

## Virtual fans? Premier League looks at options for empty stadium games

The Premier League is exploring the use of audio effects and computer generated 'fans', to improve the viewer experience of watching behind closed doors games.

P13

## Shaikh Khalid calls for developing school sports



Markets lifted by global rally

## Mass evacuations for major cyclone in S.Asia

## Eid prayers to be performed at Al Fateh Mosque

TDT | Manama

Eid Al Fitr prayers will be performed at Al Fateh Mosque, the Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments has said.

However, the prayers will be limited to the imam and to a small number of people, in line with the precautionary measures taken by Bahrain to stem the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

The prayers will be broadcast live on television and on radio.

The decision to perform the prayers was taken based on the directives of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to uphold the Islamic tradition.

Imams in other mosques will proclaim the traditional Eid takbeers (praise to Allah) that precede the prayers and sermons, but there will be no prayers.

Bahrain had shut down mosques as part of the preventive measures to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus through congregations.

Last month, it allowed the Friday prayers and the taraweeh prayers associated with the blessed month of Ramadan at Al Fateh Mosque.

The Eid prayers will be performed on Saturday or Sunday, depending on the sighting of the moon that marks the end of Ramadan, the ninth month on the lunar Islamic calendar based on the motion of the moon.

## HM the King receives the ambassadors of Italy, Bangladesh



HM the King with Italian Ambassador Amadei

TDT | Manama

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa received yesterday two new ambassadors to Bahrain during a ceremony held at Al Sakhir Palace.

HM King Hamad was presented with the credentials of Italian

Ambassador Paola Amadei and Bangladeshi Ambassador Muhammad Nazrul Islam.

HM the King exchanged welcome statements with the two ambassadors and hailed the strong bilateral relations and steadily growing ties binding the Kingdom of Bahrain and their respective countries. HM the

King wished them every success in performing their diplomatic duties to consolidate relations of cooperation and friendship with Bahrain.

The ambassadors conveyed to HM the King the greetings and appreciation from their countries' leaders, who wished HM King Hamad abundant health



HM the King receives the credentials of Bangladeshi Ambassador Islam

and happiness and Bahrain and its people further progress and prosperity. They lauded the solid relations between their countries and the Kingdom at all levels.

The ceremony was attended by HM the King's Personal Representative; HM the King's Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs

representative, National Security Advisor and Supreme Council for Youth and Sports chairman; the Royal Court Minister; the Foreign Affairs Minister; and the Royal Protocols chief.

The two ambassadors arrived at the Al Sakhir Palace separately and were each welcomed by the Royal Protocols chief.

## Global COVID-19 cases near 5M

Moscow

The total number of people worldwide who have been confirmed to be infected with the coronavirus (COVID-19) is nearing five million.

As of early this morning, more than 4.94 million across the globe have contracted the disease, and more than 322,000 deaths have been recorded.

As the coronavirus outbreak eases in Western Europe and parts of the US, cases are rising steadily in Russia, which is now behind only the US in the number of reported infections.

New hot spots emerged yesterday in Russia, as the country recorded nearly 10,000 new infections in 24 hours, bringing the total to nearly 300,000, about half of them in Moscow.



A pedestrian watches as a man is tested for the coronavirus in Boston, Massachusetts.

The US has recorded 1.55 million confirmed infections and over 92,000 deaths.

Cases are still rising across Afri-

ca, where all 54 nations have seen confirmed infections for a total of over 88,000 cases and 2,800 deaths, according to the Africa

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

South Africa had the highest number of cases at over 16,400, with nearly 290 deaths.

Latin America has seen more than 480,000 confirmed cases and about 31,000 dead. The highest number of cases is in Brazil, which became the world's third worst-hit country on Monday. There are now more than 260,000 infections despite limited testing.

Elsewhere in Latin America, intensive care units in the Chilean capital of Santiago have been beyond 90 per cent capacity for days, and officials warned that intensive care staff members are reaching their limits.

Infections are also increasing in poor areas of Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, where authorities relaxed strict lockdown

measures last week, allowing some businesses to open and children to walk outside on weekends.

Colombia struggled with an outbreak in Leticia, a city on the border with Brazil, where hospitals were overwhelmed and patients were being sent to commandeered hotels. Colombia has recorded about 16,300 confirmed cases and close to 600 dead.

Some countries have seen encouraging signs reverse: Iran reported a steady drop in new infections through April, only to see them rise again in May.

In India, cases surged past 100,000, and infections are rising in the home states of migrant workers who fled cities and towns during a nationwide lockdown when they lost their jobs. India is now seeing more than 4,000 new cases a day.

### BY THE NUMBERS

## Health Ministry announces 348 new active COVID-19 cases, 33 recoveries

TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Health announced yesterday that it had registered 348 new active cases of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in Bahrain.

This marked a steep increase in new cases, as compared to recent days.

From these, 233 are among expatriate workers, 114 are contacts of active cases and one is travel-related.

Their detection brought the total number of active cases in the Kingdom to 4,556. Nine of these are critical cases, while the rest are stable.

The Health Ministry also announced yesterday 33 new recoveries. After confirming that

46

is the number of Bahraini citizens flown home from Oman yesterday on a special flight as part of Bahrain's International COVID-19 Repatriation Programme

the patients are free of the virus, they have been discharged from isolation and treatment centres.

The total number of recoveries, as of last night, reached 2,964.

The total tested rose to 249,411. Meanwhile, in continuation of the national efforts to tackle

COVID-19 and to deal with current developments, the Ministry of Health announced that it has increased the capacity of isolation and treatment centers to 5,619 beds. Of these, 4,410 were occupied at the time of the Health Ministry's announcement.

The beds at preventive quarantine centers have also been increased to 5,168, with an occupancy of 719 at the time of the announcement.

The Health Ministry also announced the return home of 46 Bahraini citizens from Oman yesterday.

They were flown back to the Kingdom as part of Bahrain's International COVID-19 Repatriation Programme.



A view of the cabin of the aircraft that carried the 46 Bahraini citizens from Oman



### TOTAL CASES

7,532

### ACTIVE CASES

4,556

### DEATHS

12

### DISCHARGED

2,964

### NEW CASES

348

### CRITICAL

9

210 fils (includes VAT)





# Medical robots aiding COVID-19 fight

Health Ministry trials use of AI-powered robots at coronavirus isolation, treatment centres

TDI | Manama

The Ministry of Health announced yesterday the use of new medical robots to help combat the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Health Ministry undersecretary Dr. Waleed Al Manea revealed that this first-of-its-kind experiment is being conducted in Bahrain's coronavirus isolation and treatment centres.

The Health Ministry intends to determine the benefits and extent of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology within Bahrain's healthcare system. Through these landmark trials, the ministry will assess their efficacy and study the need and scope for these smart robots to help support future work and services of health personnel.

The Health Ministry, in cooperation with a French company in the Kingdom, has provided two robots for the trial.



Health Ministry officials in a presentation of the new medical robots

Ministry of Health Resources and Services assistant undersecretary Professor Fatima Abdul Wahid Al Ahmed said that one of the robots is tasked with examining a patient's body temperature, providing medicine, serving meals, and tracking the patient

through facial recognition while also being able to communicate in 12 different languages.

Al Ahmed added that the second is to sterilise surfaces, rooms and buildings. The Health Ministry stated that these robots are equipped with sensors and cam-

eras that enable them to adapt to their surroundings, move from one location to another, and communicate with patients and medical staff.

"We hope that using the robots to provide nursing care will make a quantum leap in the health ser-

vices in the Kingdom of Bahrain," said Professor Al Ahmed.

She also emphasised the role of the Health Ministry's stakeholders in finding advanced technical solutions, like the smart robots, to provide automated nursing services.

Meanwhile, Dr. Al Manea praised the Health Ministry's persistent perusal of the latest developments and technologies for the diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19 globally.

In noticing the new trend of using medical robots within the health sector, the Health Ministry is quick to provide high-level medical advancements to the country. This latest move aims to utilise the AI technology to help local doctors and nurses in their ongoing battle against COVID-19.

Professor Al Ahmed explained how the latest modern technology is used to reduce direct exposure between active cases and health care providers. This helps to ensure the health and safety of frontline medical staff working to fight the coronavirus.

She reaffirmed that the Health Ministry seeks to provide the highest levels of protection and safety for their personnel.

## Southern Governorate officials inspect house damaged by a recent fire



The Deputy Southern Governor and other officials during the house inspection

TDI | Manama

Deputy Southern Governor Brigadier General Issa Thamer Al Dossari visited a house of a number of migrant workers in Riffa, which had recently caught fire.

This followed the directives of Southern Governor HH Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali bin

Khalifa Al Khalifa,

The Deputy Governor affirmed the keenness of HH the Southern Governor to directly follow up on cases of this nature, in order to ensure the security and safety of citizens and residents in the governorate.

During the visit, the Deputy Governor inspected the damage that resulted from the

fire. He stressed that the authorities will begin the necessary procedures to ensure the safety and maintenance of the house.

He praised the efforts and speedy response of the General Administration of Civil Defense and the Southern Governorate Police Directorate in dealing with the fire, in which there were no casualties.

## Ministers discuss houses of worship in new towns



The officials at their meeting

TDI | Manama

Sites allocated for houses of worship at new housing projects and towns were highlighted in a meeting between Minister of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments Shaikh Khalid bin Ali Al Khalifa and Minister of Housing Eng. Basim bin Yacob Al Hamer.

Sunni Endowments Council Board of Directors chairman Dr. Shaikh Rashid bin Moham-

med Al Hajeri and Jaffari Endowments Council Board of Directors chairman Yousef Saleh Al-Saleh were also present.

The Housing Minister spoke about the sites, which are in line with the standards approved by the Urban Planning and Development Authority.

Board chairmen of the Sunni and Jaffari endowments councils praised the constant interest of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to build and care for houses of worship, so

that they can perform their noble mission. They pray to Allah the Almighty to protect HM the King and to guide him on the right path for the best interests of the nation and its people.

Others in attendance during the meeting were Housing Ministry undersecretary Shaikh Abdulla bin Ahmed Al Khalifa and Justice Ministry Planning, Family Reconciliation and Alimony undersecretary Dana Al Zayani.

## Two women rescued from Muharraq house fire

TDI | Manama

Two women were saved from a house fire in Muharraq last night, the Ministry of Interior announced on its official account on social networking service Twitter.

The Interior Ministry reported that the Civil Defence extinguished the fire with four firetrucks and 16 firemen.

A preliminary investigation indicated that the cause of the fire was short circuit.

No other information was available.

## Five fined for flouting COVID-19 regulations

● The Public Prosecution launched a prompt investigation after receiving notifications from the Public Health Directorate against 19 people who did not commit to their home confinement orders.

TDI | Manama

The Lower Criminal Court has fined an owner of a commercial outlet BDI,000 for flouting health regulations.

These consist of taking the temperature of customers and workers before entering the outlet, directing customers to leave one metre between

each other for social distancing, cleaning and sterilising trolleys before and after use, and ensuring workers wear gloves for protection.

The court has also fined four defendants BDI,000 each for breaching the home quarantine rules imposed on them to curb the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The Public Prosecution launched a prompt investigation after receiving notifications from the Public Health Directorate against 19 people who did not commit to their home confinement orders.

It also conducted an investigation with 10 defendants who opened their commercial outlets in violation of a ministerial decision to close certain non-essential businesses as part of measures put in place to prevent the spread of the virus.

The defendants were questioned and released on bail, pending investigation.

## Bahraini man arrested for stealing, crashing car

TDI | Manama

A Bahraini man suspected of stealing a car has been arrested, the Ministry of Interior announced yesterday.

According to the Muharraq Governorate Police director-general, the 35-year-old committed the crime after the owner of the car kept its engine running while going into a money exchange outlet in Muharraq to make a transaction.

The director-general said that an investigation into the case led to identifying and arresting the suspect within 24 hours of its report. The car was

eventually seized.

It had also emerged that the suspect was also involved in a traffic accident while driving the car in Tubli.

The department is coordinating with the General Directorate of Traffic for the required procedures.

Legal proceedings have been taken and the case was referred to the Public Prosecution.

In light of this incident, the Director-General urged drivers to switch off their engines and lock their cars should they leave them unattended at any time.



