



Coronavirus: 'Worst yet to come' for countries in conflict, says UN chief



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

United Nations | United States

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres yesterday renewed his call for a global ceasefire, urging all parties to conflict to lay down arms and allow war-torn nations to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

"The worst is yet to come," Guterres said, referring to countries beset with fighting like Syria, Libya and Yemen.

"The COVID-19 storm is now coming to all these theatres of conflict."

Guterres said there had been some progress following his March 23 call for peace, but that fighting still rages in a number of countries, hampering the ability to put into place plans to combat the virus.

"The need is urgent," Guterres said at a UN press conference. (Continues on page 2)

Bahrainis complying with stay-at-home orders, Google report says

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04 Oil price barrels ahead

08 Coronavirus survivors donate plasma

210 fils (includes VAT)



A million and more

Global Coronavirus (Covid-19) cases exceed one million

New Google data from 131 countries showed extraordinary decline in human movement

Beijing/New York

Global cases of the new coronavirus have shot past 1 million with more than 53,000 fatalities, a Reuters tally showed yesterday, as death tolls kept soaring in the United States and western Europe while the world economy spiralled disastrously.

Just in the previous day, there were 6,095 new deaths - nearly double all fatalities in China, where the COVID-19 disease originated. In a list based on officially-reported data, Italy leads with 13,915 deaths, followed by Spain with 10,935 deaths. But the United States was becoming the new epicentre, with 243,635 cases - by far the most of any nation - and 5,887 deaths.

Outside the West, China's epidemic has stabilised after draconian containment measures and it was planning to mourn its "martyrs" on Saturday with a three-minute silence.

The outbreak in badly-hit Iran still raged while it sparred with traditional foe the United States on the geopolitical stage.

With Europe accounting for more than half of cases around the world, France and Britain were also struggling to prop up health services under massive strain.



A man looks at a sign hanging from a foot bridge warning against the spread of COVID-19 in Nairobi, Kenya. - Reuters

Though the official figures were shocking enough, health experts and even some governments acknowledge they do not capture the full spread of the virus. It often goes undetected in people with minor symptoms or none at all.

With airlines largely grounded, businesses closed, layoffs mounting and millions of people at home under lockdowns, the economic fallout was shaping into worse than the 2008 financial crisis.

Rather, comparisons were being drawn with such traumatic periods as World War Two or the 1930s Global Depression.

While prosperous Western nations are reeling, there is concern about potentially far worse impact in nations already struggling with poverty, insecurity and weak health systems.

In Iraq, three doctors involved in the testing, a health ministry official and a senior political of-

COVID-19

Tolls on April 3 at 1100 GMT

Countries and territories affected **188**

Total deaths	New deaths	Total cases	New cases
53,693	1,975	1,035,386	35,350

New since April 2 at 1900 GMT

Most affected countries

	Total deaths	New deaths	Cases
ITALY	13,915	—	115,242
SPAIN	10,935	932	117,710
US	6,058	451	245,573
FRANCE*	5,387	—	73,743
CHINA (mainland)	3,322	4	81,620
IRAN	3,294	134	53,183
BRITAIN	2,921	—	33,718
NETHERLANDS	1,339	—	14,697
BELGIUM	1,143	132	16,770
GERMANY	1,017	145	79,696
SWITZERLAND	431	—	18,194
TURKEY	356	—	18,135

Sources: AFP tally from official data *Incomplete data © AFP

New York makes plea for help

New York suffered its deadliest single day from the novel coronavirus, with 562 additional deaths across the state for a total of 2,935 fatalities, Governor Andrew Cuomo said yesterday.

Cuomo warned that people were going to die in the near term due to a lack of ventilators of hospital beds and called for resources from across the United States to be deployed to New York to help it deal with the growing crisis in the state.

ficial said there were thousands of cases of COVID-19, many times more than publicly reported.

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro further played down the pandemic, saying it is "not all it's being made out to be" and denying that any hospital had reached full capacity. But with his closest aides refusing to support his plan to relax coronavirus rules to keep the economy going, according to sources with knowledge of the dispute, Bolsonaro was looking increasingly isolated.

Though there was little cause for cheer anywhere, one positive offshoot of the crisis has been a massive drop in pollution. One expert said carbon dioxide emissions could fall this year by the largest amount since World War Two. (See pages 3, 8,9)

New findings

Coronavirus may spread through normal breathing: US scientists

Washington

The new coronavirus might spread through the air via normal breathing and speaking, a top US scientist said yesterday as the government was poised to recommend the use of face masks for everyone.

Anthony Fauci, head of infectious diseases at the National Institutes of Health, told Fox News the guidance on masks would be changed "because of some recent information that the virus can actually be spread even when people just speak, as opposed to coughing and sneezing."

As it stands, the official advice is that only sick people need to cover their faces, as well as those caring for them at home.

Fauci's comments come after the National Academy of



Until now, US health agencies have said that the primary pathway of transmission is respiratory droplets. - AFP

Sciences (NAS) sent a letter to the White House on April 1 that summarised recent research on the subject.

It said that though the research isn't yet conclusive, "the

results of available studies are consistent with aerosolisation of virus from normal breathing."

Until now, US health agencies have said that the primary pathway of transmission is

respiratory droplets, about one millimetre in diameter, expelled by sick people when they sneeze or cough.

These quickly fall to the ground around a meter away.

But if the virus can be suspended in the ultrafine mist we expel when we exhale, in other words an aerosol, it becomes much harder to prevent its spread, which in turn is an argument in favour of everyone covering their faces.

The aerosol debate

A recent NIH funded study published in the New England Journal of Medicine found that the SARS-CoV-2 virus could become an aerosol and remain airborne for up to three hours.

This triggered a debate even as critics said the findings were overblown because the team behind the study used a medi-

cal device called a nebulizer to deliberately create a viral mist and argued this would not occur naturally.

The NAS letter pointed to preliminary research by the University of Nebraska Medical Center that found the genetic code of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, its RNA, were found in hard to reach areas of patients' isolation rooms.

The NAS scientists also pointed to two other studies -- both not yet peer reviewed -- from Hong Kong and from mainland China.

The Hong Kong researchers collected viral samples from patients with the coronavirus and other viral respiratory illnesses, and gave some of the patients face masks.

The masks reduced the detection of both droplets and aerosols for coronavirus patients.

(Continues on page 2)

Indian minister applauds Bahrain's fight to tackle COVID-19 outbreak

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's success in combating Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak has been hailed by the Indian Minister of External Affairs Dr Subrahmanya Jaishankar.

In a telephonic conversation with Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Abdullahif bin Rashid Al-Zayani, Dr Jaishankar praised the strict precautionary plans and measures taken by the competent authorities in the Kingdom in dealing with the outbreak.

The minister said, yesterday, his country is thankful to the Bahraini government for providing constant care to the Indian community here.

Describing the friendly relations between the two countries



Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Abdullahif bin Rashid Al-Zayani

as "solid", the minister further thanked the health authorities

for providing labourers here with necessary laboratory tests and treatment, which contributed to limiting the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Dr Al-Zayani told Dr Jaishankar that the royal orders of His Majesty the King ensure comprehensive care and free treatment for all residents and expatriates in the Kingdom of Bahrain and highest standards of healthcare.

The Foreign Minister also said the plans adopted by the government to combat this pandemic were praised by the World Health Organization, and that the authorities continue to provide treatment according to the approved medical protocols for Coronavirus.

He also stressed the importance of the international community's solidarity in these

The attention and care given by the competent health authorities to maintain the health and safety of the Indian labour force and provide them with the necessary laboratory tests and treatment contributed to limiting the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19)

INDIAN MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DR SUBRAHMANYAM JAISHANKAR.



exceptional circumstances and the unification of efforts, wishing India and its friendly people further security, peace and

prosperity.

They discussed historical friendly relations between the Kingdom of Bahrain and the

Republic of India and ways to promote bilateral cooperation to serve the two countries' common interests.

GCC virtual Labour meeting reviews COVID-19 precautionary measures



Labour and Social Development Ministry Undersecretary Sabah Salem Al-Dosari took part in the video call.

TDT | Manama

Bahrain yesterday took part in an urgent virtual coordination meeting to evaluate the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) wide initiatives to ensure a safe working environment and boost production.

The virtual meeting of the GCC Labour Ministries Undersecretaries' Committee focused on the efforts being exerted by member states to protect workers, ensure public safety and health and maintain production in the private sector companies.

Labour and Social Development Ministry Undersecretary Sabah Salem Al-Dosari took

part in the video call.

Al-Dosari highlighted Bahrain's efforts to maintain continued workflow in the private sector firms, stressing the need to continue contributing to national development.

The officials stressed commitment to preserving the rights of GCC nationals and expatriates working in the private sector, taking into account national legislation and international labour standards.

The meeting highlighted precautionary measures to combat the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and the importance of mitigating the pandemic's impact on the GCC economy and stability of the labour market.

NPRA to stop receiving applicants starting Sunday

TDT | Manama

Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs (NPRA) has announced they will stop receiving applicants starting tomorrow.

Instead, all services will be processed automatically through the Contact System on website www.npra.gov.bh, an NPRA statement said.

Going forward, to process applications, NPRA said applicants are required to fill forms online and attach documents required.

The Bahraini passports would be handed through per-



sonal attendance from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm from Sunday to Thursday at the Isa Town branch.

The move is part of the precautionary measures against the spreading of coronavirus.



Education Minister Dr Majid bin Ali Al-Nuaimi with a delegation from the American International School of Bahrain, comprising Abdullahif Al-Sahhaf, Khalid Maseeh and Khalid Ahmed Mustapha. The delegation briefed the minister on their multi-phased school which is expected to open at the beginning of the new academic year, outlining the measures taken so far. The meeting was attended by Assistant Undersecretary for Private and Continuous Education Jaffer Al-Sheikh.

Do more to aide poorer countries face the pandemic: Guterres

(Continued from page 1)
"The virus has shown how swiftly it can move across borders, devastate countries and upend lives."

He said that parties to conflict in a number of countries, including Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Libya, Myanmar, the Philippines, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen, have expressed support for his call.

"But there is a huge distance between declarations and deeds -- between translating words into peace on the ground and in the lives of people," Guterres said. "In many of the most critical situations, we have seen no let-up in fighting -- and some conflicts have even intensified."

While expressing gratitude for support of his earlier call from some 70 countries, NGO groups and religious leaders worldwide including Pope Francis, Guterres said more concrete work was necessary.

