Paine said.

Buttler auctions World Cup final shirt for hospital appeal

AFP | London

England's Jos Buttler is auctioning the shirt he wore in last year's dramatic World Cup final win in support of hospitals treating the coronavirus.

The 29-year-old wicketkeeper/batsman played a key role in England's thrilling defeat of New Zealand at Lord's in July, scoring a fifty, batting in the Super Over and then running out Martin Guptill off the very last ball of the match.

In a social media video posted on Tuesday, the 29-year-old said he would be posting the jersey, signed by all members of the World Cup-winning squad, on eBay.

All proceeds will go to the Royal Brompton and Harefield hospitals' charity.

"As we all know, hospitals, doctors, nurses and the NHS are all doing quite an incredible job at the moment," Buttler said.

"And in the weeks and months to come they are going to need our support even more.

"Last week, the Royal Brompton and Harefield hospitals'



England's Jos Buttler claims the crucial wicket in the World Cup win (file photo)

charity launched an emergency appeal to provide lifesaving equipment for those two hospitals, specialising in lung and heart conditions in preparation for the COVID-19 outbreak.

"To help with their fundraising effort I'm going to be donating this shirt, which is the shirt I wore in the World Cup final last year, signed by all the players who were members of the squad."

British television personality Piers Morgan submitted a bid of £10,000 (\$12,422) but the value

of the shirt had soon passed the £12,000 mark.

Cricket, in common with many sports, has seen its fixture programme brought to a shuddering halt by the global spread of the coronavirus.

Buttler was on England's tour of Sri Lanka that was recently abandoned during a warm-up game and was due to play in the lucrative Indian Premier League Twenty20 event, which has been postponed until at least April 15.

Coronavirus lockdown convinces Man City's De Bruyne to defer retirement

Reuters | London

Manchester City midfielder Kevin De Bruyne has deferred his retirement by "two more years" after the coronavirus lockdown made him realise how much he will miss football when he finishes his career.

The pandemic has brought global sport to a virtual standstill with events postponed, suspended or cancelled. The Premier League season has been suspended until at least April 30 after positive cases in several teams deemed it necessary.

After an injury-plagued 2018-19 campaign, De Bruyne was back to his best this season, leading the league with 16 assists and on course to break the Premier League record of 20 in a season before the league was suspended last month.

"I told my wife I'm going to play a little longer," De Bruyne, 28, said in a live video on his Instagram page. "After this lockdown, I cannot stay at home. I told her I'm going to take two years more."

"It's time to play football again. I miss it and it's difficult. But we are not important, football is not important. People love football... but you need to stay safe."

De Bruyne said he and his family were in self-isolation after his children fell ill last month, which is why he did not travel back to his native Belgium.

"I've been at home now for two weeks," De Bruyne added. "At the beginning, my family and my kids were a little bit sick so that was a little bit worrying but they are alright now."

"It took eight or nine days... but now they're better luckily as you never know what is going to happen."

"People ask why I'm not in Belgium. It's because I'm self-isolating in England. I live here so I'm here with my kids and wife."

City were second in the league standings and leading Real Madrid 2-1 after the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie before the season was suspended.

Kevin De Bruyne



Morgan says England could field two teams

AFP | London

World Cup-winning captain Eoin Morgan says he is open to England fielding two teams on the same day at separate venues if the coronavirus outbreak leads to a compressed home international season.

The England Test team, skippered by Joe Root, could face either West Indies or Pakistan, who are both due to arrive for three-match series, while Morgan's white-ball side take on Australia in 50-over and Twenty20 matches scheduled in July.

"I see every option being viable during this extraordinary time," said England limited-overs captain Morgan during a conference call on Wednesday.

"Certainly I've never experienced anything like it and I don't think anyone else has. I think the serious nature of the situation economically and financially for the game is something that we have never come across."



Eoin Morgan celebrates during a match

All domestic cricket in England has been postponed until May 28 at the earliest, with the West Indies series still scheduled to start on June 4.

England and Wales Cricket Board chief executive Tom Harrison, announcing a £61 million (\$76 million) aid package on Monday, said touring international sides were being "very flexible, innovative and massively understanding", with

Morgan indicating his teammates would adopt a similar approach.

"Certainly from a players' point of view, we want to do as much as we can to try and keep things going," Morgan said.

"If there's an opportunity to play as much cricket as we can, I'd like to think every player would be behind it. I certainly am."

"But obviously times are still

uncertain at the moment... Realistically we can't think about playing, when our first game will be, or how many we will play until the situation is downgraded from a pandemic."

One consolation for Morgan during the outbreak is that the 33-year-old Dublin-born batsman recently became a father after his wife Tara gave birth to a son, Leo.

"My wife gave birth to our first child three weeks ago so we have been preoccupied looking after the baby," said Morgan.

"We've been isolated for a bit longer than anyone else, which is really nice."

"We've been dealt a really good hand when it comes to things that are going on at the moment and have been bunned away for a while, and haven't been under pressure to go off and play cricket, which has been really nice."

"It's been good fun and a very exciting time for us."

Patrick McEnroe feeling fine after mild case of coronavirus

Reuters | New York

Retired tennis player Patrick McEnroe has recovered from a mild case of coronavirus, he announced on social media on Tuesday.

McEnroe, younger brother of seven-times Grand Slam champion John, said he had been tested after experiencing "some minor symptoms" about 10 or 11 days ago.

"My tests just came back positive," the 53-year-old said on Twitter. "That's the bad news. The good news is I feel fine. My symptoms have passed. I feel 100%."

"I'm an example of someone that has been able to fight



Patrick McEnroe looks on during a press meet

through it and I'm doing absolutely fine."

McEnroe, 53, lives in the metropolitan New York City area, one of the hardest hit cities for the virus in the United States.

He reached a career high ranking of 28 before retiring in 1998, and was later a U.S. Davis Cup captain.