TDT | Manama

An official complaint has been filed under the Personal Data Protection Law (PDPL) by two expatriate residents against a man who verbally attacked them and filmed them without their consent.

The PDPL, in effect since August 2019, protects individuals from unauthorised circulation of personal details on digital platforms.

A video has been circulating on social media since Friday in which the pair of Asians were shown to be victims of an unwarranted verbal attack directed at them by the accused man.

The man was seen in the video to be in his car while he filmed the two friends on their evening walk, with one of them also walking a pet dog.

The man, as can be heard in the video, yelled at the friends for not wearing facemasks during their excursion, as per government orders to help curb the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) disease.

But according to one of the victims, they tried to explain to him that they were not wearing facemasks because they were out exercising, and the man would not listen while continuing his verbal attack.

As per Ministry of Health guidelines, citizens or residents who wish to exercise in public spaces are exempt from wearing masks.

“On Friday afternoon, we were informed by friends that this vid-

# Victims of verbal attack video gone viral file official complaint



An infograph issued by the Ministry of Health showing guidelines for wearing facemasks when exercising

**We love Bahrain and treat it like our home, which is why we were so taken aback and hurt by the behaviour of this man.**

ONE OF THE VICTIMS OF THE VERBAL ATTACK

eo has gone viral and was being shared on various Instagram pages and WhatsApp groups,” said one of the victims.

The friends then lodged their official complaint at Hoora Police Station on Friday evening and are waiting to hear back from the police, who helped identify the accused as a Bahraini national. They said that the police were supportive and assured them justice. They also lodged a complaint with the Cyber Crime Division on Monday.

“We understand that people are scared during this time; however, it is completely unacceptable for a

vigilante with less than adequate knowledge of the law to target a particular race, threaten civilians and circulate unauthorised videos on social media,” the victims commented to TDT about the incident. “Such cases, if not reported, will go unpunished.”

Recalling the incident, they told TDT that the accused even yelled racial and derogatory comments at them from his car.

“We love Bahrain and treat it like our home, which is why we were so taken aback and hurt by the behaviour of this man,” they explained. They added that they “received an outpouring of support from both Bahraini and non-Bahraini friends following this incident”.

“People need to understand that COVID-19 does not choose or select a particular race or ethnicity to attack,” the friends highlighted. “It affects us all, irrespective of race, creed, social status or religion. In such times, it is important to be compassionate.”

## Bahrain’s capability to surmount challenges stressed

TDT | Manama

Shura Council chairman Ali bin Saleh Al Saleh expressed yesterday his heartfelt thanks and gratitude to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa for the care accorded to the legislative branch, which has enabled it to assume its role appropriately.

Marking the adjournment of the second session of the fifth legislative term, the Shura Council chairman praised the tremendous efforts of His Royal Highness the Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Premier, as well as the ministers, to boost cooperation between the Shura Council and the government.

Al Saleh lauded the constructive cooperation with the Rep-



Al Saleh

resentatives Council, presided by Fawzia bint Abdullah Zainal, and described it as an assertion of parliament’s determination to continue serving the national interest.

He also praised the efforts of Parliament Affairs Minister Ghanim bin Fadhel Al Buainin and his unwavering keenness to attend the council’s sessions.

The Shura Council chairman affirmed that the exceptional circumstances undergone by Bahrain and the world because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has necessitated the continuation of legislative efforts via electronic means, such as holding meetings remotely

to ensure Bahrain maintains its development march unabated.

He commended the unity and awareness of the Bahraini people in confronting challenges and dealing with global developments.

The Shura Council chairman thanked the National Taskforce for Combatting COVID-19 for its tireless efforts, spearheaded by HRH the Crown Prince, in handling the crisis and protecting people’s health and safety.

He also thanked all institutions and individuals who contributed to protecting the Kingdom and people’s health by adhering to the preemptive measures put in place by the authorities.

He urged to rally efforts to face challenges and draw lessons from the crisis in mapping out strategies, stressing Bahrain’s capability to surmount challenges and cope with international developments.

## Indian, 60, in need of urgent medical care is last-minute addition to repatriation flight

TDT | Manama

A 60-year-old Indian national residing in Bahrain, who is in urgent need of specialised medical care, was a last-minute addition to a repatriation flight that departed the Kingdom yesterday.

Are Anjaiah, a native of the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, was one of 174 Indians who travelled on Air India Express flight IX890 to Hyderabad, despite not being on the originally approved list of passengers.

The flight was part of the second wave of trips under the “Vande Bharat Mission” organised by the Indian government.



Anjaiah

Anjaiah was recently diagnosed with a deep fungal infection, which allegedly could lead to an oral carcinoma of the tongue. As a result, he was advised to undergo a biopsy.

Resulting from a coordinated effort by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Health and the Indian Embassy in Bahrain, Anjaiah was allowed to travel on the flight. The decision was taken under special consideration owing to his current medical condition.

Supported by Indian Embassy second secretary PK Chowdhury and the prompt response from Embassy staff, his case was fast-tracked to achieve the desired result.

Yesterday’s flight was the third under the “Vande Bharat Mission”. Two flights from Bahrain flew to the Indian cities of Kochi and Kozhikode in the coastal state of Kerala earlier this month, as part of the mission’s first phase.

## Derasat webinar addresses issues related to COVID-19

TDT | Manama

Bahrain Centre for Strategic, International and Energy Studies (Derasat) discussed the dilemma faced by policymakers in balancing decisions between economic concerns and public health priorities during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Derasat Research and Studies director Dr. Omar Al Ubaydli ad-



Dr. Al Ubaydli

ressed the issue in a webinar entitled “Balancing Policy Decisions During COVID-19: The Value of

Human Life”.

The webinar was the second held by Derasat in its “Expert’s Bulletin” series, which features Derasat experts sharing and discussing updates on how COVID-19 is affecting the world.

Dr. Al Ubaydli had worked as Economics assistant professor at George Mason University in the US. He was a member of Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell’s Joint Advisory Board of Economists.

## Online ‘Readathon’ initiative by NMS-DPS



New Millennium School (NMS) has been observing the “DEAR Time” (Drop Everything and Read) initiative every Tuesday as a part of its weekly activities. Continuing with this practice while students remain at home during the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis, the school resumed its weekly “Readathon” activity in its online classes. The students and staff were actively involved in the activity yesterday by reading books of their choice, comprising different genres. This activity united all the participants and it inspired thoughtful and responsible global citizens of tomorrow. Parents were also invited and they took an enthusiastic initiative to be a part of the online “Readathon” session. School management and the principal encouraged the children and staff to inculcate reading as a regular habit and thanked the parents for their overwhelming support. Left, some of the students and parents participating in the “Readathon” activity.

## Indian Christian preacher Ravi Zacharias dies at age 74

Ravi Zacharias, a fervent advocate of Christianity, died yesterday at the age of 74 at his residence in Atlanta, the US.

Zacharias, an Indian national whose campaigns have brought him to Bahrain in the past, was born in 1946 in Chennai, in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

He spent the last 48 years travelling the world, preaching the word of Christian faith before succumbing to spinal cancer.

Zacharias had been undergoing medical treatment and his daughter Sarah Davis announced two



Zacharias

weeks ago that his doctors were doing everything in their power to help him.

“His oncologist informed us that this cancer is very rare in its

aggression and that no options for further treatment remain,” Davis, Ravi Zacharias International Ministries (RZIM) CEO, said earlier this month. “Medically speaking, they have done all they are able.”

She added: “His thoughts and conversations in recent years and his final weeks were saturated with gratitude for this team of evangelists, apologists, and staff that he called family at RZIM.”

Zacharias visited Bahrain last November to speak at an event organised by YMCA and National Evangelical Church.



## Eskan Bank starts returning April installments on housing loans

TDI | Manama

Eskan Bank said that it had started returning the April installments for all citizens with housing loans.

The move is in line with the Cabinet's decision to postpone installments due to Eskan Bank for six months, and to stop the collection of rent from tenants and beneficiaries from the shops owned by Eskan Bank for a period of three months, starting from April.

The bank indicated that it had completed all coordination procedures with other banks that are cooperating in providing housing financing, adding that all the sums will be returned to citizens within the next few days.

Eskan Bank praised the order of His Royal Highness the Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salam Al Khalifa and the directives of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Premier, to postpone the installment payments, within efforts to reduce the economic impact of the coronavirus on citizens, and support commercial activities during this period.

# Fighting off COVID-19

Extensive sterilisation campaign conducted in Manama Suq, Bab Al Bahrain

TDI | Manama

An extensive sterilisation campaign was conducted in Manama Suq, in particular at Bab Al Bahrain, as part of the national campaign to combat the coronavirus (COVID-19).

A special sterilisation truck was used to spray the Suq's streets, while a team of volunteers wearing personal protective equipment including body suits, gloves, face masks and goggles also roamed the area spraying disinfectant.

The campaign was held in co-operation and coordination with the Capital Governorate and its Police Directorate, at the initiative of Arab Shipbuilding and Repair Yard (Asry) company.

The sterilisation process was attended by the Capital Governorate Police Directorate director-general.

Capital Governor Shaikh Hisham bin Abdul Rahman Al Khalifa stressed that the strong relationship that the governorate has established with the private sector, along with that of volunteers, has contributed to enhancing community cooperation and created a growing awareness of the coronavirus.



The sterilisation campaign being conducted in Bab Al Bahrain



Shaikh Hisham explained that community partnership is the only way to limit the spread of COVID-19. He added that the people of Bahrain are now more aware of the importance of the government's measures taken to curb its impact, which has resulted in a greater commitment from the public to staying at home.

The Capital Governor added that this partnership contributes to overcoming this health crisis



**Community partnership is the only way to limit the spread of COVID-19. The people of Bahrain are now more aware of the importance of the government's measures taken to curb its impact, which has resulted in a greater commitment from the public to staying at home.**

CAPITAL GOVERNOR SHAIKH HISHAM BIN ABDUL RAHMAN AL KHALIFA

by working responsibly and following the instructions of authorities, especially during sterilisation campaigns in the capital and across Bahrain in general.

For his part, Asry Public Relations Department head Wael Hamzah expressed his pride in the company's opportunity to help sterilise the Manama Suq.

He said that it is in service of the homeland and its citizens and residents, especially under the current challenging period that the Kingdom is experiencing.

## AUBH offers Cambridge Assessment Testing

TDI | Manama

The American University of Bahrain (AUBH), an official Cambridge Assessment Center for English language testing, has opened proficiency testing online to the Kingdom.

The announcement has come as a response to the widespread cancellation of English proficiency tests.

The testing will take place on ProctorU, AUBH's online artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled proctoring platform.

ProctorU, solely adopted by AUBH in the Kingdom and used by respected institutions worldwide, protects the integrity and credibility of high-stakes exams.



**Amidst the widespread cancellation of international English proficiency tests, students, employers and institutions in Bahrain still urgently need these assessments. Being a recognised Linguaskill testing center, it was important for us to bridge our capabilities with the technology we already have in place.**

AUBH PROVOST DR. MARK D. SHERMIS

AUBH Provost Dr. Mark D. Shermis commented: "Amidst the widespread cancellation of international English proficiency tests, students, employers and institutions in Bahrain still urgently need these assess-

ments. Being a recognised Linguaskill testing center, it was important for us to bridge our capabilities with the technology we already have in place: namely AI-enabled ProctorU.

"This globally recognised

technology will ensure the continuation of English language assessment while also guaranteeing the integrity of results."

Drawing on over 100 years of research, Cambridge Assessment exams are trusted as secure English tests by governments worldwide. Linguaskill results are aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), the international standard for describing language ability. Cambridge qualifications are internationally accepted as the highest quality mark in English language assessment.

For more information, visit [aubh.edu.bh](http://aubh.edu.bh).

## HM the King congratulated on Bahrain's achievement in Holy Quran competition

TDI | Manama

Minister of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments Shaikh Khalid bin Ali bin Abdullah Al Khalifa extended his sincerest congratulations to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa on Bahrain's clinching fourth place internationally in the eighth edition of the Shaikha Hessa bint Mohammed Al Nahyan Award for Holy Quran competition.

The achievement was made in the remote contest by female competitor Zain Khamis Abdullah Al Nuaimi in the memorisation of the whole Holy Quran category.