"We need robust diplomatic efforts to meet these challenges. To silence the guns, we must raise the voices for peace," he said.

Since the beginning of the global pan-

dem, the Security Council has not met once on COVID-19, making no statement or joint resolution.

On Thursday the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution calling for international cooperation and "multilateralism" in addressing the virus, which has infected more than one million worldwide and killed more than 50,000. Guterres appealed for developed countries and multilateral institutions to do more to aide poorer countries face the pandemic.

"To act early rather than later is essential... This is particularly true with the developing world," he said.

Guterres noted that the ceasefire in Idlib, Syria is holding but said it needs to be expanded to the entire country to allow full efforts to slow the coronavirus spread.

But he noted that expressions of support for a ceasefire by different factions fighting in Libya had not ended the violence.

"This war is now not allowing the response to COVID-19 to take place," he said. "This is the moment to stop. It's not morally acceptable to continue with this conflict."

Covid-19: Airborne threat

(Continued from page 1)

The Chinese paper on the other hand raised concerns that personal protective gear used by health care workers could itself be a source of airborne virus.

The team studied hospitals in Wuhan and found that there were two major areas where the virus was aerosolized: the bathrooms of patients, and rooms where medical staff removed their protective gear.

This may be because doffing protective gear causes the particles to get re-suspended in the air. Even if these particles are not of breathable size, they could settle on people's hands and bodies, the NAS panel said.

So far, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has been more cautious on the airborne threat.

In an analysis published on March 29, it wrote that aerosol transmission was only known to occur during particular medical treatments that required assisted breathing.

On the recent preliminary research, such as the University of Nebraska's paper, the WHO cautioned that the detection of the virus' genetic code in patient's rooms did not necessarily amount to viable amounts of the pathogen that could be transmitted onward.

If the virus can be suspended in the ultrafine mist we exhale when we breathe, in other words an aerosol, it becomes much harder to prevent its spread



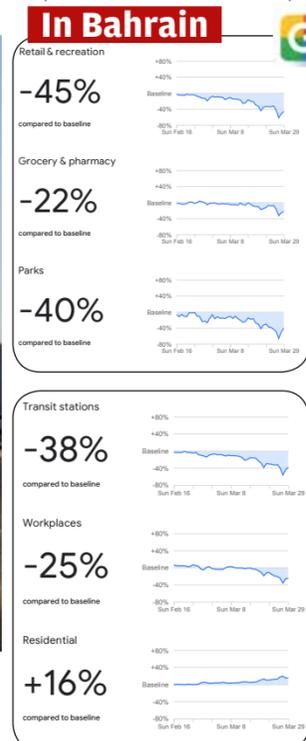
Bahrainis complying with stay-at-home orders, says Google report

Google's COVID-19 mobility reports show changes in traffic to stores, parks, transit stations, and more

Like the detection of traffic jams or the measurement of traffic on Google Maps, the new reports use "aggregated, anonymised" data from users who have activated their location history



According to the tech giant's data showing mobility changes, Bahrain recorded a 45 per cent fall in visits to the locations of restaurants, cafes, shopping centres, theme parks, museums, libraries, and movie theatres.



Google data of affected nations globally

Italy: Retail and recreation trips in the country, which has seen the highest number of deaths globally, plunged 94pc. Grocery and pharmacy visits were down 85pc, and workplace trips fell 63pc. Italy has imposed severe limits on movement and shuttered all non-essential services until April 13.

Spain: Retail and recreation trips fell 94pc. The country has witnessed 112,065 cases - the second-highest after the United States. Grocery and pharmacy visits slumped 76pc, and workplace trips fell 64pc.

France: Retail and recreation trips slumped 88pc in the country, which has recorded roughly 59,000 cases and 5,387 deaths. The country's broad lockdown is likely to be extended beyond April 15. Grocery and pharmacy visits declined 72pc, and workplace visits fell 56pc.

India: Trips to retail and recreation spots fell 77pc, grocery and pharmacy visits dropped 65pc, and workplace visits fell 47pc. India went into a lockdown due to end April 14. With a recent spike in cases, the country's said it will pull out of the lockdown in phases.

Brazil: Retail and recreation trips dropped 71pc, grocery and pharmacy visits fell 35pc, and visits to workplaces declined 34pc. President Jair Bolsonaro has urged states to relax their strict quarantine policies, clashing with the country's health minister, who has advised maximum social distancing.

Canada: Retail and recreation visits fell 59pc. Grocery and pharmacy trips fell 35pc, and those to workplaces dropped 44pc.

What Google data says about GCC nations?

- **Saudi Arabia:** Visits to retail and recreation locations including restaurants, cafes, shopping centres, theme parks, museums and libraries declined 54pc. Trips to grocery and pharmacy locations fell by 24. Mobility trends for places like national parks, public beaches, marinas, dog parks, plazas, and public gardens dropped 49pc. Visits to workplaces fell by 45pc, while to public transport hubs such as subway, bus, and train stations fell 75pc.
- **Kuwait:** Retail and recreation trips dropped 56pc, grocery and pharmacy visits fell 30pc, and visits to workplaces declined 42pc.
- **Oman:** Retail and recreation visits fell 52pc. Grocery and pharmacy trips fell 35pc, and those to workplaces dropped 34pc.
- **UAE:** Retail and recreation trips dropped 55pc in the country, which has recorded roughly 814 cases and 8 deaths. Grocery and pharmacy trips fell 26pc, and those to workplaces dropped 45pc.

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's measures to prevent the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) infection is progressing on a healthy path with citizens and residents here responding positively to the lockdown measures installed.

Latest Google data, released to help public health officials understand responses to social distancing guidance related to COVID-19, confirms this trend.

According to the tech giant's data showing mobility changes, Bahrain recorded a 45 per cent fall in visits to the locations of restaurants, cafes, shopping centres, theme parks, museums, libraries, and movie theatres.

Trips to grocery markets, food warehouses, farmers markets, speciality food shops, drug stores, and pharmacy locations fell 22pc.

The report, based on users' movements, further shows a 40pc fall in visits to places like national parks, public beaches, marinas, parks, plazas, and public gardens.

Mobility trends for places like public transport hubs such as subway, bus, and train stations show a 38pc decline.

Visits to workplaces fell by 25pc, while it shows a 16pc increase in mobility trends for places of residence.

The data is compared to a baseline or median value for the corresponding day of the week, during the 5 weeks from Jan 3- Feb 6, 2020. (<https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/>).

The move comes as technology companies have been asked by government agencies and health officials to share more data to aid in the coronavirus response. Facebook has also made

similar data available to academic researchers.

Releasing the data, in a blog post, signed by Jen Fitzpatrick, who leads Google Maps, and the company's chief health officer Karen DeSalvo, said, "This information could help officials understand changes in essential trips that can shape recommendations on business hours or inform delivery service offerings."

Like the detection of traffic jams or the measurement of traffic on Google Maps, the new reports use "aggregated, anonymised" data from users who have activated their location history.

No "personally identifiable information," such as a person's location, contacts or movements, will be made available, the post said.

The reports will also employ a statistical technique that adds "artificial noise" to raw data, making it harder for users to be identified.

Bahrain has toughened its fight against coronavirus out-

break by rolling out emergency measures including limiting public gathering and requiring restaurants to function only as take away and delivery services on 17 March 2020.

The decisions followed a Government executive committee meeting chaired by HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister.

The new data is expected to boost the King-

dom's efforts to contain the virus as it continues to take further comprehensive preventive measures.

In a recent letter to HRH Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, the Prime Minister, WHO



business

EU waives customs duties, VAT on imports of medical equipment

Reuters | Brussels

The European Commission approved yesterday requests from EU countries and Britain to temporarily waive customs duties and VAT on imported medical devices and protective equipment to help fight the coronavirus epidemic.

The duty-free kit includes masks, testing kits and ventilators and the exemption will apply for a period of 6 months, with a possibility for further extension. The decision takes effect retroactively from January 30.

"By waiving customs and VAT duties on imports of these products from outside the EU, the European Commission will help make those products more accessible," Paolo Gentiloni, EU commissioner for the economy, said in a statement.

3M to make more face masks, ramp up imports to U.S. after Trump order



Various N95 respirator masks at a laboratory of 3M

Reuters

3M Co said yesterday it would increase the production of respirators and import more masks into the United States, after President Donald Trump invoked a law to help ease a shortage in the items needed to protect health staff against the coronavirus.

The company said it will work closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to prioritise orders for the masks.

Trump slammed 3M in a tweet late on Thursday after earlier announcing he was invoking the Defence Production Act to get the company to produce face masks.

Coronavirus has cost 2 million jobs in Turkey

Reuters | Ankara

More than two million workers in Turkey have lost their jobs due to measures taken to contain the coronavirus outbreak, the main opposition party said yesterday, as the government moved closer to enforcing stricter curbs on movement to slow its spread.

Oil price barrels ahead as OPEC flags meeting with Russia

● The meeting of OPEC and allies such as Russia has been scheduled for Monday

● Oil prices have fallen to around \$20 per barrel from \$65 at the start of the year

● Trump said he did not make any concessions such as agreeing to a US domestic production cut - a move forbidden by US antitrust legislation.

Reuters | London

The price of crude oil surged again yesterday after OPEC said it would talk to non-members, notably Russia, giving investors hope that they will stop a price war which has created market chaos along with crushed demand because of the coronavirus.

The Saudi-led OPEC group of oil producers and their allies will meet Monday via video conference, a source close to the cartel said.

"There's certainly a lot of optimism that a deal is going to be done," OANDA analyst Craig Erlam said.

Global stock markets fell following another set of devastating American employment numbers, gloomy eurozone services data and news that the number of declared COVID-19 infections had hit one million worldwide.

The US economy shed 701,000 jobs in March amid the damage inflicted by the coronavirus shutdowns -- several times the market's consensus forecast -- while the unemployment rate



Oil producers seem ready to close the valves again

Key figures around 1540 GMT

Brent North Sea crude:	▲ 10.4 pc at \$33.06 per barrel
West Texas Intermediate:	▲ 5.3 pc at \$26.67
London - FTSE 100:	▼ 1.4 pc at 5,406.17 points (close)
Frankfurt - DAX 30:	▼ 0.5 pc at 9,525.77 (close)
Paris - CAC 40:	▼ 1.6 pc at 4,154.58 (close)
EURO STOXX 50:	▼ 1.0 pc at 2,662.99
New York - Dow:	▼ 1.3 pc at 21,127.92
Tokyo - Nikkei 225:	■ at 17,820.19 (close)
Hong Kong - Hang Seng:	▼ 0.2 pc at 23,236.11 (close)
Shanghai - Composite:	▼ 0.6 pc at 2,763.99 (close)
Euro/dollar:	▼ at \$1.0793 from \$1.0964 at 2100 GMT
Dollar/yen:	▲ at 108.52 yen from 107.17
Pound/dollar:	▼ at \$1.2241 from \$1.2371
Euro/pound:	▼ at 88.18 pence from 88.62 pence

surged to 4.4 percent, the Labor Department reported.

