



# New 'outbreak fashion trend'

From safety to style, face masks have quickly been embraced and 'beautified'

● **Born out of necessity and care for people**

● **Face coverings in all shapes, sizes and unique styles**

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As always, fashion has drawn inspiration from what's going on in the world, and this year is definitely no exception.

Because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, face masks have swiftly become an accidental trend – a growing fashion trend on the streets.

In all shapes, sizes and styles, face coverings are the new must-have accessories – literally.

At first, wearing a medical, disposable mask that hide the mouth and nose was just a collective social responsibility or solidarity to help prevent the spread of infection.

People wanted to protect themselves and, even more importantly, they wanted to protect others especially their loved ones. That feeling was stronger than the feeling of social embarrassment at wearing a mask.

But now that people are a bit more used to it, wearing fashionable masks outdoors has turned into an entirely new form of self-expression to many. But

unlike most fashion statements, face masks are born out of necessity to keep one another safe when in public.

## Safety and health

Since the beginning of the pandemic, face coverings in public are required by authorities not only for personal use but mainly to ensure the safety and health of others.

Indeed, face masks have come a long way, and they're more fashionable than ever these days.

Due to their growth in popularity, many have begun creating and innovating masks and infusing them with a little fashion personality as part of one's outfit.

In Bahrain, as the government increasingly requires face masks to stem the spread of the virus, fashionable face masks have become a trend.

People have even begun styling their masks, from black, white, colourful to subtly unique ones.

## Profitable business

"Elaborate face masks" have become a profitable business. Many have become big sellers.

"Many small and big businesses have taken the opportunity to make and sell personalised cloth face covers with a wide variety of styles and designs," an old British lady entrepreneur noted.

"We're already seeing a lot of people not only wearing cloth

“The cool designs just bring a little sunshine during one of the most difficult times we have seen in this lifetime. But let's not forget why we are wearing masks: for health and safety.”

FILIPINO PRINT SHOP OWNER

face coverings, but making a design or fashion statement with their choice of cover.”

Before the virus outbreak, the typical image which may come to mind when thinking about face masks is most likely the blue medical mask worn by doctors. Now, a face mask could be anything imaginable.

Shops, stores, and even ordinary people, make non-medical, "washable" masks, especially made of clothes or fabric, and sell them for a living.

Most of them are simply pieces of fabric with straps, decorated with flowers, puppy dogs, Wonder Woman, Star Wars, rainbows and other designs, and ranging from BD1 to as high as BD5 per piece.

They make masks with different colours to choose from and made out of different customised styles, unique tones and texture and, of course, numerous designs. They also add some humour to the new fashion accessory.

Other customers order designs with their own faces printed on the reusable cotton or silk material, some with smiling faces, or



**26,596**  
Total number of violations for not wearing face masks at public places and shops since the enforcement of precautionary measures as reported by the Public Security on 6 October.



Different fashionable and trendy face masks

big red lips.

## Smiling and laughing

"When people see us wearing cool masks, they seem to be wondering why we are smiling and laughing," a Bahraini said with a smile.

Nasser Iqbal, owner of a used items shop in Gudaibiya narrated: "Every time I wear brightly coloured masks, it puts a smile on everyone's face. So I thought, why not produce more and sell them to the public? I just feel like there is a need for stylish face masks."

So Iqbal began producing protective yet personalised face masks. The final product was a

remarkable marriage of motifs featuring a variety of patterns, colours and styles.

Face masks, in all shapes, sizes, colours and flamboyancy, have also conquered the internet with customers reaching out to online sellers to purchase more eye-catching face masks.

"I think this is absolutely a fashion trend," said an Indian expatriate.

One Filipino print shop owner named Julius is popular now in the community making and designing face masks with prints of horror,

cartoon and movie characters. "The cool designs just bring a little sunshine during one of the most difficult times we have seen in this lifetime. But let's not forget why we are wearing masks: for health and safety," Julius pointed out.

Before the coronavirus, face masks were never a trending topic. Yet, through the changes and adaptations into this "new normal" way of life, we are all still absorbing, trendy face masks could be one of the main ways that this virus could subside.

# NHRA licenses medical face mask factory

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The National Health Regulatory Authority (NHRA) has licensed the first factory to produce medical face masks in Bahrain, as part of the kingdom's efforts to enhance medical investments, especially those aimed at supporting its efforts to combat the coronavirus (COVID-19).

NHRA's Chief Executive Officer Mariam Adhbi Al Jalahma received yesterday Ziyad Janahi, representative of "Aegis Medical", and handed over to him a certificate approving the factory as licensed manufacturers of medical N95 and PLY3 medical face masks in the kingdom.

Al Jalahma said that based on the leadership's directives, the



Al Jalahma hands over the certificate to Janahi

NHRA is keen to attract and support investments in the health sector.

"Aegis Medical" Board of Directors deputy chairman Dawood Al Hmood lauded the cooperation of all the relevant authorities,

particularly the NHRA, with the investors in the factory.

He appreciated the easy and smooth establishment procedures of the factory, and the full support of the Industry, Commerce and Tourism Ministry, praising the tax

exemptions for medical products. He pointed out that Bahrain's open-market policy and investment-stimulating environment have encouraged the factory's owners to set it in the kingdom, given its clear procedures and the electronic system provided for investors.

The 750-square-metre plant produces the highest standard medical face masks, using cutting-edge technologies, with a monthly production capacity of about two million high grade N95 medical face masks, and nearly three million surgical 3 PLY masks.

The NHRA will face masks are made according to the European and American safety and efficiency standards.



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## Virtual programmes for people with special needs



Bousabiah

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Department of Continuing Education Acting Director Abdul Karim Bousabiah said that the ministry is providing virtual sign language programmes for people with special needs.

The programmes are provided through educational portals presented by sign language teachers, he added.

Bousabiah said that 21 education centres across the governorates will be dedicated for distance learning and training for people with special needs.

The centres will be provided with sign language teachers, community service and advisors.

# Education Ministry restructuring plans approved

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The Steering Committee in charge of the project to restructure different departments of the Ministry of Education yesterday held its ninth meeting.

Chaired by Undersecretary for Resources and Services Dr Mohammed Mubarak Juma'a, the virtual session was attended by committee's members representing Government's partners and the consulting company.

The panel discussed and approved the restructuring plans of all the Education Ministry's sectors, at the level of directorates and sub-directorates, ahead of submitting them to the Civil Service Bureau (CSB). The meeting also discussed the progress made in the project's various initiatives, and the proposals to implement them.

The committee members were also updated on the implementation of the decisions of the Supreme Council for the Develop-



The virtual meeting in progress

ment of Education and Training, such as the independence of the Higher Education Council, the affiliation of the Bahrain Training Institute to the Bahrain Polytechnic and the Education and Training Quality Authority (BQA)'s supervision of the exams of the ninth and 12th grades.

The committee also approved the future procedures related to the mechanisms and regulations of spending at the level of schools.