The Justice Minister described the accomplishment as an extension of the series of achievements brought about by Bahrainis in international Holy Quran competitions. He stressed that these



Shaikh Khalid

achievements are the dividend of continuous support and care of HM the King to all programmes aimed at serving the Holy Quran.

The Justice Minister took pride in the honourable standing achieved by Bahraini competitors in such contests, which have reached more than 70 placings and wins, in addition to participating in the arbitration of those competitions thanks to the experience acquired by the Islamic Affairs affiliates in this respect.

## Red Crescent Society delivers aid to 4,500 families in Bahrain

TDI | Manama

Bahrain Red Crescent Society (BRCS) has concluded a campaign to deliver Ramadan aid to about 4,500 families in diverse regions of the Kingdom, according to the records of underprivileged families registered on the Society's lists.

BRCS this year delivered in-kind assistance to eligible families in their homes, instead of inviting those families to attend the Society's headquarters as was the practice every year, as part of the precautionary measures to prevent the coronavirus (COVID-19) spread.

The volunteers of the society made great efforts in delivering this aid to needy families in their homes in 73 regions, villages, cities and governorates, where they dis-



Volunteers with some of the donations being delivered to needy families



tributed themselves to small teams and worked to deliver aid during the evening after Iftar, while wearing masks and gloves and ensuring social distancing.

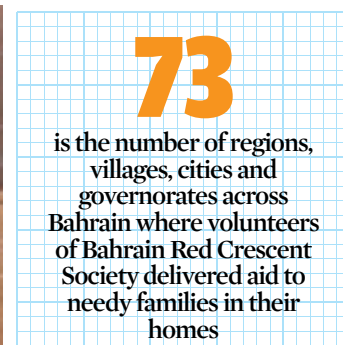
The volunteers were very keen to deliver aid to underprivileged families directly, despite the difficulty of reaching everyone, especially

since some of the beneficiaries did not inform the Society of their recent addresses. The distribution schedule included specific days allocated for each region to ensure the smooth distribution process.

The distribution of aid to needy families in these difficult circumstances is further evidence

of BRCS' endeavor to support the Bahraini community, especially since reaching more than 4,000 homes in different regions of Bahrain is a very challenging task.

The volunteers worked to deliver this aid to the worthiest families, meet their needs, and preserve their humanity and dignity,



benefiting from the experience and deep knowledge of BRCS for more than years regarding the requirements of needy families.

Express Rent-a-Car contributed 14 cars from its fleet for free at the disposal of BRCS to distribute this aid, and a number of famous social media celebrities and a number of

athletes participated as volunteers in the delivery. BRCS director-general and acting general secretary Mubarak Al Hadi praised the efforts of the volunteers who worked tirelessly to distribute aid to eligible families, despite all the challenges. He said that delivering this aid required double the efforts of the Society to fulfill its obligations this year to needy families, under the slogan "Giving with Dignity".

"We also thank Express Rent-a-Car company and all the Society's partners for their support, and we urge companies and institutions operating in the country, as well as beneficiaries of citizens and residents, to provide their hoped-for donations for the success of this aid programme in the same way this year, as it did in the previous years," said Al Hadi.



# Markets lifted by global rally

Banking shares, oil price recovery lift Bahrain market

● **Aramco registers sixth consecutive daily gain**

● **All Saudi banks in positive territory**

● **Aldar edges higher ahead of quarterly earnings**

TDТ | agencies

Helped by banking shares, Bahrain’s All Share Index yesterday rose 0.24 per cent as most other Middle Eastern Stock markets also gained tracking a rise in global equity and a recovery in oil prices.

Bahrain index increased 3.07 points to 1,257.02 points from the previous close of 1,253.95 points.

The index was led by GFH Financial Group B.S.C, National Bank of Bahrain and Ahli United Bank, which rose 1.40pc, 1.34pc and 0.87pc, respectively. Arab Banking Corporation slipped 4.15pc.

Neighbouring Saudi Arabia also closed higher leading gains on the back of oil giant Saudi Aramco.

Global equity markets surged on Monday and Asian shares extended gains yesterday after data on Moderna Inc’s COVID-19 vaccine, the first to be tested in the United States, showed it produced protective antibodies in a small group of healthy volunteers.

Oil prices rose for a fourth straight session yesterday, sup-



Traders on the floor of Bahrain Bourse (file)

### Closing Bell

SAUDI	▲ 1.8pc to 7,045 pts
ABU DHABI	▲ 0.3pc to 4,074 pts
DUBAI	▲ 0.6pc to 1,931 pts
QATAR	▲ 0.4pc to 8,802 pts
EGYPT	▲ 0.8pc to 10,357 pts
BAHRAIN	▲ 0.2pc to 1,257 pts
OMAN	▼ 1pc to 3,393 pts
KUWAIT	▲ 1.8pc to 5,287 pts

### Bahrain All Share Index

Index	1,257.02
Previous	1,253.95
Change	▲ 3.07 0.24 pc
YTD Change	▼ 21.93 pc
Volume	2,677,689.00
Value	BD 407,072.98
Market Cap.	BD 7,914,992,460

ported by signs of output cuts and demand recovery as coronavirus restrictions are eased.

“Global sentiment is leading the rise in local markets supported by recovering oil prices,” said Marie Salem, head of institutions at Daman Securities.

Saudi Arabia’s index closed 1.8 per cent up, led by Saudi Aramco and banking shares.

Aramco jumped 3.1pc for its sharpest intra-day rise in more than a month and its sixth consecutive daily gain, trimming its year-to-date loss to 5.4pc.

Saudi Basic Industries rose 3.1pc and Al Rajhi Bank added 1.3pc.

The Dubai index firmed by 0.6pc, with Emirates NBD Bank up 1.6pc and Aramex advancing 2.6pc.

In Abu Dhabi, the index was

up 0.3pc as the telecoms company Etisalat gained 1.2pc and Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank jumped 4.4pc.

Aldar Properties edged up 0.6pc ahead of a meeting of its board on Wednesday to discuss first-quarter financial performance.

Qatar’s index rose 0.4pc, led by a 1.9pc increase for Industries Qatar.

Qatar has extended a programme that provides guarantees to local banks from the Qatar development bank, with interest-free loans for a full year instead of six months, the state news agency reported on Tuesday.

In Egypt, the blue-chip index closed 0.8pc up, with market heavyweight Commercial International Bank Egypt gaining 1pc.

## Al Baraka Banking Group Chairman and Founder passes away

TDТ | Manama

Shaikh Saleh Abdullah Kamel, the Chairman and Founder of Al Baraka Banking Group (ABG), passed away on Monday.

Shaikh Saleh is widely acknowledged and revered internationally as a pioneer of Islamic banking & finance and Participation banking. He was the highest authority in the field of Islamic economics. As a philanthropist, Shaikh Saleh’s commitment and contribution to communities across the world is unparalleled.

Shaikh Saleh was the Chairman of the Dallah Al Baraka Group, one of the largest business groups in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He founded the group over 50 years ago and created Al Baraka Investment and Development, a holding company for many Islamic Banks, Financial Institutions and companies in various diversified businesses around the world.

In addition to being Chairman and Board Member of many companies within the Dallah Al Baraka Group, Shaikh Saleh was on the Boards of many social, charitable and cultural societies and foundations such as Arab Thought Foundations, King Abdulaziz and His Companions Foundation for the Gifted, Islamic Solidarity Fund, and Arab Academy for Finance and Banking.

Shaikh Saleh Abdullah Kamel was the President of The Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, The Jeddah Chamber of Commerce & Industry, and

the Chairman of the General Council for Islamic Banks and Financial Institutions. He is a member of President’s Advisory Panel at Islamic Development Bank.

The President & Chief Executive of Al Baraka Banking Group, Adnan Ahmed Yousif stated, “a guiding light has gone from my life today and as the whole organization mourns the great leader’s passing we shall strive to hold the torch for the ideals of Shaikh Saleh – to serve the society and communities and help them prosper and apply Shari’a rules related to the ownership of wealth in creating the wealth and in investing, exchanging, growing and spending the wealth.”

In recognition of his personal endeavours and the remarkable contribution of the Group, towards enhancing economic development and creating jobs and well-being, Shaikh Saleh Abdullah Kamel has been awarded many medals, titles and prizes including the Jordanian Independence Decoration, the King Abdulaziz Decoration – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Al Alawi Decoration - Morocco, the Royal Award for Islamic Finance - Malaysia and the Islamic Banker Award by the Islamic Development Bank.

The Board of Directors, the President & Chief Executive, The Executive Management and Staff of Al Baraka Banking Group and all ABG Units deeply mourn the loss of their beloved Chairman and convey their deepest condolences to the family members.

## Michelin refuses to put away knife as guides rally round restaurants

● **Michelin, insists that it is business as usual**

● **The British-based 50 Best Restaurants cancelled its 2020 ranking**

● **Michelin’s main rival, the Gault & Millau, said it was time to stand by and support restaurants who are “in great danger”**

AFP | Paris

The world’s top gastronomic guides are split over whether to continue ranking and rating restaurants with many closed because of coronavirus lockdowns.

The most prestigious of them all, the Michelin, insists that it is business as usual, with new director Gwendal Poullennec saying that great chefs “have not lost their talent during the lockdowns”.

“They have been innovating and creating new recipes,” he said, adding that his inspectors were chomping at the bit “with impatience and an appetite to try them out when restaurants reopen.” Yet with only 13 per cent of Michelin-starred restaurants



The French-based Argentinian chef Mauro Colagreci (centre) comes out top at the awards ceremony for the world’s 50 Best Restaurants ranking in Singapore last

open across 32 countries, the guide’s critics and rivals have questioned the move, with chefs who have already lost millions in custom also worried about losing their precious stars.

Michelin’s main rival, the Gault & Millau, said it was time to stand by and support restaurants who are “in great danger”.

Its director Jacques Bally said they have shelved their chef, pastry chef and sommelier wine waiter of the year awards, but the 2021 guide will appear as

normal in October.

With drastic social distancing measures in restaurants likely when they do reopen, “our responsibility as a guide is to highlight what is being done and what possibly can be done,” Bally said.

“The next 18 months are going to be extremely difficult and dangerous for restaurants,” he warned.

### Noma burger ba

The guide is also going to spot-

light chefs who have shown a social conscience during the crisis as well as those who have experimented with click and collect, oven-ready meals or even starred chefs offering to go to their customers homes and cook for them.

The British-based 50 Best Restaurants was quick to cancel its 2020 ranking which was to be unveiled in the Belgian city of Antwerp next month.

“We decided to not announce a list this year even though the

vote had taken place,” director Helene Pietrini said.

“It would have been inappropriate,” she added. “There are moments to celebrate the best restaurants and others when we have to pull up our sleeves to make sure that all these restaurants survive.”

Pietrini said some chefs were disappointed that the influential ranking had called a pause, but “a very large majority welcomed it”.

“This crisis has called our val-

ues into question,” she added.

Pietrini believes that many of the very best restaurants are going to be “less into the spectacle” after the crisis, and “more into sincerity, the products and the philosophy of the chef.”

Bally agreed, saying he felt post-coronavirus gastronomy would be less pricey and “more simple and humble... and at a human scale”, celebrating seasonal ingredients and producers.

Jorg Zipprick, the co-founder of La Liste, which as the guide of guides sees itself as the most scientific ranking of the world’s best 1,000 restaurants, said even big-name chefs will have to re-imagine what they are doing.

“However, those who accept to rethink their formula might find themselves among the winners,” he added.

Indeed the visionary chef of Noma in Copenhagen, Rene Redzepi, will reopen it on Thursday as an outdoor wine and burger bar, serving beef and veggie burgers.

“We need to heal. So let’s have a glass of wine and a burger and you’re all invited,” he wrote on Instagram.

What is more, there will be no reservations at what had up until the start of Denmark’s lockdown in March, been one of the hardest places in the world to get a table.



# McDonald's hit with sexual harassment complaint

● The document cites witness testimony of “attempted rape, indecent exposure, groping, and sexual offers”

● McDonald's said it would review the complaint

● Last year, the firm fired its CEO Steve Easterbrook for having a consensual relationship with a staff

AFP | Washington

An international group of labor unions said Monday it has filed a complaint against McDonald's for what it called systematic sexual harassment at the fast food chain's restaurants around the world.