"Likely to worsen"

"The markets are digesting

a larger-than-expected drop in March employment, which is likely to worsen on the heels of the past two weeks of spikes in

jobless claims that approached the 10 million mark," said analysts at the Charles Schwab brokerage.

OPEC's move meanwhile sparked fresh speculation of an oil production cut, one day after US President Donald Trump sparked a record crude price rally by hinting that Russia and Saudi Arabia planned to end their price war with a sharp reduction in output.

According to a Russian source cited by the TASS agency, US officials have also been invited to take part in the meeting.

"It is in all parties' interests to agree to a significant cut," said Michael Hewson, an analyst at CMC Markets.

But even a 10 million barrels per day reduction "is unlikely to be enough to push prices up much higher from here with demand on the floor", Hewson cautioned.

Friday's oil price surge extended a dizzying recovery seen Thursday.

In the runup to the upswing, oil prices had plunged this year as the market reeled from the effects of the new coronavirus pandemic, with WTI shedding around 65 percent of its value in the first quarter.

A price war, triggered last month by Saudi after Moscow refused to tighten oil supply to counteract the sharp drop in demand, added to the bloodbath.

'Recession knocking' -

Equity investors remain hostage to uncertainty as they try to gauge the long-term economic impact of the pandemic, which is widely expected to plunge the planet into recession.

"The short-term impact of the coronavirus tragedy is straightforward: a complete shutdown of businesses worldwide is taking a heavy toll on the global economy," Swissquote Bank an-

\$66

was the closing price of Brent at the end of 2019. Now it is trading near \$33 per barrel, a recovery from \$20 per barrel earlier this week

The freefall in prices has spurred regulators in the US state of Texas, the heart of the country's oil production, to consider regulating output for the first time in nearly 50 years, while producers in neighbouring Oklahoma asked state regulators also to consider cuts.

analyst Ipek Ozkardeskaya said.

"The coronavirus outbreak hits all layers of the population, has had an impact on each and every single business regardless of their size, and paralyzed each and every household regardless of their wealth," she added.

"You do not need to be an economist or an expert to predict a meaningful recession knocking on the door."

Investors hoped that with trillions of dollars pledged in government support, wild volatility seen at the start of the crisis would give way to some form of stability.

But key stock markets in Europe, after posting strong gains last week, posted hefty weekly losses going in the weekend, with US stock markets on track to follow suit.

Saudi king earmarks \$2.4 billion to pay private-sector workers: state news agency

Reuters | Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's King Salman has ordered up to 9 billion riyals (\$2.4 billion) to be disbursed to pay part of the wages of private-sector workers to deter companies from laying off staff, the state-run Saudi Press Agency reported yesterday.

The latest measure to tackle the fallout from the coronavirus outbreak followed an emergency stimulus package announced last month to shore up the economy.

"Instead of terminating the employment of a Saudi citizen, the employer has the right to ask social insurance to disburse as compensation 60 percent of his salary over a period of three months, with a maximum limit of nine thousand riyals (per employee) and with a total value of up to 9 billion riyals (2 billion pounds)," the SPA reported, citing a royal order.

The stimulus announced last month by Finance Minister Mo-



A Saudi man walks past a poster depicting Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz,

ammed al-Jadaan included 70 billion riyals to be set aside to help businesses, with measures including exemptions and postponements of some government fees and taxes.

Brings forward coronavirus

curfew start in three areas

Saudi Arabia has brought forward its nightly curfew by four hours in three areas to combat the coronavirus epidemic, state news agency SPA said.

Starting yesterday, the curfew begins at 3 p.m. (1200 GMT) instead of 7 p.m. in the city of Dammam and the governorates of Taif and al-Qatif, SPA said, quoting a senior interior ministry official. The curfew is lifted at 6 a.m.

Saudi Arabia has recorded 1,885 infections and 21 deaths, the most among any of the Gulf Cooperation Council states.

The port of Dammam, on the Gulf, is a main entry point for supplies for the oil industry centered in the eastern region and for the rest of the kingdom.

Italian luxury shoemaker Sergio Rossi dies from coronavirus



Reuters | Milan

Italian luxury shoemaker Sergio Rossi has died aged 85 after being hospitalised with the coronavirus, the mayor of the designer's home town said yesterday.

Italy has recorded more deaths from coronavirus than any other country in the world, with 13,915 fatalities as of Thursday.

Rossi died on Thursday in the small town of Cesena in central Italy.

US employment plunges in March



US President Donald Trump touted the record low unemployment rate for blacks and Hispanics as a signal achievement of his presidency, but the jobless rate is soaring
Washington

As the US economy craters amid the damage inflicted by the coronavirus shutdowns, businesses jettisoned jobs at an alarming rate last month, according to government data yesterday, and the situation is expected to get dramatically worse.

US employment plunged by 701,000 in March and the jobless rate surged to 4.4 per cent, the Labour Department reported.

Yet the department acknowledged its statistics could not yet capture the full extent of the damage, and its own weekly data on first-time claims for jobless benefits showed 10 million people lost their jobs in the last two weeks of the month.

With COVID-19 cases topping a million worldwide, a quarter of which are in the United States where the death toll is over 6,000, cities have turned into ghost towns and officials

are struggling to find ways to ease the ruinous damage to the economy and individuals.

"The drop in payrolls in March was unprecedented for the start of a recession and will get more than twenty times worse in April," said Diane Swonk of Grant Thornton.

"We will easily lose more than twice as many jobs as we lost during the Great Recession during the first two months of this crisis alone," she said in an analysis.

The monthly report reveals the worst job loss since the depths of the global financial crisis in March 2009 and the biggest single-month jump in the jobless rate in more than 45 years.

However, the Labor Department acknowledged it "cannot precisely quantify the effects of the pandemic on the job market in March," and errors in counting those who lost jobs mean the unemployment rate was like a full point higher.

ADB warns global virus cost could top \$4 trn

● The estimated impact is equivalent to nearly five percent of worldwide output

● Close to five percent, or \$628 billion, of China's GDP could be lost.

AFP | Manila

The coronavirus pandemic could cost the global economy \$4.1 trillion as it ravages United States, Europe and other major economies, the Asian Development Bank warned yesterday.

The estimated impact is equivalent to nearly five percent of worldwide output based on a range of scenarios, but the lender said losses from "the worst pandemic in a century" could be higher.

"The estimated impact could be an underestimate, as additional channels such as...possible social and financial crises, and long-term effects on health care and education are excluded from the analysis," the ADB said.

The Manila-based bank said a shorter containment period could pare the losses to \$2 trillion.

The crisis has sent equity markets spinning as traders



With billions of people in lockdown around the world, the global economy has almost come to a standstill

fret over the long-term impact on the world economy, though governments and central banks have stepped in to ease the pain, pledging more than \$5 trillion in stimulus and easing monetary policy.

Officially reported COVID-19 cases worldwide topped the one million mark on Thursday, with tens of thousands dead, while there are warnings the numbers will continue to balloon as the disease rapidly spreads.

With billions of people in lockdown and economies at a standstill, the ADB said Asia is forecast to grow 2.2 percent this year, its slowest pace since a 1.7 percent expansion during the Asian financial crisis in 1998.

"No one can say how widely the COVID-19 pandemic may spread, and containment may take longer than currently projected," ADB chief economist Yasuyuki Sawada said.

"The possibility of severe fi-

ancial turmoil and financial crises cannot be discounted," he added.

The forecasts assume the coronavirus outbreak will be contained this year and a return to normality in 2021.

However, there is still the potential for additional outbreaks and the severity of the pandemic remains uncertain.

"Outcomes can be worse than forecast and growth may not recover as quickly," the bank said.

Growth in China, the region's largest economy, could slow to 2.3 per cent this year from 6.1 pc in 2019, before bouncing back in 2021.

"The outbreak became a demand shock as people stayed home. It became a supply shock as companies suffered shortages of labor...and of materials as supply chains faltered," ADB said.

Close to five percent, or \$628 billion, of China's GDP could be lost.

Temperature checks, masks new norm for Amazon employees

San Francisco

Amazon on Thursday said it is temperature-checking more than 100,000 workers daily and handing out masks as part of ramped-up defenses against the coronavirus pandemic.

The online e-commerce colossus made the announcement after a series of employee protests and complaints about safety for workers delivering food and supplies to people hunkered down in their homes.

Amazon this week began checking the temperature of workers arriving at US facilities, asking those with apparent fevers to go home, according to senior vice president of worldwide operations Dave Clark.

Disney to furlough some employees

Los Angeles

The Walt Disney company said on Thursday it plans to furlough some of its employees starting later this month as the coronavirus pandemic keeps its theme parks and other businesses shuttered.

The furlough will begin the following day, Disney said, stressing that affected staff would receive full healthcare benefits for the duration.

Trump Organisation, hit by virus, tries to delay loan payments: report



Trump, shown here with his wife Melania arriving in Palm Beach

New York

US President Donald Trump's family company is asking creditors such as Deutsche Bank if it can delay loan payments as the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic deepens, *The New York Times* reported Thursday.

The Trump Organisation -- the conglomerate of companies created by Trump and now run by his sons -- is, like many others, losing money as the restrictions put in place to lessen the spread of deadly COVID-19 bring the US to a grinding halt.

The New York Times said the Trump Organization contacted Deutsche Bank, seen as the only major lender willing to do business with the company, at the end of March to ask about extending some repayment deadlines.

"These days, everybody is working together," Trump's son Eric, the Organization's

executive vice president, said in a statement sent to AFP.

"Tenants are working with landlords -- landlords are working with banks. The whole world is working together as we fight through this pandemic," the statement continued.

The Trump Organisation still owes Deutsche Bank several hundred million dollars, according to *The Times*.