The complaint, filed at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s offices in the Netherlands, was the first of its kind to target a multinational company, its authors said.

“McDonald's workers have sounded the alarm about sexual harassment and gender-based violence for years, but a company with a culture rotten from the top has failed to take meaningful action to address the problem,” Sue Longley, general secretary of the International Union of Foodworkers, said in a statement.

“Because McDonald's has neglected to act to create a safe workplace, the Dutch government should make use of this complaint to empower workers to effectively address the



Delivery riders queue outside a McDonald's in London; the company is facing a sexual harassment complaint filed at the OECD by an international coalition of labor unions

rampant harassment they face under the Golden Arches,” she said.

The complaint also targets two investment banks, APG Asset Management of the Netherlands and Norges Bank of Norway, which together have holdings worth \$1.7 billion in the food giant.

The complainants noted that the OECD's own guidelines “require due diligence by institutional shareholders in companies to ensure responsible business conduct.”

The unions said it was the “first-ever complaint brought to the OECD to take aim at systematic sexual harassment at a multinational company.”

## ‘McDonald's culture’

The document cites witness testimony of “attempted rape, indecent exposure, groping, and sexual offers.”

It said the victims, some as young as 16, “said they were ignored, mocked, or punished when they reported it. Some had their hours cut back and others were fired.”

It also cited cases of “touching, forced kissing and other forms of unwanted bodily contact” in branches of the food chain in numerous countries including the United States, Britain, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and France, among others. In France, it cited a case in which a McDonald's manager allegedly “installed a cellphone camera in the women's changing room, and secretly filmed young women changing their clothes.”

“Gender-based violence and harassment is part of McDonald's culture,” the complaint alleged.

McDonald's said in a statement it would review the complaint when it had received it, stressing that the food giant is a “people-first company.”

“There is a deeply important conversation around safe and respectful workplaces in communities throughout the US and around the world,” the company said.

“Around the world we believe that McDonald's and its business partners have a responsi-

bility to take action on this issue and are committed to promoting positive change,” it added.

Last year, the firm fired its CEO Steve Easterbrook for having a consensual relationship with a member of staff in violation of company policy.

The complaint will be examined by the Dutch government, which has up to three months to decide whether to launch a process of mediation with the company.

The OECD does not have the power to fine or penalize the company, said Lance Compa, an expert on international labor law.

But the complainants hope mediation “could lead to an agreement and a template for McDonald's operations around the world,” and in particular to allow “workers to bring their own experiences and ideas to the table to help shape policies to combat harassment and gender-based violence.”

The unions, which include the European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions and the Service Employees International Union of the United States and Canada, said they brought the case in the Netherlands because in the United States, where the company is headquartered, McDonald's “insists it has no responsibility for employment conditions, employment relations, or workplace abuses in the more than 90 percent of its stores operated by franchisees.”

The unions chose the Netherlands because it is the “nerve center” of the fast food giant's European operations, and also the headquarters of APG bank.

McDonald's is the largest restaurant chain in Europe, where it employs almost 500,000 people, 90 percent of them working in franchises.

## Australia threatens WTO action as dispute with China deepens



Sydney

Australia threatened yesterday to take China to the World Trade Organisation to counter a fresh round of punitive sanctions, as the two countries clashed over an investigation into the origins and spread of the coronavirus.

Canberra said it may seek remedial action to overturn almost 81 percent in tariffs on barley exports -- the latest in a series of Chinese sanctions that many believe are politically motivated.

Beijing on Monday announced the measures -- earmarked to last five years -- after finding Australian subsidies and dumping had “substantially damaged domestic industry”.

Both sides have insisted that barley is a technical trade issue, and Australian officials

have played down fears of a trade war, saying there would be no “tit-for-tat” response.

“To say that I'm disappointed is an understatement,” agriculture minister David Littleproud said.

“This is something that we will strongly reject, the premise that the Australian barley farmer is subsidised in any way, shape or form.”

“We will now work through the determination by Chinese officials, calmly and methodically, and reserve our right to go to the World Trade Organisation to get the independent umpire to make that determination.”

The move has worsened a relationship that has become increasingly troubled as Beijing has become more assertive in flexing its growing military, economic and diplomatic power in the Asia-Pacific region.

## US auto plants get back to work after COVID-19 halts

Warren | United States

Two months after effectively freezing American auto manufacturing, Detroit's “Big Three” on Monday began to get back to business with masks, temperature checks and social distancing protocols to try to prevent coronavirus outbreaks.

Some hourly workers have expressed concerns about the risks of assembly line activity, where staff traditionally have worked side-by-side. But automakers say they will be able to work while practicing social distancing and taking other measures to protect workers.

The resumption brings a burst of fresh economic activity across states in the midwestern United States, a key swing area in the upcoming elections.

# Australia watchdog suggests news boycott of Google, Facebook

AFP | Sydney

Australia's competition watchdog suggested Tuesday that local media could organise a “collective boycott” of Google and Facebook to force the tech giants to pay for news they put on their platforms.

The radical idea was among a series of possible bargaining tools put forward by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) as it considers a mandatory code of conduct for the tech firms.

Other mechanisms laid out in a 33-page “Concepts Paper” included bilateral negotiations between Australian media organisations and the two tech behemoths and collective bargaining involving all the country's news companies.

But acknowledging the global reach and immense power of Google and Facebook, it said an “alternative bargaining framework” could be needed if direct negotiations fail.

“A collective boycott, or the threat of a collective boycott, may encourage each of Google and Facebook to offer news me-



Google says it has invested heavily in initiatives helping Australia's struggling news industry

dia businesses more appropriate remuneration for the use of their content,” it said.

In a process being closely watched across the world,

Australia last month announced plans to force major internet firms to share advertising revenues earned from news content featured in their services.

While the initial targets of the anti-trust move involved a range of tech firms, including Twitter and Verizon Media, the ACCC said Tuesday it was narrowing

its focus to Google and Facebook.

“Facebook and Google were the digital platforms currently benefitting from a significant imbalance in bargaining power in their commercial negotiations with Australian news media businesses,” it said.

The ACCC is tasked with drawing up a “code of conduct” for payments and addressing other competition concerns with the tech titans.

Its concept paper posed a series of questions about what kind of news should be compensated and how best to determine its value, and gave stakeholders until June 5 to submit recommendations.

The ACCC then has until the end of July to draw up the final code, which the government has said it will quickly implement.

## Industry struggling

Last week the head of Nine Entertainment, one of Australia's biggest media companies, called for Google and Facebook to pay news organisations 10 percent of their annual Austral-

ian advertising revenue, which is estimated by the government at Aus\$6.0 billion (US\$3.9 billion).

Other industry leaders have suggested payments of up to Aus\$1.0 billion per year.

Google and Facebook vehemently oppose any mandatory fees and insist they have invested millions of dollars in initiatives helping Australia's struggling news industry.

The two firms have had a huge impact on media companies across the globe as they capture the lion's share of online advertising spending.

In response to falling revenues, Australian news outlets have slashed 20 percent of jobs in the last six years.

The crisis has only deepened in the economic and advertising downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic, which has already forced the closure of many smaller news publishers.

An estimated 17 million Australians use Facebook each month and spend an average of 30 minutes on the platform a day, while 98 percent of Australian mobile searches use Google.



# Mass evacuations for major cyclone in S.Asia

AFP | Kolkata

Millions of people were being moved to safety as one of the fiercest cyclones in years barrelled towards India and Bangladesh yesterday, but with evacuation plans complicated by coronavirus precautions.

“Amphan” is expected to pack winds gusting up to 185 kilometres (115 miles) per hour when it hits eastern India and Bangladesh today afternoon or evening, and with a storm surge of several metres, forecasters said.

Bangladesh authorities fear it will be the most powerful since cyclone Sidr devastated the country in 2007, killing about 3,500 people -- mostly due to a deluge of sea water sweeping in.

Junior disaster management minister Enamur Rahman said Tuesday that they have already evacuated several thousand people from low-lying areas.

“We will evacuate up to 2.2 million and try to keep casualties at zero,” Rahman told AFP.

To ensure social distancing in view of the coronavirus pandemic, the number of cyclone shelters has been doubled by using schools, with masks compulsory, Rahman said.

“We are also keeping separate isolation rooms in the shelters for any infected patients,” he added.

Fishing boats have been ordered to return to shore and all ports and fish landing stations shut down. The coronavirus lockdown had also cut off many people's income and eaten up their cash reserves, she added.

### Diggers and chainsaws

In India, West Bengal state offi-



Bangladesh is aiming to evacuate more than two million people ahead of Cyclone Amphan

cial Manturam Pakhira said more than 200,000 people were being evacuated from coastal districts and the Sundarbans, a vast mangrove forest area.

“Authorities are also supplying masks and sanitisers and making arrangements so that they can maintain safe distance from each other,” he said.

Arjun Manna, who works for the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in the Sundarbans, said that loud speakers were urging locals “to wear a mask and maintain social distancing in the shelters”.

In Odisha state, relief commissioner Pradeep Kumar Jena told AFP that 20,000 people have been evacuated, with 600 disaster teams “pre-positioned” and contractors standing by with diggers and chainsaws.

“We will evacuate more people depending on the situation. No one will be allowed to stay in huts with thatched roofs in coastal areas,” Jena said.

He too said that in order to

ensure social distancing, additional temporary shelters have been identified, with the state ready to house 1.1 million people if needed.

“We have made arrangements for soap, water tanks for hand washing and face masks. We are also educating people about the need to cover their mouths,” he said.

### Modi prays

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted that he was praying for everyone's safety after chairing a virtual meeting on preparations Monday.

Bangladesh's low-lying coast, home to 30 million people, and India's east are regularly battered by cyclones that have claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in recent decades.

In 1999, the eastern Indian state of Odisha was hit by a super-cyclone that left nearly 10,000 dead. In 1991, a typhoon, tornadoes and flooding killed 139,000 in Bangladesh.

## Brazil jumps to third in COVID-19 cases worldwide



Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro

Sao Paulo

Brazil has the third-highest number of novel coronavirus cases in the world, according to official figures released Monday, a troubling surge for a country struggling to respond to the pandemic.

With 254,220 confirmed cases, Brazil has now surpassed Britain, Spain and Italy in the past 72 hours on the list of total infections, and is behind only the United States (1.5 million) and Russia (290,000).

Brazil has registered 16,792 COVID-19 deaths, the sixth-highest toll in the world.

But experts say under-testing means the real figures could be 15 times higher or more.

The giant South American country of 210 million people is torn by a political battle over how to respond to the virus.

Far-right President Jair Bolsonaro compares the virus to a “little flu,” condemns the “hysteria” surrounding it and is urging the country to get back to work to stop an economic crash.

## News in brief

**Puppy scammers target lonely Aussies during lockdown**



Australia is suffering a wave of puppy scams as fraudsters target the lonely and locked down with fake online offers of cavoodles, French bulldogs and other popular pooches,

authorities said. The consumer watchdog ACCC said the scammers fleeced people looking for a new pet out of some Aus\$300,000 (US\$196,000) in April alone, five times higher than the normal monthly average.



**President Donald Trump on Monday made the surprise announcement that he is taking hydroxychloroquine, an anti-malaria drug that his own government experts say is not suitable for fighting the novel coronavirus.** Trump,

noting that he has tested negative for the virus and shows no symptoms, said he'd been taking the drug as a preventative measure for about a week and a half. “I take a pill every day,” he said, adding that he combines this with zinc. Asked why, he said: “Because I think it's good. I've heard a lot of good stories.” **House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said it's “not a good idea” for Trump to be taking the drug as a potential treatment for the coronavirus.** “I would rather he not be taking something that has not been approved by the scientists, especially in his age group and in his, shall we say, weight group, which is morbidly obese, they say,” Pelosi said during an appearance on CNN's “Anderson Cooper 360.” “So, I think that it's not a good idea,” she added.

**Brazil re-enlisted more than 150 Cuban doctors Monday to help fight a surge in coronavirus cases, a year and a half after Havana ended a medical assistance program over a row with President Jair Bolsonaro.**

The doctors, who had opted to stay in Brazil after the Cuban government pulled the plug on the program that sent them, received new medical licenses from the Brazilian health ministry under a program to round up reinforcements for the overstretched health system.

**President Vladimir Putin was forced to intervene personally on Monday in the epidemic sweeping Russia's North Caucasus region of Dagestan, as local officials described the coronavirus situation as a “catastrophe.”** For several days now, there have rumours of mounting fatalities and overwhelmed hospitals in the mountainous majority-Muslim region and local medical staff have taken to social media to make frantic appeals.

## Italians hit the hair salon after restrictions lifted



After hairdressers were allowed to reopen, some people in Italy could not wait to rush out and get their grey roots done or just a decent hair cut.

# Stopping pandemic ‘without vaccine’!

Scientists in China believe new drug can bring Corona to a halt

Beijing

A Chinese laboratory has been developing a drug it believes has the power to bring the coronavirus pandemic to a halt.

A drug being tested by scientists at China's prestigious Peking University could not only shorten the recovery time for those infected, but even offer short-term immunity from the virus, researchers say.

Sunney Xie, director of the university's Beijing Advanced Innovation Center for Genomics, said that the drug has been successful at the animal testing stage.

“When we injected neutralising antibodies into infected mice, after five days the viral load was reduced by a factor of 2,500,” said Xie.

“That means this poten-



The team had been working “day and night” on the drug



Sunney Xie, director of the Beijing Advanced Innovation Center for Genomics

tial drug has (a) therapeutic effect.”

The drug uses neutralising antibodies -- produced by the human immune system to prevent the virus infecting cells -- which Xie's team isolated from the blood of 60 recovered patients.

A study on the team's research, published Sunday in the scientific journal Cell, suggests that using the antibodies provides a potential “cure” for the disease and shortens recovery time.

Xie said his team had been working “day and night” searching for the antibody.

“Our expertise is single-cell genomics rather than immunology or virology. When we realised that the single-cell genomic approach can effectively find the neutralising antibody we were thrilled.”

He said he hopes that the drug will be ready for use later this year and in time for any potential winter outbreak of the virus, which has infected 4.8 million people around the world and killed more than 315,000.

“Planning for the clinical trial is underway,” said



More than 100 vaccines for COVID-19 are in the works globally

Xie, adding it will be carried out in Australia and other countries since cases have dwindled in China, offering fewer human guinea pigs for testing.

“The hope is these neu-



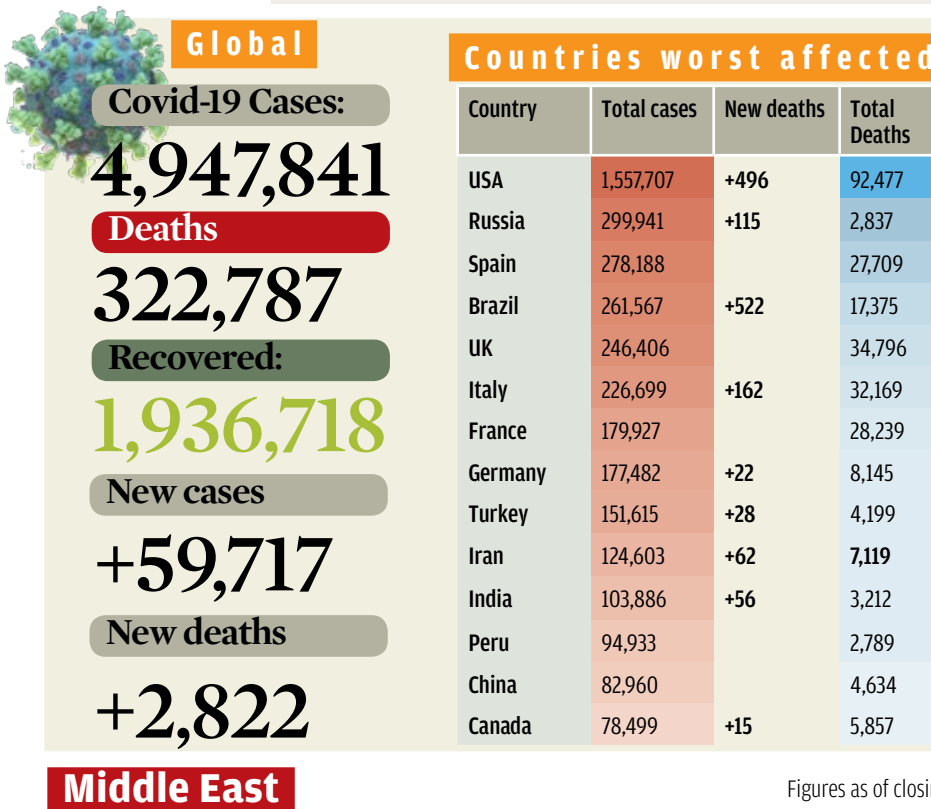
The new drug is being tested by scientists at China's Peking University

tralising antibodies can become a specialised drug that would stop the pandemic,” he said.

The study showed that if the neutralising antibody was injected before the mice were infected with the virus, the mice stayed free of infection and no virus was detected.

This may offer temporary protection for medical workers for a few weeks, which Xie said they are hoping to “extend to a few months”.

More than 100 vaccines for COVID-19 are in the works globally, but as the process of vaccine development is more demanding, Xie is hoping that the new drug could be a faster and more efficient way to stop the global march of the coronavirus.



Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases	Serious, Critical	Tot cases/1m pop
Saudi Arabia	59,854	+2,509	329	+9	31,634	27,891	237	1,723
UAE	25,063	+873	227	+3	10,791	14,045	1	2,538
Kuwait	16,764	+1,073	121	+3	4,681	11,962	179	3,933
Oman	5,671	+292	27	+2	1,574	4,070	31	1,114
Qatar	35,606	+1,637	15		5,634	29,957	172	12,384
Egypt	12,764		645		3,440	8,679	41	125



## Indonesia calls for Saudi decision on Mecca pilgrimage



Last year around 2.5 million faithful travelled to Saudi Arabia from across the world to take part in the “hajj”, which all Muslims must perform at least once in their lives if able

**Jakarta**

Indonesia on Tuesday called for Saudi Arabia to decide if it will allow the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, after the coronavirus pandemic plunged the ritual into doubt.

Last year around 2.5 million faithful travelled to Saudi Arabia from across the world to take part in the “hajj”, which all Muslims must perform at least once in their lives if able.

The year-round “umrah” pilgrimage was suspended in March, while Saudi Arabia asked Muslims to temporarily defer preparations during the COVID-19 outbreak.

But Saudi authorities have yet to announce whether they will proceed with this year’s hajj, which takes place at the end of July.

Indonesia’s religious affairs ministry said a decision should be made before the fasting month of Ramadan ends this weekend. “We hope the official decision on whether hajj will go ahead or be cancelled will be announced soon,” ministry spokesman Oman Fathurahman told AFP Tuesday.

Indonesia is the world’s biggest Muslim-majority nation and at least 231,000 of its citizens were registered to take part in this year’s pilgrimage -- the largest contingent of any nation.

But Indonesia has held off confirming housing, transportation and other contracts with Saudi travel authorities, Fathurahman said.

“Until now the Ministry of Religious Affairs has yet to sign any contracts or pay the down payment for hajj services in Saudi Arabia,” he added.

The pilgrimage is a key revenue earner for the kingdom but risks becoming a major source of contagion if pilgrims flock to Mecca’s religious sites.

## India to help migrant workers leave cities

**Reuters** | New Delhi/Bhubaneswar

India will run more special trains and buses to allow millions of distressed migrant workers to leave big cities, the federal government said yesterday, as concerns grew in some states over rising infections from those returning home.

Workers are walking long distances to their homes in the countryside ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi imposed a vast lockdown in March to control the spread of coronavirus, shutting down all public transport.

After initially trying to keep them in their cities of employment, authorities are now helping them get home.

The federal home ministry said it was working with states to run special trains and buses, and set up rest stops for those on foot.

The move came as India’s confirmed cases surged past 100,000 on Tuesday, outstripping China, where the virus emerged late last year.

The concern is that migrants, who are leaving coronavirus hotspots such as Mumbai, New Delhi and Ahmedabad, could be carrying the virus into the hinterland.

Since early May, around



Migrant workers walk on a flyover as they look for transport to return to their home state of northern Uttar Pradesh in Ahmedabad

70 per cent of all coronavirus cases in the densely populated eastern state of Bihar have been linked to migrant workers, the state’s top health official, Sanjay Kumar, said.

“The top priority is the people who are coming from Delhi because they have the highest percentage of positive cases,” Kumar told Reuters.

In Odisha, also in the east, 851 out of 978 confirmed cases till Tuesday were returnees, mostly migrant workers, according to state data.

In the state’s Ganjam district, more than 53,000 migrants have been screened and quarantined since early March, and another 200,000 are expected later this month, a health official said.

The official said managing such numbers was a challenge.



Mao Yin had a tearful reunion with his birth parents who had never given up the search for their missing son

# A tearful reunion

Man abducted as child in China reunited with parents after 32 years

**AFP** | Beijing

A Chinese man kidnapped as a toddler 32 years ago has been reunited with his biological parents, after police used facial recognition technology to help track him down.

Mao Yin was just two when he was snatched outside a hotel in Xi’an in central Shaanxi province in 1988 and sold to a childless couple in neighbouring Sichuan province who raised him as their own son, Xi’an’s public security bureau said in a statement.

Police “aged” one of Mao’s childhood photos, according to state broadcaster CCTV, and used the model to scan the national database and find close matches.

They were acting on a tipoff that a person in a certain area of Sichuan had bought a child in the late 80’s.

On Monday, the now 34-year-old had a tearful reunion with his birth parents who had never given up the search for their missing boy.

Mao’s mother Li Jingzhi told CCTV that after he was taken, she quit her job and sent over 100,000 flyers to officials and appeared on several TV channels to appeal

for his return.

Over the past three decades, Li had followed 300 false leads to see if they were her missing son.

But in late April, police in Xi’an were tipped off that a man in Sichuan province had bought a child from Shaanxi in the late 1980s, according to the statement from Xi’an officials.

Police tracked down Mao and later confirmed he was the abducted son of Li Jingzhi after a DNA test.

Mao’s adoptive parents had renamed him Gu Ningning, and he grew up without any knowledge of his birth parents or that he had been abducted.

At the reunion event, organised by Xi’an police, Mao emerged from a side door to a conference room and ran into his mother’s arms.

“I don’t want him to leave me anymore. I won’t let him leave me anymore,” Li said as she held onto her son’s hand.

Mao, who runs a home decoration business in Sichuan, told CCTV he would move to Xi’an to live with his birth parents.

There are no official statistics on the number of children who disappear every year in China, but a system was estab-



**At the reunion event, organised by Xi’an police, Mao emerged from a side door to a conference room and ran into his mother’s arms.**

lished in 2016 to send alerts about missing children through social media and mobile phone texts.

Police have helped more than 6,300 abducted children to reunite with their families over the past decade through the DNA matching system, official news agency Xinhua reported.

Kidnapping and child trafficking became widespread in China from the 1980s, when the draconian one-child rule was enforced, with a cultural obsession with sons also fuelling demand for kidnapped babies.

## Global CO2 emissions could fall by up to 7pc this year amid pandemic - research

**Reuters** | London

**In 2019, the world emitted around 100 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per day by burning fossil fuels and cement production**

Global carbon dioxide emissions could fall by up to 7 per cent this year, depending on ongoing restrictions and social distancing measures during the coronavirus pandemic, research published in the journal Nature Climate Change showed yesterday.

The study, by a group of scientists from institutions in Europe, the United States and Australia, analysed daily CO2 emissions across 69 countries, 50 US states, 30 Chinese provinces, six economic sectors, and three levels of confinement, using data from daily electricity use and mobility tracking services.

In 2019, the world emitted

around 100 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per day by burning fossil fuels and cement production, the research said.

In early April 2020, emissions fell to 83 million tonnes per day, a drop of 17pc, and some countries’ emissions dropped by as much as 26pc on average during the peak of the confinement.

If pre-pandemic conditions

return by mid-June, then 2020 emissions could decline by 4pc compared to 2019 but if restrictions remain worldwide until the end of the year, then emissions could drop by 7pc, the report added.