The group, whose main business is real estate development, also contacted Palm Beach County to see if it could suspend rent payments on land occupied by the Trump International Golf Club, a 27-hole course and clubhouse on more than 120 hectares.

Negotiations have so far not led to any change in the financial conditions of the Trump Organisation.

Eric Trump and his brother Donald Jr took over the organization after their father's inauguration.



Delta Air Lines passenger planes are seen parked due to flight reductions made to slow the spread of coronavirus disease at Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport in Birmingham, Alabama

Grounded planes insured for more than \$160 billion: report

Reuters | London

Aeroplanes with a total insured value of more than \$160 billion are grounded around the world, presenting risks for insurers, a report said yesterday.

Singapore has the largest number of planes standing idle at airports, at 205, with Hong Kong second at 178, the report by insurance broker Gallagher said.

There are 158 planes on the ground in Madrid though only 40 in New York, with planes at the world's 20 biggest airports having a total insured value of \$164 billion.

Airlines have seen revenues

Singapore has the largest number of planes standing idle at airports, at 205, with Hong Kong second at 178

slump as a result of the coronavirus pandemic which has led to travel lockdowns around the world.

"There will be airline failures, meaning unpaid premiums and bad debt," Bruce Carman, Chief Underwriting Officer at Hive Aero, said in the report.

The airlines will likely seek some of their premiums back because passenger numbers are

heavily reduced, he added.

Groups of grounded aircraft also present risks for so-called "aviation war" underwriters, as they are a far larger target for terror attacks.

The lead insurers in consortia of aviation underwriters are turning down some renewal business, with particular concerns including non-Western built aircraft and older aircraft, the report said.

Where insurers are offering cover, they are seeking rate increases of at least 20-25%, Gallagher said. Aviation insurance rates have been falling for many years due to an improving safety record and steep competition.

Gold edges up

Reuters

Gold prices inched higher on Friday and were stuck in a narrow range as the dollar strengthened ahead of US nonfarm payrolls data.

Spot gold was up 0.2 per cent at \$1,616 per ounce by 1205 GMT. The metal has declined nearly 0.5pc so far this week after an 8pc jump in the previous week.

US gold futures edged 0.1pc higher to \$1,639.40 per ounce.

"The US dollar is moderately stronger and that's weighing on the gold prices," said Bank of China International analyst Xiao Fu.

"It's still a tug-of-war situation for gold between the virus and the equity markets; when equity markets further sell off, there is request for margin calls again. So it's very unclear if there will be an upward trend, and gold is expected to be range-bound in the near-term."

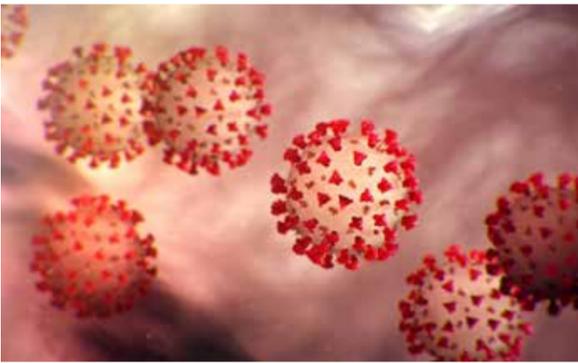
On Thursday, gold gained 1.2pc after the number of Americans filing claims for unemployment benefits last week shot to another record high as more jurisdictions enforced stay-at-home measures to curb the pandemic.

Palladium slipped 1.5pc to \$2,179.56 an ounce on Friday, while platinum dipped 0.7pc to \$722.58. Both metals were set to register a weekly loss.

Silver shed 0.7pc to \$14.43 per ounce.

Ayurveda's immunity boosting measures for self care during COVID 19 crisis

MINISTRY OF AYUSH, INDIA



In the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, entire mankind across the globe is suffering. Enhancing the body's natural defence system (immunity) plays an important role in maintaining optimum health.

We all know that prevention is better than cure. While there is no medicine for COVID-19 as of now, it will be good to take preventive measures which boost our immunity in these times.

Ayurveda, being the science of life, propagates the gifts of nature in maintaining healthy and happy living. Ayurveda's extensive knowledge base on preventive care, derives from the concepts of "Dinacharya" - daily regimes and "Ritucharya" - seasonal regimes to maintain healthy life. It is a plant-based science. The simplicity of awareness about oneself and the harmony each individual can achieve by uplifting and maintaining his or her immunity is emphasized across Ayurveda's classical scriptures.

Ministry of AYUSH recommends the following self-care guidelines for preventive health measures and boosting immunity with special reference to respiratory health. These are supported by Ayurvedic literature and scientific publications.

Recommended Measures

I General Measures

1. Drink warm water throughout the day.
2. Daily practice of Yogasana, Pranayama and meditation for at least 30 minutes as advised by Ministry of AYUSH (#YOGAatHome #StayHome #StaySafe)
3. Spices like Haldi (Turmeric), Jeera (Cumin), Dhaniya (Coriander) and Lahsun (Garlic) are recommended in cooking.

II Ayurvedic Immunity Promoting Measures

1. Take Chyavanprash 10gm (1tsf) in the morning. Diabetics should take sugar free Chyavanprash.
2. Drink herbal tea / decoction (Kadha) made from Tulsi (Basil), Dalchini (Cinnamon), Kalimirch (Black pepper), Shunthi (Dry Ginger) and Munakka (Raisin) - once or twice a day. Add jaggery (natural sugar) and / or fresh lemon juice to your taste, if needed.
3. Golden Milk- Half tea spoon Haldi (turmeric) powder in 150 ml hot milk - once or twice a day.

III Simple Ayurvedic Procedures

1. Nasal application - Apply sesame oil / coconut oil or Ghee in both the nostrils (Pratimarsh Nasya) in morning and evening.
2. Oil pulling therapy- Take 1 table spoon sesame or coconut oil in mouth. Do not drink, Swish in the mouth for 2 to 3 minutes and spit it off followed by warm water rinse. This can be done once or twice a day.

IV During dry cough / sore throat

1. Steam inhalation with fresh Pudina (Mint) leaves or Ajwain (Caraway seeds) can be practiced once in a day.
2. Lavang (Clove) powder mixed with natural sugar / honey can be taken 2-3 times a day in case of cough or throat irritation.
3. These measures generally treat normal dry cough and sore throat. However, it is best to consult doctors if these symptoms persist.

The above measures can be followed to the extent possible as per an individual's convenience.

These measures are recommended by a number of eminent Vaidyas from India as they may possibly boost an individual's immunity against infections.

(Disclaimer: The above advisory does not claim to be treatment for COVID-19)



The World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Director for East Mediterranean Dr. Ahmed bin Salem Al-Munthari during a virtual meeting to discuss the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis. Health Minister Faeqa bint Said Al-Saleh delegated Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health, member of the National Taskforce for combating COVID-19, Dr. Mariam Al-Hajeri to take part in the meeting



Bangladesh Youth Club (BYC) members during its initiative to make a contribution to supply essential food items to the Bangladeshi community in Bahrain who are in need. They have delivered the essentials to 100 people all over the Kingdom. The president of BYC Al Amin Muhammed has requested that the Bangladeshi community come forward

Society



onavirus
ovid-19



The Director of Traffic Culture, Salah Mohammed Shahab honours the weekly winner in traffic contest to promote online services. So far, there were 39 winners, and the department continues to provide its online services through Bahrain.bh, the e-Traffic mobile App and Sadad devices. The online applications reached half-million in 2019. The weekly prize is BD50 and the one year contest that is supported by the Bahrain Credit "Imtiaz, continues until July



in need of help amidst this pandemic. The team
to help the poor and needy



Members of Rotary Club of Salmaniya during its second virtual meeting on Wednesday. The meeting started with Past President Sebahat Isik welcoming the attendees and her invited friend Fuge who attended from Turkey online. Guest speaker was Rotary Club of Salmaniya member Dr. Mona El-Gezery who spoke about the "Psychological Effects of Quarantine on Children and their Carers". The meeting concluded with members asking questions and discussing the topic of activities during quarantine



UN adopts resolution calling for 'cooperation' on virus

United Nations, US

The UN General Assembly on Thursday approved a resolution calling for "international cooperation" and "multilateralism" in the fight against COVID-19, in the first text to come out of the international body since the outbreak began.

The resolution, approved by consensus, also stresses "the need for full respect for human rights" and that "there is no place for any form of discrimination, racism and xenophobia in the response to the pandemic."

Russia was unsuccessful in opposing the resolution with its own text that was supported by four other countries.

The UN resolution emphasizes the central role of the body in the global health and economic crisis. It was submitted by Switzerland, Indonesia, Singapore, Norway, Liechtenstein and Ghana, and adopted by 188 of the 193 states that make up the body, diplomats said.

The Russian text -- which also discussed cooperation but included an implicit demand for a general lifting of international sanctions, seen as a brake on efforts to fight the virus -- was supported by the Central African Republic, Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

Unlike the UN Security Council, the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly are not binding but have a strong political value depending on their support.

Coronavirus survivors donate plasma hoping to heal the sick

AFP | New York

As she emerges from quarantine, recovered COVID-19 patient Diana Berrent is eager to join the battle against the pandemic and donate precious antibodies that researchers hope might help others.

In mid-March, the New Yorker woke up with a 102-degree (39 Celsius) fever and intense chest heaviness, becoming one of the first from her Long Island neighborhood to test positive for coronavirus.

This week, Berrent was the first survivor in her state screened for antibodies -- immune system-generated proteins that can ward off viruses -- to contribute to initial tests seeking treatment for the infection that's left more than 51,000 people dead worldwide.

Convalescent plasma, the fluid in blood teeming with antibodies post-illness, has proven effective in small studies to treat infectious diseases including Ebola and SARS.

Now, the US Food and Drug Administration has greenlit physicians to experiment with the strategy as coronavirus patients fill hospitals and the nation's positive caseload spikes to over 236,000.

Bruce Sachias, chief medical officer of the New York Blood Center -- which will collect, test and distribute donations in the city -- said while there is reason to believe plasma transfusions can help alleviate the current crisis, tests underway are not intended to yield golden-ticket solutions.

"It's really important for us to be very cognizant of the fact that



Diana Berrent was the first coronavirus survivor in New York state to get screened hoping to donate anti-body rich plasma

we're still in very new territory," he said.

Crisis mode

Eldad Hod and Steven Spitalnik -- transfusion medicine doctors leading trials at Columbia University's Irving Medical Center -- are cautiously optimistic but, like Sachias, emphasize the unknowns.