This would be the largest single annual decrease in absolute emissions since the end of World War II.

A UN report last year said emissions needed to drop by 2.7pc a year keep warming well below 2 degrees Celsius, and 7.6pc a year to keep below 1.5C.

“Population confinement has led to drastic changes in energy use and CO2 emissions,” said lead author Corinne Le Quéré at the University of East Anglia.

“These extreme decreases are

likely to be temporary, however, as they do not reflect structural changes in the economic, transport, or energy systems,” she added.

China saw the largest drop in emissions in April, followed by the United States, Europe and India.

In the countries with the strictest lockdown restrictions, emissions from aviation plunged 75pc in early April, while emissions from land transport fell by 50pc and from power generation by 15pc.

Emissions from industry declined by around 35pc, with a lack of data causing some uncertainty. Emissions from residential buildings, however, increased by 5pc, the study said.



# China offers farmers cash to give up wildlife trade



The sale of wild animals for food has now been banned in China

## Revenues from breeding reached 10 billion yuan in 2018

AFP | Beijing

Farmers in China are being offered cash to quit breeding exotic animals as pressure grows to crack down on the illegal wildlife trade that has been blamed for the coronavirus outbreak. Authorities have for the first time pledged to buy out breeders in an attempt to curb the practice, animal rights activists say. China has in recent months banned the sale of wild

animals for food, citing the risk of diseases spreading to humans, but the trade remains legal for other purposes -- including research and traditional medicine. Two central provinces have outlined details of a buyout programme to help farmers switch to alternative livelihoods. Hunan on Friday set out a compensation scheme to persuade breeders to rear other livestock or produce tea and herbal medicines. Authorities will evaluate farms and inventories and offer a one-off payment of 120 yuan (\$16) per kilogram of rat snake, king ratsnake and cobra, while a kilogram of bamboo rat will

fetch 75 yuan. A civet cat -- the animal believed to have carried Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) to humans in another coronavirus outbreak nearly two decades ago -- would fetch 600 yuan. Neighbouring Jiangxi province has also released plans to help farmers dispose of animals, as well as financial aid. The state-run Jiangxi Daily newspaper reported last week that the province has more than 2,300 licensed breeders, mostly rearing wild animals for food. Their stock is worth about 1.6 billion yuan (\$225 million), the report said. Both Jiangxi and Hunan border Hubei, the province where the coronavirus first emerged in December.

Animal rights group Humane Society International (HSI) said Hunan and Jiangxi are "major wildlife breeding provinces", with Jiangxi seeing a rapid expansion of the trade over the last decade. Revenues from breeding reached 10 billion yuan in 2018, it said. HSI China policy specialist Peter Li told AFP that similar plans should be rolled out across the country. But he cautioned that Hunan's proposals leave room for farmers to continue breeding exotic creatures as long as the animals are not sent to food markets. The province's plan also does not include many wild animals bred for fur, traditional Chinese medicine or entertainment.



## Hollywood producer 'ready to testify' against Malaysia ex-PM

Kuala Lumpur

A producer of Hollywood hit "The Wolf of Wall Street" is willing to testify against his step-father, Malaysia's disgraced ex-leader Najib Razak, over a massive graft scandal, a court heard Tuesday. The news came just days after charges were unexpectedly dropped against producer Riza Aziz, who was accused of illegally receiving huge sums from Malaysian sovereign wealth fund IMDB.



Riza Aziz, one of the producers of 'The Wolf of Wall Street'

Billions of dollars were looted from the fund and spent on everything from a yacht to art in a huge fraud that purportedly involved Najib and his cronies. Najib lost power in 2018 in large part due to public anger at the IMDB scandal, and has since been put on trial. Riza's charges were shelved in exchange for him agreeing to hand over more than \$100 million in assets to Malaysia, but there was widespread anger that he had escaped a jail term.

There was a new twist in the drama on Tuesday, however, as one of Najib's trials resumed at the Kuala Lumpur High Court following a lengthy break due to the coronavirus pandemic. "Riza Aziz has indicted his willingness to give evidence for the prosecution in the case," lead prosecutor Gopal Sri Ram told the court before proceedings began. The case is the most significant of several that Najib, who denies wrongdoing, is facing.

## News in brief

Eight Afghan soldiers were killed on Tuesday while repelling a fierce Taliban attack on Kunduz, a strategic city in northern Afghanistan that had briefly fallen to the militants twice in the past, officials said. Taliban fighters attacked several government posts on the outskirts of the city at around 1:00 am, a defence ministry statement said, triggering heavy fighting. "With the support of air force their attack was repelled," it said, adding the fighting lasted for several hours. Defence Minister Assadullah Khalid, who visited Kunduz later on Tuesday, said the Taliban had "suffered big losses". "Unfortunately, we have also lost eight brave soldiers," he told reporters.



Hong Kong on Tuesday extended anti-virus measures limiting public gatherings until June 4, a move that means an annual vigil marking the Tiananmen crackdown will likely not take place for the first time in 30 years. The candlelight vigil usually attracts huge crowds and is the only place on Chinese soil where such a major commemoration of the anniversary is still allowed. Last year's gathering was especially large and came just a week before seven months of pro-democracy protests and clashes exploded onto the city's streets, sparked initially by a plan to allow extraditions to the authoritarian mainland.

Singapore has apologised to more than 350 people who contracted COVID-19 for accidentally sending them a text message saying they had tested positive again, the health ministry said. A technical glitch led to the message being sent out at the weekend, the ministry said late Monday, adding that no confidential information was revealed. A follow-up message was sent to the 357 people affected pointing out the mistake and "to apologise for any inconvenience and anxiety caused", it said in a statement. "We have since reviewed our processes to ensure that a similar error will not recur," the ministry added.



Russia's Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin returned to his duties on Tuesday after recovering from the coronavirus, as total infections approached 300,000 and officials said new cases were dropping off. President Vladimir

Putin signed a decree reinstating Mishustin as the head of government, nearly three weeks after the prime minister announced on television he had tested positive for coronavirus. Mishustin checked himself into hospital and his deputy was named interim prime minister, but he continued to participate in meetings via video-link wearing a suit and tie. The 54-year-old former tax chief was appointed prime minister in a surprise government shake-up earlier this year but had little time to make an impact before the coronavirus pandemic hit.

British lawmakers yesterday heaped fresh pressure on the government for its handling of the coronavirus outbreak, calling its testing regime "inadequate" in the early stages. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been criticised for his initial response to the global pandemic, and has faced weeks of pressure about the availability of tests for the virus. The country has seen 34,796 deaths -- the second-highest toll in the world behind the United States -- and 246,406 cases, according to the latest figures. But despite a recent surge in daily tests and the expansion of eligibility, MPs on a parliamentary committee said: "Testing capacity has been inadequate for most of the pandemic so far."



A 74-year-old immigrant who had pleaded to be released from a detention facility in California for fear of contracting COVID-19 died by suicide at the weekend, officials said on Monday. Choung Won Ahn, who suffered from diabetes, hypertension and heart ailments, was found dead late Sunday at the Mesa Verde Detention Facility located in Bakersfield, some two hours north of Los Angeles.

## Barber in Secunderabad, India



A barber wearing a facemask attends a customer at his roadside stall after the government eased a nationwide lockdown imposed as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 coronavirus, in Secunderabad the twin city of Hyderabad, India.



# WHO faces virus probe

- **Trump said he was taking hydroxychloroquine, a pill every day**
- **Daily death count in the United States has also slowed in recent days**
- **Trump had already suspended US funding to the UN body**

AFP | Washington

World Health Organisation member states agreed yesterday to launch an investigation into its coronavirus response, after US President Donald Trump threatened to quit the UN agency and branded it a “puppet of China”.

Trump has been locked in a bitter spat with Beijing, alleging it covered up the initial COVID-19 outbreak in central China late last year before the disease unleashed death and economic devastation across the planet.

Under pressure at home in the United States, which has far more deaths and cases than any other country, Trump has also targeted the WHO with accusations that it failed to do enough to combat the initial spread of the disease.

“They’re a puppet of China, they’re China-centric to put it nicer,” he said at the White House on Monday, before threatening to make permanent a temporary freeze on US funding to the body.

Beijing, in turn, accused Trump of trying to “smear” China and shirking American responsibilities to the WHO.

With the row threatening the global response to the pandemic, WHO countries adopted a resolution calling for an “impartial, independent and comprehensive evaluation” of the international response and the measures taken by the agency.

Both the United States and China voted for the resolution tabled by the European Union at the WHO’s annual assembly, despite earlier fears that the tensions might make a full consensus impossible.

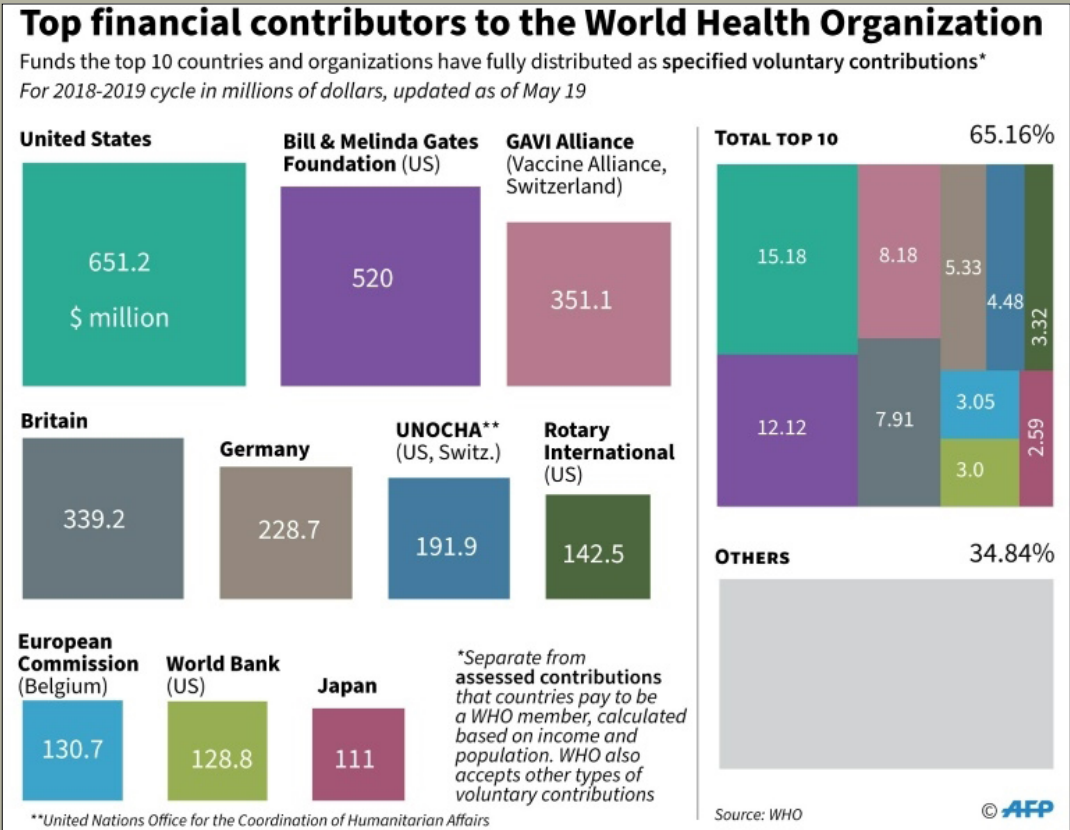
More than 318,000 people have died of COVID-19 out of over 4.8 million infections worldwide since its emergence, and governments are scrambling to contain the virus while seeking ways to resuscitate their economies.