Spitalnik said they believe "within seven to 14 days after the onset of an infection, that people will develop an immune response and eventually make high amounts of antibodies -- although exactly when the peak of antibody production will be, we don't know."

He said some data suggests antibody production could peak around 28 days post-infection, and hopes the new research could provide a clearer picture.

Hod said each donation "can potentially save three to four lives."

The primary goal now is ac-

quiring a significant plasma stock, so researchers can conduct formal studies with control groups who would receive non-convalescent plasma, and others the antibody-packed donations.

Initial plasma, however, will be distributed for "compassionate use," Hod said -- to patients outside studies but for whom other strategies have failed.

They also aim to test treatments on already-hospitalized patients and as a preventative therapy in settings like nursing homes.

Spitalnik said that normally they would want "highly controlled" clinical trials, which take longer but are more definitive.

But "this is a crisis," he said. "We understand and we are amenable to doing things that will take shorter amounts of time -- but hopefully we'll yield at least some rigorous results."

Internal hazmat suit

Berrent is eager to open her personal blood bank and crossing her fingers in hope the process can prove life-saving.

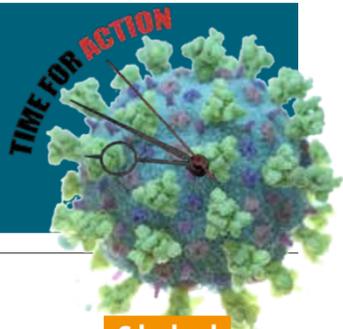
"We can be superheroes," the 45-year-old photographer said. "These are unprecedented, frightening times where everything is beyond our control -- except for we as survivors can help," Berrent said.

"We can be the ones running towards the fire in our own internally built hazmat suit. And that is a tremendous opportunity -- how could you not take advantage of that?"

Berrent's antibody levels met donation requirements -- but she is waiting on results of a nasal swab test to make sure any remnants of coronavirus have dissipated.

In the meantime, she's started the more than 17,000-member Facebook group "Survivor Corps" to mobilize other survivors to share their immunity.

"I can't wait to donate," Berrent said. "We need a forward-looking solution-based approach that offers hope because things are very, very bleak right now."



Global

Covid-19 Cases:

1,083,596

Deaths

58,150

Recovered:

227,738

Active cases

796,708

Closed cases

285,888

Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	New deaths	Total Deaths
USA	266,279	+733	6,803
Italy	119,827	+766	14,681
Spain	117,710	+587	10,935
Germany	89,838	+127	1,234
China	81,620	+4	3,322
France	64,338	+1,120	6,507
Iran	53,183	+134	3,294
UK	38,168	+684	3,605
Turkey	20,921	+69	425
Switzerland	19,606	+55	591
Belgium	16,770	+132	1,143
Netherlands	15,723	+148	1,487
Canada	12,375	+5	178
Austria	11,506	+10	168
S. Korea	10,062	+5	174
Portugal	9,886	+37	246
Brazil	8,229	+19	343
Israel	7,428	+4	40
Sweden	6,131	+50	358
Australia	5,350	+3	28
Ireland	4,273	+22	120
Russia	4,149	+4	34
Denmark	3,757	+16	139
Ecuador	3,368	+25	145
Philippines	3,018	+29	136
Pakistan	2,637	+6	40
India	2,567		72
Indonesia	1,986	+11	181
Mexico	1,510	+13	50
Algeria	1,171	+19	105
Hungary	623	+5	26
Lebanon	508	+1	17

Figures as of closing

Pentagon removes captain of virus-struck aircraft carrier

Washington

The Pentagon removed the captain of the coronavirus-stricken USS Theodore Roosevelt Thursday, saying he mishandled communications over how the outbreak was sweeping through the warship.

Acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly said Captain Brett Crozier was wrong to distribute to a wide range of people copies of an emotional, four-page letter describing the threat of the outbreak to the ship's nearly 5,000 sailors, allowing it to be leaked earlier this week to US media before top defense officials saw it.

Modly said that while there have been 114 cases of the coronavirus in the crew so far, none has been severe and Crozier overstated the severity when he suggested sailors were going to die without fast action.

Crozier "demonstrated extremely poor judgment in the middle of a crisis" in

his handling of the letter, Modly said.

"It misrepresented the facts of what was going on the ship" and created "a little bit of panic" that was unnecessary, he said.

"I have no doubt in my mind that Captain Crozier did what he thought was in the best interests of the safety and well-being of his crew," said Modly. "Unfortunately, it did the opposite."

In addition to frightening families of the sailors, he said, "it raised concerns about the operational capabilities and operational security of that ship that could have emboldened our adversaries to seek advantage."

Modly said the situation was exaggerated and that it was not correct that the Navy leadership was not addressing the problem at the time the letter went out.

In addition, he

'accelerating'

Crozier's letter, which leaked Tuesday, sparked concern that the virus was out of control and suggested the Navy leadership was not responding.

Crozier stunned experts by saying the ship had to be evacuated to ensure the coronavirus does not spread further.

"The spread of the disease is ongoing and accelerating," he wrote. "We are not at war. Sailors do not need to die," he pleaded.

"Removing the majority of personnel from a deployed US nuclear aircraft carrier and isolating them for two weeks may seem like an extraordinary measure," he added. "This is a necessary risk."

Modly said the situation was exaggerated and that it was not correct that the Navy leadership was not addressing the problem at the time the letter went out.

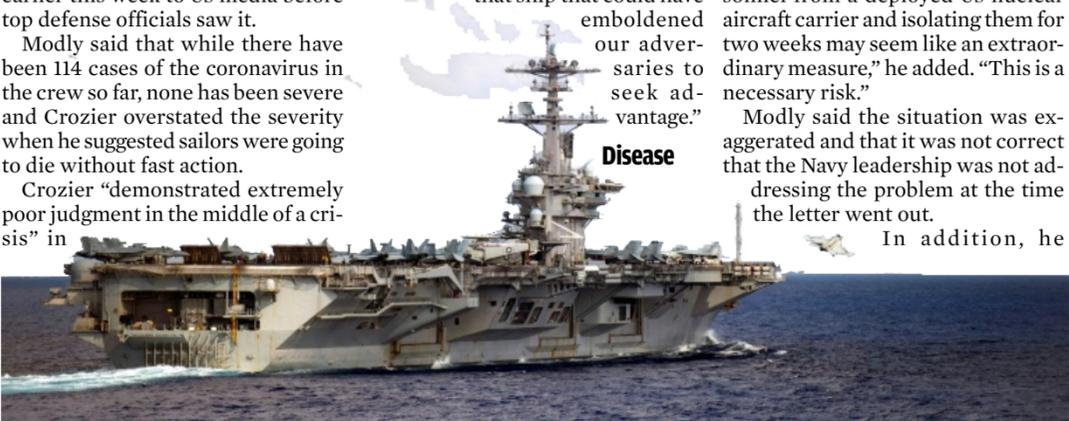
In addition, he

faulted Crozier for "an uncharacteristic lapse in judgment" in sending an unclassified letter meant for his superiors to as many as 30 people, increasing the chance it would be made public.

The letter "undermined the chain of command who had been moving and adjusting as rapidly as possible to get him the help he needed," Modly said.

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases	Serious, Critical	Tot cases/1m pop
Bahrain	673	+29	4		388	281	3	395
Saudi Arabia	2,039	+154	25	+4	351	1,663	41	59
UAE	1,264	+240	9	+1	108	1,147	2	128
Kuwait	417	+75			82	335	16	98
Oman	252	+21	1		57	194	3	49
Jordan	310	+11	5		58	247	5	30
Iraq	820	+48	54		226	540		20
Egypt	985	+120	66	+8	216	703		10



Message sent: Canada minister arranges virus airlift by text

AFP | Ottawa

Canada's foreign minister used his thumbs to arrange an emergency airlift of weary Canadians from Peru during the pandemic, reaching out to his counterpart by text message to secure landing rights, he said Thursday.

It was part of what Foreign Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne described in an interview with AFP as "the largest repatriation of Canadian travellers abroad in Canada's history."

According to his office, some 8,000 Canadians so far have been brought home from more than 30 countries on over 40 government flights since the World Health Organization declared a pandemic last month.

In numbers and complexity, the task he described was enormous, overcoming airport closure after airport closure, restrictions on flights and the movement of people, and in extreme cases situations where



Canadians queuing outside their consulate in Lima, Peru on March 26. Some 8,000 Canadians have been returned home over virus fears in the country's largest repatriation ever

martial law had been declared.

"You know, basically, I had to negotiate the landing slots for our planes to land in Peru, I did that by text message, to be honest," he said.

"I said to my counterpart in Peru that we need to get our planes there and we started ex-

changing texts, so I got the dates and then I got the hours (for the flights) because now every plane that is leaving Peru has to leave from one military airport in Lima."

"This is by far the most challenging repatriation exercise that we have ever done."

"You know, basically, I had to negotiate the landing slots for our planes to land in Peru, I did that by text message, to be honest"

Champagne also said he has been reaching out weekly to a "subgroup of G20 countries" to share lessons learned about the new coronavirus and how to slow its spread, "to advocate for airbridges that we had during the World War, to advocate for supply chains to remain open, for allowing transit and the repatriation of our citizens."

"Many of my colleagues were facing the same challenges with respect to their repatriations," he said.

"So in a world like that, Canada has been trying to express some leadership and trying to bring together people who don't normally work together."

Could TB vaccine protect medics from COVID-19?

Paris

Could a common vaccine used for decades to protect against tuberculosis help shield health workers from COVID-19?

While developing a specific immunisation against the coronavirus sweeping the planet will likely take many months, researchers are studying the potential benefits of the BCG shot, which many people around the world receive as children.

Laboratories and pharmaceutical firms are racing to find medicines to tackle COVID-19, which has infected more than a million people, killed at least 50,000 and for which there is currently no known treatment, vaccine or cure.

They are also looking at repurposing existing drugs.

Experts remain cautious

"We have known for decades that BCG has non-specific beneficial effects", in that it protects against diseases other than the one for which it was created, Camille Locht, of the French public health research institute Inserm, said.

Children vaccinated with BCG suffer less from other respiratory illnesses, it is used to treat certain bladder cancers and it could protect against asthma and autoimmune diseases such as type 1 diabetes.