**‘A pill every day’**

Trump turned the screws on the WHO on Monday -- first in a press conference and then in a letter to the head of the organisation --



Trump has been locked in a bitter spat with Beijing, alleging it covered up the initial outbreak in central China late last year



### Hydroxychloroquine

Antimalarial that has gained interest in the coronavirus pandemic, despite lack of conclusive clinical evidence of its benefits

CC(C)NCCc1ccc2c(c1)nc3ccccc3n2

**C<sub>18</sub>H<sub>26</sub>ClN<sub>3</sub>O**

Derivative of chloroquine

**NO PROOF AGAINST COVID-19**

- ◆ Treating COVID-19 patients with hydroxychloroquine had no positive effect and caused other health complications, two new studies showed on May 15
- ◆ French drug agency ANSM has repeatedly warned doctors about using the drug in the fight against COVID-19 due to worrying side effects

**ORIGINAL USE**  
To treat and prevent malaria  
Became less effective as the malaria parasite developed resistance

**ALSO USED IN**  
Autoimmune diseases such as lupus and rheumatoid arthritis  
Some types of sun allergies  
There are ongoing, but as yet, inconclusive clinical trials on patients with COVID-19

**RISKS**  
Recent reported serious, sometimes fatal, heart rhythm problems, particularly at high doses. Also potential liver and kidney problems, and nerve cell damage

Source: [ec.europa.eu/pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/ract](https://ec.europa.eu/pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/ract), [bbc.com/ANSM/BMJ](https://www.bbc.com/health/ANSM/BMJ)

© AFP

A passenger wears a protective suit against the spread of the COVID-19, queues at El Dorado international airport in Bogota, Colombia

Scientists at Peking University have said they are developing a drug that can help stop the pandemic without a vaccine

giving it 30 days to show “substantive improvements” that demonstrated its “independence” from Beijing.

The letter to Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus threatened to permanently freeze US funding. The US is by far the biggest contributor.

As he launched his latest attack, Trump also dropped a bombshell saying he was taking hydroxychloroquine, an anti-malaria drug that his own government’s experts have said is not suitable for fighting the coronavirus.

“I take a pill every day,” said the president, adding that he is using it because he has “heard a lot of good stories”.

Beijing has furiously denied the US allegations that it played down the threat, and hit back at Washington on Tuesday.

“The US tries to use China as an issue to shirk responsibility and bargain over its international obligations to the WHO. This is a miscalculation and the US has picked the wrong target,” foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said.

The EU also backed the WHO, putting Brussels once again in opposition to Washington when it comes to Trump’s treatment of international organisations.

“This is the time for solidarity, not the time for finger pointing or for undermining multilateral cooperation,” EU foreign affairs spokeswoman Virginie Battu-Henriksson told reporters

## Vaccine hopes

While the political row rages, countries around the world are trying to find a balance between restoring normal life and risking a second wave of the disease.

Experts have warned that the social distancing measures that have affected more than half of humanity will remain necessary until a vaccine or viable treatment is found.

The global race to find a vaccine got a boost Monday when results from a trial by US biotech firm Moderna sparked optimism.

Early clinical results suggested that recipients showed an immune response similar to people recovering from COVID-19. It will begin a larger second-phase trial soon.

In China, meanwhile, scientists at Peking University have said they are developing a drug that can help stop the pandemic by using antibodies that can neutralise the virus.

They are planning clinical trials for the treatment, and are hoping to have the drug available later this year and in time for any potential winter outbreak.

The virus



WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

continues on its destructive path, with many poorer nations now seeing a dramatic rise in infections even as the hotspot in Europe eases.

In Russia, the number of coronavirus cases hit nearly 300,000 on Tuesday after Moscow said the virus situation had stabilised. The Kremlin also said Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin is returning to his duties after fighting off the coronavirus.

Meanwhile the economic impact of the virus was further entrenched with fresh data showing the number of unemployed in Britain soared nearly 70 percent to 1.3 million in three months to March.

US home-building meanwhile plunged by 30 percent.

The vast economic damage caused by the virus has led to unprecedented emergency stimulus measures by governments and central banks, and the latest came from Europe where France and Germany proposed a fund worth 500 billion euros.

## ‘Test from God’

But other parts of the world -- especially developing countries -- are only just starting to feel the full force of the virus.

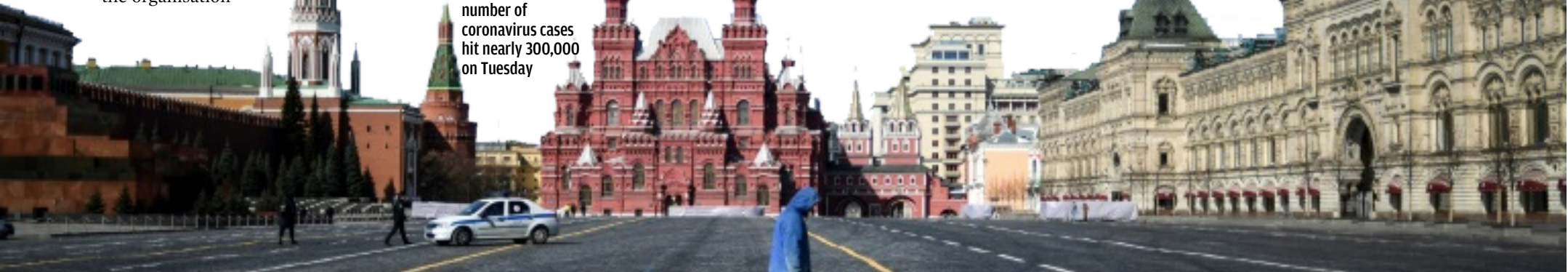
Already, Brazil has overtaken Britain, recording the third-highest number of infections in the world with around 255,000 confirmed cases.

Maria Nunes Sinimbu, a retired teacher from Manaus, the biggest city in the Brazilian Amazon, said COVID-19 had killed five of her family members, including three of her 12 children.

“People should be more careful with this disease. It’s silent,” said the 76-year-old.

And in Indonesia, gravediggers at a cemetery earmarked for COVID-19 victims in the capital Jakarta are struggling to keep up with the number of corpses arriving every day.

“This is probably a test from God,” said gravedigger Minar.





# Summer unlikely to curb coronavirus pandemic growth: study

AFP | Washington

The higher summer temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere are unlikely to significantly limit the growth of the coronavirus pandemic, according to a Princeton University study published Monday in the journal Science.

Several statistical studies conducted over the past few months have shown a slight correlation between climate and the novel coronavirus -- the hotter and more humid it is, the less likely the virus is to spread.

But the findings remain preliminary, and much remains unknown about the exact relationship between climate and COVID-19.

The Princeton study does not rule out the correlation entirely but concludes that the impact of climate on the spread of the virus is "modest."

"Our findings suggest, without effective control measures, strong outbreaks are likely in more humid climates and summer weather will not substantially limit pandemic growth," the study said.

"We project that warmer or more humid climates will not slow the virus at the early stage of the pandemic," said Rachel Baker, a postdoctoral research associate in the Princeton Environmental Institute (PEI).

While climate, particularly humidity, plays a role in the spread of other coronaviruses and the flu, the study said a more important factor is the absence of widespread immunity to COVID-19.

"We do see some influence of climate on the size and timing of the pandemic, but, in general, because there's so much susceptibility in the population,

the virus will spread quickly no matter the climate conditions," Baker said.

Baker said the spread of the virus seen in countries such as Brazil, Ecuador and Australia indicates that warmer conditions do little to halt the pandemic.

"It doesn't seem that climate is regulating spread right now," Baker said.

Without strong containment measures or a vaccine, the coronavirus may continue to infect a large proportion of the world's population, the researchers said, and only become seasonal later, "after the supply of unexposed hosts is reduced."

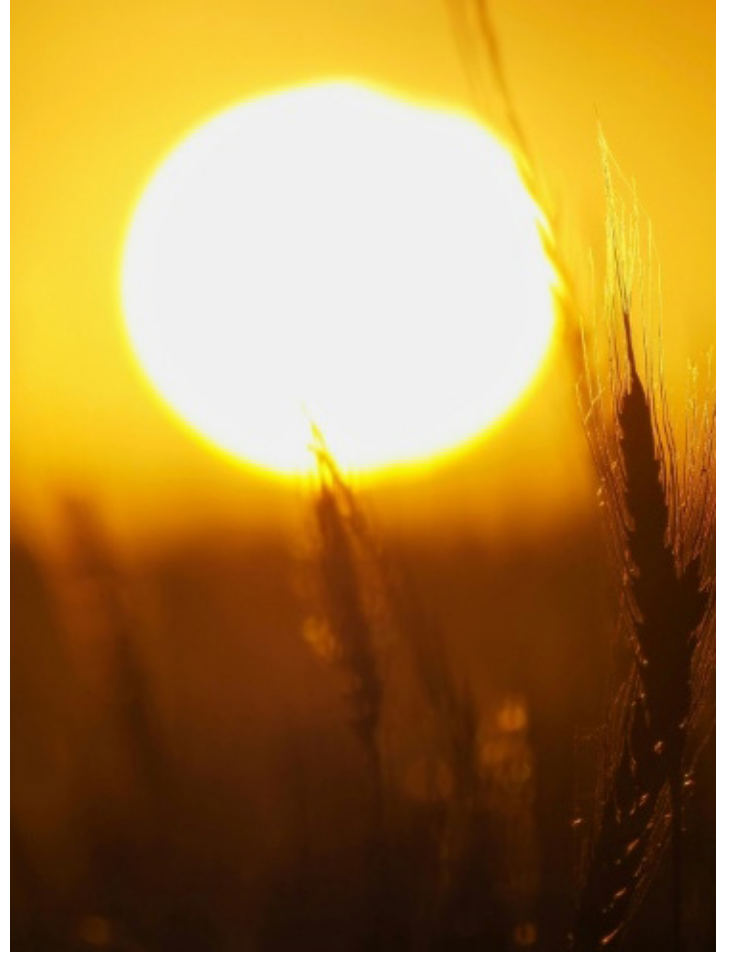
"Previously circulating human coronaviruses such as the common cold depend strongly on seasonal factors, peaking in the winter outside of the tropics," said co-author Bryan Grenfell, professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at PEI.

"If, as seems likely, the novel coronavirus is similarly seasonal, we might expect it to settle down to become a winter virus as it becomes endemic in the population," Grenfell said.

For the study, the researchers conducted simulations on how the pandemic would respond to various climates. They ran scenarios based on what is known about the effect seasonal variations have on similar viruses.

In all three scenarios, climate only became a mitigating factor when large portions of the human population were immune or resistant to the virus.

"The more that immunity builds up in the population, the more we expect the sensitivity to climate to increase," Baker said. "If you run the model long enough, you have a big pandemic and the outbreak settles into seasonal infection."



## Two arrested in US for cross-border kidnap plot that left two dead



A commuter wearing a protective mask to avoid the spread of the coronavirus, COVID-19, shows his ID to a Customs and Border Protection agent as crossing the US-Mexico border at San Ysidro port of entry in Tijuana, Baja California state, Mexico

Los Angeles

A US woman and her boyfriend have been arrested and are facing federal charges for their alleged part in a plot in which three California residents were recently kidnapped while in Mexico and two were killed.

Leslie Briana Matla, 20, a US citizen who lives in Mexico, was arrested last Thursday and Juan Carlos Montoya Sanchez, 25, of Tijuana, was arrested on Sunday, the US Department of Justice said.

Both face federal charges of money laundering and conspiracy for their alleged role in the kidnapping plot.

Authorities said Matla crossed the border from Mexico into the United States on three occasions in April and March to collect ransom payments from the families of the kidnap victims, who were residents of San

Diego, Norwalk and Pasadena.

The men were kidnapped March 28, April 13 and April 22 while on business or visiting family in Tijuana, located just across the border from San Diego, officials said.

In each case, the families of the victims were notified via a caller with a Mexican number to deposit ransom money at a specific location.

"Mexican authorities found the San Diego victim's body on March 29 -- one day after the victim's adult son placed a bag containing \$25,000 inside the women's restroom of a McDonald's restaurant in San Ysidro," prosecutors said.

"The body of the Norwalk victim was found in Mexico on April 14, one day after the victim's family tried, but did not succeed, to pay a \$25,000 ransom to a woman whom law enforcement believes was Matla, at a Lowe's (store) parking lot in Norwalk," they added.

The Pasadena man was rescued by law enforcement in Tijuana after a family member called police on April 22 to report he had been kidnapped with a \$20,000 ransom demand.

The man was found at a hotel where the other victims had been held, according to cell phone records.

"A review of US-Mexico border crossing records, security camera videos from the various pickup locations, and social media led law enforcement to identify Matla, as the woman sent to ... to pick up the ransom money on the dates in question," prosecutors said.

They added that records show that Montoya Sanchez received wire transfers from two of the kidnapping victims.