Researchers want to test whether the tuberculosis vaccine could have a similar effect against the new coronavirus, either by reducing the risk of



Researchers are testing whether the tuberculosis vaccine could either reduce the risk of being infected by the coronavirus, or limit the severity of the symptoms

being infected, or by limiting the severity of the symptoms.

In France, where the BCG vaccine was compulsory until 2007, "most of the study participants will have already had a first vaccination", but the protective effect of this decreases over time, said Locht.

But experts remain cautious on the potential of the BCG to provide protection.

'Military exercise in peacetime'

"That is exactly the reason for this research," says Mihai Ne-tea, professor of experimental internal medicine at Radboud University in the Netherlands, which recently announced a clinical trial, with the University of Utrecht involving hundreds of healthcare workers.

This will see 500 medical pro-

fessionals receive the BCG jab and 500 get a placebo.

This is a relatively new concept based on the discovery that our innate immune response -- the body's generalised defences -- also has a memory, alongside the acquired immunity, which develops antibodies after coming into contact with a specific pathogen.

The BCG vaccine does not directly protect against the coronavirus, but provides a boost to the immune system which may lead to improved protection and a milder infection, Radboud university said of the study.

The idea is that the innate immune system can be prepared, or "trained" to better combat attacks, thanks in particular to live attenuated vaccines, such as BCG or measles, which contained a weakened sliver of the original pathogen.

In the case of COVID-19, in addition to infection by the virus itself, some patients have also suffered excessive immune responses, with the uncontrolled production of pro-inflammatory proteins, cytokines.

"Vaccination, in particular against BCG, might help to better orchestrate this inflammatory immune response," said Laurent Lagrost, Inserm research director who works on links between inflammation and the immune system.

The vaccine acts as a "military exercise in peacetime" so that the body can "fight the enemy effectively in wartime," he said in an interview this week with French broadcaster BFMTV.

International effort

A separate trial of the BCG vaccine has also been launched in Australia, with some 4,000 health workers, by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute.

Microbiologist Locht wants to harmonise the criteria of the French study with that planned in four Spanish hospitals, in order to better compare their results.

However, researchers in Spain, instead of using the BCG, would like to try a new tuberculosis vaccine developed by the biotech firm Biofabri.

This vaccine candidate, whose safety has already been demonstrated, should offer "better protection", said Carlos Martin, professor of microbiology at the University of Zaragoza, because it is "developed from a strain isolated in humans".

In contrast, he said the BCG is prepared from a strain of the bacteria that infects cattle, and two genes very important to the virulence of tuberculosis have been deactivated in the vaccine candidate.

Another advantage of the new vaccine is that it is made in Europe and could be quickly made available, while the BCG suffers from strong supply tensions and using it for adults against COVID-19 could deprive children of it in countries where tuberculosis remains endemic.

In Germany, the Max Planck Institute for Infectious Biology is also preparing a trial with a genetically-modified vaccine candidate, developed by the Serum Institute of India.

In coordination with these countries, Inserm announced on Thursday that clinical trials could also be launched in Africa, where health systems are expected to come under acute pressure from the coronavirus pandemic.

Latest developments

Thailand will begin enforcing a six-hour curfew from Friday night in a bid to control the spread of coronavirus, and has warned anyone who breaches the order faces a two-year jail term. The curfew runs from 10 pm to 4 am (1500 to 2100 GMT), and bars everyone in the country from leaving their homes, except for workers in essential services.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on Indians to hold candles and mobiles aloft for nine minutes on Sunday in order to dispel the "darkness and uncertainty" of the coronavirus crisis. "Friends, amidst the darkness spread by the Corona pandemic, we must continuously progress towards light and hope," Modi said in an address to the nation of 1.3 billion people under a lockdown since March 25.



Japan shifted its focus more to coronavirus patients with severe symptoms, asking those who are less ill to stay home or at accommodation designated by local authorities, as specialised beds run short with the outbreak spreading fast. Health minister Katsunobu Kato said his ministry issued the instruction to all prefectures, including hard-hit Tokyo.



A policeman wears a coronavirus-themed outfit at a market in Chennai, India to raise awareness about social distancing

Australia's corporate watchdog threatened real estate agents with fines and jail time if they tell financially struggling tenants to withdraw money from their retirement accounts to pay their rent during the COVID-19 crisis. The Australian Securities and Investments Commission said in a letter to professional real estate bodies that it had "significant concern" over reports that agents were pressuring tenants unable to pay their rent due to the economic impact of the pandemic to use their retirement savings.

Rights activists on Friday condemned Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen's government for executing a convicted murderer, saying the continued use of capital punishment undermined the island's progressive reputation. Death row inmate Weng Jen-hsien, found guilty last year of setting a fire that killed his parents and four relatives in 2016, was executed by a firing squad on Wednesday, the justice ministry said.



The UK government said yesterday it was rushing to build more emergency field hospitals ahead of an expected surge in coronavirus cases, hours after recording a record 569 deaths from the disease. Two new facilities will be built in Bristol in the west and Harrogate in the north to house up to 1,500 patients, the state-run National Health Service (NHS) said in a statement.

Tunisia's interior ministry has deployed a police robot to patrol the streets of the capital and enforce a lockdown imposed last month as the country battles the spread of coronavirus. Known as PGuard, the 'robocop' is remotely operated and equipped with infrared and thermal imaging cameras, in addition to a sound and light alarm system.



Troops and police in Ecuador have collected at least 150 bodies from streets and homes in the country's most populous city Guayaquil amid warnings that as many as 3,500 people could die of the coronavirus in the city and surrounding province in the coming months.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Friday he was remaining in isolation with mild symptoms of the coronavirus, including a high temperature, seven days after he first tested positive. "Although I'm feeling better and I've done my seven days of isolation, alas I still have one of the symptoms, a minor symptom, I still have a temperature," Johnson said in a video message posted on Twitter.



Britain's Prince Charles opened a new hospital in London yesterday. The Nightingale Hospital, which will initially provide up to 500 beds equipped with ventilators and oxygen, will eventually be able to treat about 4,000 patients. It has been created in the Excel Exhibition Centre in London's Docklands.

Italy's civil protection chief said the country's lockdown would probably continue beyond the start of May.

Spain's daily deaths fell for the first time since March 26, a day after its total casualties exceeded 10,000.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel ended her self-quarantine and returned to the chancellery after testing negative several times.

Russia will send 11 military planes carrying medical equipment to Serbia.

The U.S. government on Friday sounded the alarm about the surge in coronavirus cases in Japan, adding to a chorus of prominent domestic voices - including the governor of Tokyo - who have called for decisive action to avoid an explosive outbreak.

India will pull out of a three-week lockdown in phases, as officials battle to contain the country's biggest cluster of infections in New Delhi.

Indonesia's death toll passed South Korea as the country with the highest number of recorded fatalities in Asia after China

Kyrgyzstan reported its first death

Israel enforced a lockdown of an ultra-Orthodox Jewish town badly affected by the virus.



Laboratories and pharmaceutical firms are racing to find medicines to tackle COVID-19

CELEBS

celebs



Justin Bieber

Justin Bieber postpones all 2020 concerts due to COVID-19

ANI | Los Angeles

Singer-songwriter Justin Bieber announced that he is postponing all of his scheduled 2020 concerts for his 'Changes Tour' due to the global outbreak of corona-

virus.

The singer took to Instagram and posted a statement on the platform to make an announcement in the regard.

"In light of the current public health crisis. And with the deepest concern for all those being affected. Justin Bieber will be postponing all currently scheduled 2020 dates for the changes

tour," read a statement.

"While Justin - along with his band. Dancers and crew - has been hard at work preparing an amazing show. He has always put the health and well-being of his fans first and foremost," the statement further read.

The statement also said that the 'Cold Water' singer, "is anxiously awaiting the opportunity

to get back out on the road and perform in a space that is safe for everyone."

Bieber asked all his fans to hold on to their tickets as the dates of the tour will soon be rescheduled.

According to the World Health Organisation, COVID-19 has affected over 8,27,419 people globally and has spread to almost 206 countries.

Kristen Bell says she and Dax Shepard have 'gotten on each other's last nerve'

Fox | Los Angeles

Hollywood super couple Kristen Bell and Dax Shepard are finding quarantine to be a little tough.

In a video chat with Entertainment Tonight, Bell, 39, discussed her experience being isolated with Shepard, 45, and their two kiddos.

"We've gotten on each other's last nerve these last couple days," admitted Bell. "We're doing much better now because we were laughing about it. But when we were not laughing about it for the first couple of days, that's the hard spot."

Bell then shared her thoughts on why quarantining with loved ones can be

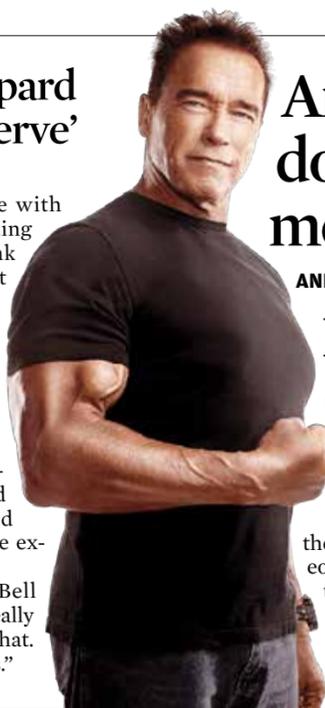
Kristen Bell



so tough.

"I love spending time with him and he loves spending time with me but I think what is different about this quarantine time is you have so much more time to think about the other persona and their actions and sort of replay what they said or attach a meaning to something that they did and that I could do without," she explained.

Furthermore, Bell added: "Nobody really needs time for that. That's useless."



Arnold Schwarzenegger donates 1 million USD medical safety equipment

ANI | Los Angeles

Hollywood star and former California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has donated 1 million USD in personal protection equipment to hospitals dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak.

According to Fox News, the 73-year-old actor, in a video shared on Facebook, stated that he went down to make sure the shipment had arrived, cheekily tearing open a box and verifying that

Arnold Schwarzenegger

there were N95 masks inside.

The 'Terminator' star has been urging people to socially isolate themselves in a number of videos and social media posts, some of which show backyard workout tips.

Schwarzenegger said that he had donated the 1 million USD to a GoFundMe set up for hospital workers in a post on Instagram earlier.

He wrote, "This is a simple way to protect our real action heroes on the frontlines in our hospitals, and I'm proud to be part of it. I never believed in sitting on the couch and complaining about how bad things are.

Bareilles says she had coronavirus, is now 'fully recovered'

Fox | Los Angeles

Sara Bareilles has announced that she contracted coronavirus.

The 40-year-old singer-songwriter shared her diagnosis and her recovery on her Instagram story on Thursday.

"Just wanted to check in," said Bareilles in the video, taking a walk outside. "I'm really quiet right now and will probably continue to be quiet. Just sort of taking all of this in and having a lot of feelings as I do."

She then shared that she'd fought off the virus.

"I had it, just so you know," she announced. "I'm fully recovered, just so you know."



Sara Bareilles

Tom Cruise reacts to 'Top Gun: Maverick' release delay, hopes everyone stays 'safe'

Fox | Los Angeles

The coronavirus continues to wreak havoc on the entertainment industry.

Paramount Pictures announced on Thursday that the release of its highly-anticipated movie "Top Gun: Maverick" would be delayed from June 24 to Dec. 23.

The sequel's star and producer, Tom Cruise, who plays Pete "Maverick" Mitchell, reacted to the news on Twitter.

"I know many of you have waited 34 years. Unfortunately, it will be a little longer. Top Gun: Maverick will fly this December. Stay safe, everyone," he wrote.

Gwyneth Paltrow

Gwyneth Paltrow, Brad Falchuk discuss household 'tension' with intimacy expert

Fox | Los Angeles

Gwyneth Paltrow and her husband, Brad Falchuk, are getting real about what it's like living under the same roof with her two kids as they remain in quarantine.

In a YouTube video titled "How Do You Find Intimacy in Uncertain Times?" the married couple chatted with intimacy and sexuality expert Michaela Boehm to learn some tips on how to make the most of your relationship while keeping children at home entertained during isolation.

The Goop founder admit-



Brad Falchuk

ted there's "definitely tension" in her household as she and Falchuk live under the same roof with her daughter, Apple, 15, and son, Moses, 13.

"We're really lucky we have a re-

ally solid relationship, but we're also in the house with the kids and it's pretty close quarters," she says. "And you know, I think we all feel,

GWYNETH PALTROW

especially my teenagers right now, are feeling very pent in -- especially Apple, who is a really social creature."

"We're really following the strict guidelines so she's not able to see people that she wants to see, so it gets fractious in moments," Paltrow continues. "And there's definitely tension within the household and we have the added dynamic of step-parent, and I think there is quite a lot of stress that just comes from trying to recalibrate to this new normal and this level of proximity. Then as a couple, I think a lot of our friends are going through things like this. Where do you go as a couple when you're all in the house and you've got dogs and you're trying to work...what are you supposed to do?"

SUDOKU

9	5	1						7
2		4						
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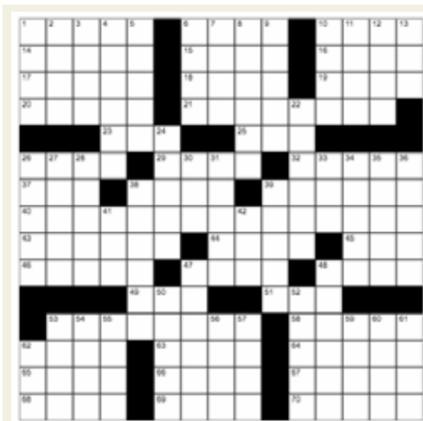
Yesterday's solution

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

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- Cancels a dele; 6- Norwegian king; 10- Move off hastily; 14- Kind of kitchen; 15- Female horse; 16- "Is... it?"; 17- Fancy pancake; 18- Bakery worker; 19- Yorkshire river; 20- Try; 21- Inclination; 23- Metal in Montana's motto; 25- Goal, intention; 26- Eye sore; 29- ... on first?; 32- Wharves; 37- Seed of a legume; 38- Doozy; 39- Linen location; 40- Informally; 43- Angora fleece; 44- Fleet; 45- Snake-like fish; 46- ... nous; 47- Mongolian desert; 48- Initial stake in a hand of poker; 49- Hide-hair link; 51- Little guy; 53- Teeny; 58- Wears well; 62- Oklahoma Native; 63- Sharp; 64- Go along (with); 65- Cricket equipment; 66- Gung-ho; 67- Dense element; 68- The wolf ... the door; 69- City in Western Nevada; 70- City near Kobe;

Down

1- Faction of a group, often religious; 2- Skater Lipinski; 3- French summers; 4- Walk stealthily; 5- Twisted expression; 6- Pass over; 7- Chantilly product; 8- Places of contest; 9- "Otello" composer; 10- Ollie's partner; 11- In vogue; 12- Breezy; 13- "The Waste Land" monogram; 22- Hire; 24- Dog tag datum; 26- Foam; 27- Mortise insert; 28- Cruising vessel; 30- Skirt stitching; 31- Home of the Black Bears; 33- Debtor's note; 34- Ruhr city; 35- Sublease; 36- Elegance; 38- Familiarize; 39- Poilite; 41- Projection at the corner of a door architrave; 42- Apprehend; 47- Suffer from a loss; 48- Saws; 50- Industrialist Schindler; 52- Budget alternative; 53- School orgs; 54- Scintilla; 55- Treehouse used by birds; 56- Corn powder; 57- Prefix with skeleton; 59- Mex. miss; 60- Furniture wood; 61- Actress Ward; 62- ...Wan Kenobi was a character in "Star Wars";

Yesterday's solution

A	R	I	E	L	A	S	H	O	C	T	E	T					
H	E	N	R	I	S	T	E	N	O	I	R	E					
E	S	C	A	L	A	T	O	R	E	A	T	I	N				
M	T	A		I	O	W	A		I	S	L	E	S				
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S	C	R	A	W	L		U	N	I	T							
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P	E	R	I		E	A	R				P	O	R	T	S		
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B	E	A	R	D		W	E	S			L	Y	S	O	L		

SPORTS

Suarez 'hurt' by criticism of Barca players' pay cut delay

AFP | Barcelona

Uruguay star Luis Suarez complained that he has been "hurt" by criticism of him and fellow millionaire Barcelona players for the time it took to agree to pay cuts to help out other club employees.

Argentine superstar Lionel Messi announced on Monday that Barca's players had agreed to a 70 percent pay cut and to make contributions to ensure the club's non-playing staff could be paid in full during the state of alarm in Spain caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Footballers across Europe's top leagues have come under fire as some clubs have made cuts to their non-playing staff or their salaries while many wealthy players have yet to see their incomes affected.

"It hurts because we were the first to want to reach an agreement," Suarez told Uruguayan radio station Sport890.

"We know the situation the club is in, the situation the world is in right now and it was



Barcelona's Argentine forward Lionel Messi (L) and Barcelona's Uruguayan forward Luis Suarez leave the Camp Nou Stadium in Barcelona (file photo)

a minimal detail (holding up the agreement).

"But people have said things like us players didn't want to give in; that the basketball and handball players came to an agreement and we didn't."

"We hadn't come to an agreement because we were waiting to find the best solution for the club, and to our benefit and trying to help the employees."

In announcing the agreement, Messi had directed a thinly veiled swipe at the Barca board, led by president Josep Maria Bartomeu, whom he accused of undermining the players during recent negotiations.

His lengthy Instagram post was shared by a slew of teammates, including Suarez.

Striker Suarez, who has remained in Spain unlike some

“We hadn't come to an agreement because we were waiting to find the best solution for the club, and to our benefit and trying to help the employees

LUIS SUAREZ

of his European-based international teammates such as Edinson Cavani and Diego Godin, called on Uruguay to impose a strict lockdown.

"It's the best solution for everyone. I know it's difficult in Uruguay where many people live day to day ... but if we don't all come together and go in the same direction, it's going to be difficult to come out of this situation," he said.

Uruguay has partially closed its borders, shut schools and shopping malls and advised people to social distance and stay at home, but hasn't imposed a lockdown.

Calm Ancelotti wants fair play on season restart date



Everton manager Carlo Ancelotti looks on during a match (file photo)

AFP | Paris

Before the Premier League starts up it must ensure all clubs resume training on the same day, Everton manager Carlo Ancelotti told French newspaper L'Equipe in an interview published yesterday.

The Premier League is on hold because of the coronavirus pandemic. It was scheduled to resume on April 30, but club chairmen were meeting by videoconference yesterday and were expected to push that the date back.

"One of the important things is that all the clubs resume training at the same time, that there are no disparities, that no one has an advantage over the others," the 60-year-old Italian told L'Equipe. "Players nowadays are capable of being physically ready within a fortnight."

Ancelotti, who took over at Everton in December, has won the Champions League as a player and coach and has led teams to league titles in Italy, Germany, France and England.

After more than 45 years in a world without football, preoccupied by the terrible toll the coronavirus pandemic is taking, particularly in his native Italy. Unsure of what is going to happen next, he is calm in the face of the uncertainty.

Confined to his home in Liverpool and with no players to coach or matches to watch, he is in no rush to return to the managerial treadmill.

"It's a little strange for me. It's something I've never done," he said.

The whole Everton squad stayed in England and none have tested positive for Covid-19, he said.

“One of the important things is that all the clubs resume training at the same time, that there are no disparities, that no one has an advantage over the others. Players nowadays are capable of being physically ready within a fortnight

CARLO ANCELOTTI

"I keep in touch with the players. I don't call them regularly but, with the staff, we send them a training programme that we update to keep them in good physical condition. Even though I know they are."

Painful

Even if the league does resume on April 30, players will have gone seven weeks without collective training.

"It's a lot, but a player has no problem taking part in a match after a seven or eight week break. Of course, they won't be at 100 per cent when he resumes, but they have the ability to do it, there's no doubt about that," he said. "You train while you play."

He says he is talking to friends and relatives in Italy by phone.

"It's very painful to hear that so many of my compatriots are dying every day."

While he said the pandemic was "like a war," Ancelotti remained optimistic about the future.

Chelsea to help Refuge tackle domestic abuse

Reuters | London

English soccer club Chelsea have teamed up with domestic abuse charity Refuge to help raise funds for women and children left in vulnerable situations because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Some experts have warned that self-isolation directives during the coronavirus lockdown could lead to further cases of domestic abuse and make it more difficult to find support.

Chelsea said the manager of its women's team Emma Hayes, and male and female players would take part in a digital cam-

paign to raise funds for the charity, with the club saying it would match all donations received in the next six weeks.

"I am proud to lead the club's support of this worthy cause during such a difficult time for so many," Hayes told the club's website.

"There are many things for people to deal with in the present climate but it is important we support the vulnerable and those who may feel alone or without a voice.

"I hope this campaign can do that and make a difference to those who need support."

Chelsea have already opened the hotel on their Stamford



General view outside Stamford Bridge stadium home of Chelsea

Bridge stadium site to National Health Service staff in London, while the men's squad have

donated money to the Chelsea Foundation to help support those in need during the crisis.

UEFA warn of European bans if leagues end seasons prematurely

AFP | Paris

UEFA and Europe's top clubs have stated their determination that the current football season should be played to a conclusion and threatened that teams may be excluded from the next Champions League if their domestic competitions are ended prematurely.

In a joint letter released late on Thursday, UEFA, the European Club Association (ECA), and the European Leagues body representing nearly a thousand clubs in 29 countries, said that they were working on the possibility of playing on into July and August if need be.

The Champions League and Europa League -- both of which are frozen in the last-16 stage -- could be completed once the domestic seasons are finished, and "stopping competitions



UEFA's logo is seen at its headquarters

should really be the last resort after acknowledging that no calendar alternative would allow to conclude the season."

The joint response came after the Belgian Pro League announced on Thursday that it recommended declaring the season over with the present table accepted as final.

It is the first European league to take such a measure, although more could follow.

That means Club Brugge



The response came after the Belgian Pro League announced on Thursday that it recommended declaring the season over with the present table accepted as final

would in theory go straight into the next Champions League group stage, but UEFA, the ECA and the European Leagues indicated that they may be barred from continental competition if the Belgian league decision is

finalised.

"It is of paramount importance that even a disruptive event like this epidemic does not prevent our competitions from being decided on the field, in accordance with their rules and that all sporting titles are awarded on the basis of results," the joint letter said.

"We are confident that football can restart in the months to come -- with conditions that will be dictated by public authorities -- and believe that any decision of abandoning domestic competitions is, at this stage, premature and not justified.

"Since participation in UEFA club competitions is determined by the sporting result achieved at the end of a full domestic competition, a premature termination would cast doubts about the fulfilment of such condition."

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Wimbledon chief fears 'no more tennis this year'

AFP | London

Wimbledon chief Richard Lewis admitted on Thursday that he feared the remainder of the 2020 tennis season could be wiped out.

Tennis has been in lockdown since early last month and is not scheduled to return until July 13 at the earliest following the cancellation of Wimbledon for the first time since World War II on Wednesday.

The decision to axe the sport's oldest and most prestigious Grand Slam event due to the coronavirus pandemic followed the French Open's unilateral switch from its traditional May-June slot to September-October.

The double body blow resulted in the entire clay-court and grass-court seasons being abandoned.

"I don't think it's unrealistic to say that there may be no more tennis this year," said All England Club chief executive Lewis.

"But I would like to think that things will settle down so that tournaments can be



The logo of Wimbledon at the All England Club

played sooner rather than later. Who knows what will happen?"

Lewis told the Guardian that, despite his fears, he hoped that the season's next Grand Slam, the US Open in August-September could take place.



"I would like to think that things will settle down so that tournaments can be played sooner rather than later. Who knows what will happen?"

RICHARD LEWIS

"Let's hope the US Open and Roland Garros (rescheduled to start in Paris a week after the final of the US Open in New York) can take place," he added. "The optimist in me – and I am often not optimistic – still hopes the American hard-court season, the big tournaments, the Masters and the Premiers, will take place: Montreal, Toronto and then Cincinnati.

Townsend hits out at UK health minister for 'blaming' footballers

AFP | London

Crystal Palace's Andros Townsend has accused the British government's Health Secretary of "deflecting blame" onto footballers after Matt Hancock said they should take a pay cut during the coronavirus crisis.

Tottenham, Newcastle, Norwich and Bournemouth have said they will use a government scheme to guarantee 80 percent of salaries for non-playing staff up to a maximum of £2,500 (\$3,100, 2,850 euros) per month.

Such moves have prompted angry responses from politicians given no cuts have so far been agreed for high-earning players.

Citing the "ultimate sacrifice" made by staff in Britain's National Health Service who had died from the coronavirus while treating patients, Hancock called for players, in some cases earning hundreds of thousands of pounds a week, to take a pay cut.

He said: "I think the first thing that Premier League footballers can do is make a contribution, take a pay cut

and play their part."

'Easy target'

Talks between the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) and clubs over pay cuts are ongoing, with the PFA insisting Thursday they are aware their members "must share the financial burden".

But Townsend said footballers, many of whom have already made significant charitable donations during the crisis, were an "easy target" for ministers.

"Football is trying to do a lot of good," he told Talksport radio yesterday.

"To wake up yesterday and see footballers being painted as villains was a bit of a surprise.

"The Health Secretary, deflecting blame onto footballers. I don't think that is right. His job is the responsibility for NHS workers.

"NHS workers have been underpaid for years. Only 2,000 of them have been able to be tested for coronavirus.

"He (Hancock) is coming out and deflecting onto the easy targets, the footballers, and that doesn't sit right with me."

Andros Townsend



Bad blood between Cleiton and Luan continues

TDT | Manama

Cleiton 'Predator' and Luan 'Miau' rivalry has generated quite a buzz for MMA fans of BRAVE Combat Federation; the largest MMA promotion company in the Middle East.

Even though the duo were supposed to fight for the Lightweight championship in March 2020; the rivalry between the two roots back to the BRAVE CF 25 event in August of 2019.

Prior to their encounter, Cleiton 'Predator' and Luan 'Miau' were verbally locking horns with each other during the weeks leading up to their decisive fight at BRAVE CF 25's main event held at Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

The MMA world was shocked at how the fierce rivalry was brought to a quick end in an unexpected 32 second submission.

Being the more experienced mixed martial artist, Cleiton 'Predator' chose to submit his opponent before going blow for blow with his opponent: a



Cleiton 'Predator' and Luan 'Miau' in action (file photo)

knockout artist. So, when Luan 'Miau' went for a single-leg takedown, he ended up having his back taken and forced to tap out, relinquishing his world title to his biggest rival. Cleiton 'Predator' was then crowned the BRAVE CF World Champion by dethroning his foe.

Right after his loss, Luan went

back to work testing the waters of Super Lightweight. However, he stated that his endgame would be claiming back the lightweight championship from his nemesis with the statement.

"This is a great chance for me to fight once again in my second home of Bahrain, against a very tough opponent. But things re-

main the same. My mindset is that I need to go out there and get back in the game. I want to show everyone I'm still the champion and I want to fight Cleiton again", said Miau, who beat a tough Gadzhimusa Gaziev before coming back to Lightweight for a second shot at his arch-rival.

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused worldwide disruption to the economy, lifestyle, entertainment and events across the globe.

In the wake of the health risks caused by large gatherings of people, BRAVE CF officials postponed the event which was planned to be held on March 28 in Balneario Camboriu, Brazil. While the new date for the fight is still under review, the official statement released by BRAVE CF read:

"We intend to get back to event planning as soon as the situation is stabilized and we have clearance from governments and health organizations, we will get back to the organization of the events."

New Zealand tours in doubt, office avoids sackings

Reuters | Wellington

New Zealand's winter tours to Netherlands, Scotland, Ireland and West Indies are in "serious doubt" due to the coronavirus pandemic and there are "obvious question marks" looming over the tour to Bangladesh in August, the national cricket board said yesterday.

"Clearly, this situation is extremely disappointing for everyone involved in sport but, given the bigger picture, and the terrible toll COVID-19 is taking worldwide, we need to look after not only our own people but the greater community good," New Zealand Cricket boss David White told reporters in Auckland.

"Cricket in New Zealand has been fortunate in that we were very much at the end of our home summer programme when this crisis struck.

"However, with the lockdown now in full force, we're mindful of the difficulties facing our cricket community."

New Zealand has reported over 800 infections and one death from the virus.

As in other countries, virtually all sport in New Zealand has been shut down as part of containment efforts, triggering job losses and pay-cuts. White said the board had not yet needed to resort to staff cuts but had switched to four-day working weeks and applied to a government scheme which subsidises wages at organisations affected by the coronavirus.

England pay cuts still an option - Woakes

AFP | London

England all-rounder Chris Woakes indicated Thursday pay cuts for the country's leading cricketers could yet happen as the sport tries to keep financially afloat amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Wednesday saw England and Wales Cricket Board chief executive Tom Harrison announce he was taking a 25 percent pay cut, with other officials at Lord's reducing their salaries as well.

That followed his announcement on Tuesday of the ECB's £61 million (\$76 million) aid package in response to the "once in a generation" challenge of COVID-19.

Harrison said Tuesday there were no plans to enforce a pay cut on leading England players, with cricket worldwide suspended.

But the ESPNcricinfo website reported Harrison had written to the chief executive of England's Professional Cricketers Association to suggest centrally contracted stars such



Chris Woakes reacts during a match (file photo)

as Test captain Joe Root and all-rounder Ben Stokes volunteer to accept a cut of some 20 percent.

The players, however, do not yet appear to have been contacted directly.

"It's a tricky one, talking about finances and people's wages, it can be a delicate subject," World Cup-winner Woakes told BBC Radio.

"The PCA is our governing

body (union) as players and they do a fantastic job for us. They're looking after us as well as they can and trying to help the ECB through this."

The 31-year-old Warwickshire star added: "Those discussions are ongoing between the ECB and the PCA and there's every chance that might happen but at the minute we haven't been asked to take a pay cut."

Vuelta to stick to start date and route, says director

AFP | Madrid

This year's Vuelta a Espana is still set to go ahead as planned with all 21 stages despite the coronavirus pandemic's devastating impact on Spain, the race's director said on Thursday.

"As it stands today the Vuelta's dates stay as they are and we not considering a race of less than the scheduled 21 stages," Javier Guillen told sports daily AS.

It had been rumoured that the Vuelta, one of cycling's



Cyclists compete in Vuelta cycling race (file photo)

three Grand Tours and is scheduled to start on August 14 in the Netherlands, could reduce the number of stages if the Tour de France is delayed, in order to make room for the postponed

Giro d'Italia which as yet has no new start date.

"All this is mere speculation that has come out of Italy ... we know that it's difficult to combine races with established dates with others that need to be reorganised, so should know that we will have to be flexible should a change of dates materialise," Guillen added.

However Guillen insisted that the priority was ensuring that the Tour de France, which is still scheduled to start on June 27, is run as "it's an indispensable event for our sport".