If convicted, Matla and Montoya Sanchez face life in prison.

Nine other suspects have been arrested in Mexico.

## Baby boom: Indonesia faces virus-driven spike in births



About 4.8 million babies are born annually in Indonesia, a country of more than 260 million Jakarta

Indonesia is facing a baby boom that could see more than 400,000 unplanned pregnancies as coronavirus lockdowns cut access to birth control, the national family planning agency said Tuesday.

Small health clinics have been temporarily shuttered while doctors and midwives are limiting patient numbers since the Southeast Asian nation implemented a partial lockdown last month to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

That has made it more difficult for Indonesians to access birth control, the agency said.

By early next year, Indonesia -- the world's fourth most populous country -- could see 420,000 more babies born than would otherwise be expected, the agency estimated.

The figure is based on 10 percent of its 28 million member nationwide family planning practice having trouble getting birth control. About 4.8 million babies are born annually in Indonesia, a country of more than 260 million.



A worker wearing a full body suit holds a STOP sign in front of a Food market as he manages the flow of the customers in the Jackson Heights neighbourhood of Queens in New York City.



Demonstrators clash with riot police during a protest against Chilean President Sebastian Pinera's government amid the COVID-19 pandemic, in Santiago, Chile.

## Endangered Sumatran tiger found dead in Indonesia



A Sumatran tiger has been found dead in an apparent case of poaching, Indonesian authorities said Tuesday, underscoring the threats to the survival of the critically endangered species. The 18-month-old male's decomposing body was found on Monday with its leg caught in a trap near a palm oil plantation in Sumatra's Riau province. "It had already been dead for several days when the team found it," said local conservation agency head Suharyono, who like many Indonesians goes by one name. "We concluded it was intentional because the hunter tied a pig carcass to the trap in order to attract and kill the tiger."



# Celtic celebrate nine in a row despite anticlimactic end to Scottish season

Celtic have won a record-equalling ninth Scottish Premiership title in a row

AFP | London

Celtic's grip on Scottish football remains unbreakable after a ninth consecutive league title was confirmed on Monday even though they have not kicked a ball for two months.

Nine in a row is a landmark staging post in Scottish football. Only twice has it been achieved before, once on either side of the Glasgow divide -- by Celtic and Rangers.

But Celtic's feat in matching those historic achievements feels like an anti-climax after the coronavirus lockdown deprived them of the chance to win it on the pitch.

"They are the ones who have lost out the most in terms of the opportunity to play in front of the supporters, going for nine in a row," said Celtic manager Neil Lennon of his players. "I feel so sorry for them."

Scottish league chiefs on Monday declared the season over, drawing a line under a bitter squabble over how to finish the campaign.

Rangers failed to gain sufficient support among the other 41 league clubs for an independent inquiry into the controversial vote that allowed the season to be called on a points-per-game basis.

Many clubs were unhappy at the Scottish Professional Football League's insistence that the final instalment of prize money

worth £7 million (\$8.5 million) could only be distributed once the leagues were declared over. But as the shutdown stretched into its third month, there has also been a growing acceptance that the season could not be completed on the pitch.

## Worthy champions?

Celtic were 13 points clear at the top of the table when matches were halted, after storming ahead as Rangers faltered following the winter break.

"We have scored 89 goals, conceded just 19, and established a commanding 13-point lead at the top of the table. We are champions for a reason," Celtic said in a statement.

Rangers fans will claim this title will always come with an asterisk attached. But for the blue half of the Glasgow divide, their focus must now be on stopping their rivals reaching the holy grail of 10 in a row next season.

Celtic's European Cup-winning side were unstoppable from 1965 to 1974, while Rangers' investment in a stellar cast of stars was rewarded from 1988 to 1997. For all those sides achieved, neither managed a full decade of dominance.

However, doubt remains over when the 2020/2021 season can even start and what the Scottish football landscape will look like.

According to UEFA's latest Club Licensing Benchmark report, gate receipts provide 43 percent of revenue for the 12



Celtic fans gather at Celtic Park following the announcement that their club has been crowned Scottish champions for the ninth season in a row



**Scottish clubs could suffer more than other leagues if games have to be played behind closed doors**

clubs in the Scottish Premiership, by far the highest proportion in Europe's top 20 leagues.

If a large portion of the season were played behind closed doors, that would hit Scottish clubs particularly hard.

Celtic are best set up to be able to ride out the economic storm, with their latest accounts showing cash reserves of £33 million.

Rangers admitted in November to needing £10 million in funding to see them through to the end of the season before the consequences of the pandemic were known.

Aberdeen chairman Dave Cormack has warned his club are



Leigh Griffiths of Celtic celebrates with teammates after scoring a goal (file photo)

burning through £1 million a month and the Dons' turnover from the 2018/19 season was just under £16 million, compared with Celtic's £83 million.

Premiership clubs' desire not to jeopardise a new television contract with Sky that starts next season played a part in ending the season early.

However, even an improved deal is reportedly worth just £26 million a season.

"Our middle-ranking Scottish Premiership club might get four times the money through the gate as it does through its TV contract, so the economics (of closed-doors games) don't work in Scotland," Scottish Football

Association chairman Rod Petrie told the BBC.

Finance experts Begbies Traynor have predicted insolvencies among the hardest-hit clubs as "inevitable".

Celtic may be champions again, but there is little else that is business as usual for the Scottish game.



Celtic captain Scott Brown applauds the fans after a match (file photo)

## Lancashire offer to stage Test cricket during crisis

AFP | London

The coronavirus has left the English cricket season in limbo but Lancashire were dealt a devastating personal blow when they lost their chairman, David Hodgkiss.

Just weeks later the Manchester-based county have returned record financial results -- a fitting legacy for Hodgkiss, who died in late March at the age of 71 after contracting the virus.

And they have put themselves in the frame to host Tests during the English summer.

Lancashire, who chose not to follow other counties in furloughing players during the COVID-19 crisis, have announced their highest-ever annual turnover of £34 million (\$41 million). EBITDA (earnings before in-

terest, tax, depreciation, and amortization) for the Red Rose county in 2019 were £7.6 million, a 10-fold increase since 2015 and a record for a first-class county.

"Excluding minority interests and one-off legacies it is absolutely a record," CEO Daniel Gidney told AFP. "It's a very proud day for the club."

"A hundred percent it is David's legacy. He was a mentor, a friend as well as a boss. With his construction background, without him the £60 million redevelopment (of the ground) would not have happened."

"The board was the driving force but he was the centre of that."

"For me a business problem to solve is like any other problem such as a recession but when you lose a friend it is an emotional



Late Lancashire chairman David Hodgkiss (right), makes a presentation to England's James Anderson at Old Trafford in 2017

kick in the gut."

## Test hosts?

Gidney said Lancashire, with a Hilton hotel on the site of their Old Trafford ground, were still

in a position to host Tests this year.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) hope they can kickstart a season delayed by coronavirus by rescheduling the

three-Test series between England and the West Indies that was meant to take place in June, in July.

Australia and Pakistan are also scheduled to tour England in the coming months.

Old Trafford was originally due to host the second Test against Pakistan, which was scheduled to start on August 7.

Should the current lockdown be relaxed sufficiently to allow cricket to go ahead, Tests could be played behind closed doors at "bio-secure" grounds with on-site accommodation such as Old Trafford.

That would allow players and officials to be monitored while restricting their access to the outside world.

"We have made a formal expression of interest to the ECB,"

said Gidney. "We believe we have the capability, the experience and facilities on site to support them put on a bio-secure event."

Lancashire are also thinking big for when cricket can return in earnest -- including plans to promote themselves in the game's biggest market.

"David's legacy is to complete the ground redevelopment, a new stand, another hotel and work with the local authority on a leisure centre," said Gidney.

"We also decided after last year's World Cup match between India and Pakistan to look east and an Indian growth strategy -- to make Lancashire the second Indian team so if the fan say supports Mumbai Indians then their English team is us."



# Virtual fans? Premier League looks at options for empty stadium games



General view inside Burnley's Turf Moor stadium

Reuters | Manchester

The Premier League is exploring the use of audio effects and computer generated ‘fans’, to improve the viewer experience of watching behind closed doors games.

The league voted on Monday to allow teams to return to non-contact training in small

*While the league and broadcasters evaluate all the options, the focus for now though is on the players returning to their training grounds*

groups and hopes to be able to clear contact training next week as it steps up ‘Project Restart’.

Germany’s Bundesliga returned to action on Saturday without any major hitches, which has encouraged the Premier League. However, CEO Richard Masters says they are looking at ways to improve the television experience of watching games in empty stadiums should the league return as planned in June.

“I think we’ll take a different approach, not better, but slightly different approach about the behind closed doors product and that was one of the things we were able to talk to clubs today, the direction of travel on. We have group of clubs and broadcasters together on that,” Masters told reporters.

The absence of fans was

highly noticeable on Bundesliga broadcasts with players’ shouting the only noise to be heard other than the voice of the commentator.

Sources with knowledge of the discussions have indicated that all options are currently on the table, including adding crowd noise and the use of computer generated (CGI) fans to replace the images of empty seats in the stadium.

No decision has been taken on whether to use such technology, with concerns that any changes do not make the game appear too far away from the reality of what is unfolding on the pitch.

“In terms of the precise nature of what we are planning, we haven’t really talked about it with the wide group yet so I don’t want to share too much of the plans,” said Masters during

a conference call with reporters.

“But obviously the big issue is that if there aren’t fans in the stadium, what does the viewing fan at home, what’s his experience like? And how different is it to a normal Premier League production and that’s the question we’re seeking to answer,” he added.

## Augmented reality

A number of companies offer technology, including augmented reality products, which could add crowd noise and the impression of a crowd to broadcasts.

“The idea is to protect the integrity and experience of the game, by turning the attention away from the empty stadium, and instead replacing it with appealing surroundings to make the game more interesting, and as close to reality as possible,” said Gudjon Gudjonsson, CEO of one such company, OZ Sports.

“These are times to explore and experiment, to make sports even more appealing and to bring it closer to the latest developments in esports,” he added.

Oz Sports declined to discuss whether they were in talks with the Premier League. “OZ Sports can confirm it is in discussions with multiple sports bodies, not limited to football,” the company said.

While the league and broadcasters evaluate all the options, the focus for now though is on the players returning to their training grounds.

Initial training will be in small groups, no bigger than five players, and with social distancing rules enforced in and around the facilities.

## Spain’s Bautista Agut still eyeing elusive ATP Finals spot



Bautista Agut reacts during a match (file photo)

Reuters | Madrid

Qualifying for the season-ending men’s ATP Finals, which features the world’s top eight singles players and doubles teams, is one of the goals for Roberto Bautista Agut before he retires, the Spaniard has said.

The 32-year-old came close to ticking that off his wish list when he rose to a career-high world ranking of ninth last year and served as a reserve player for the 2019 edition of the event in London.

“It is one of the goals I would like to achieve before retiring,” Bautista Agut told ATPTour.com.

“I know how difficult it is, I know that I have been very close some seasons. It’s not something I’m obsessed about, but it remains a goal I’d like to achieve some day.”

Bautista Agut was ranked 12th when the tennis season was suspended in early March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The tennis shutdown will continue at least until the end of July and the fate of the 50th edition of the ATP Finals, scheduled for Nov. 15-22 in London, is expected to be decided later.

The Spaniard made a strong start to the season by winning

“I know how difficult it is, I know that I have been very close some seasons. It’s not something I’m obsessed about, but it remains a goal I’d like to achieve some day”

ROBERTO BAUTISTA AGUT

all six of his singles matches for Spain in the ATP Cup before reaching the third round of the Australian Open, where he fell to Croatia’s Marin Cilic after a gruelling five-setter.

In November, Bautista Agut, who has 11 career wins against top 10 opponents, returned to Spain’s Davis Cup squad a day after his father’s funeral and delivered an emotional win over Canada’s Felix Auger-Aliassime to help his country to a sixth title.

“What keeps me motivated is my competitiveness. I’m very competitive both as an athlete and person,” he said. “I’m always trying to improve and win, adding minor details to my game, because it’s a feeling I love.”



General view of Carrow Road Stadium, home of Norwich City FC

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SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

How to play

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

CROSSWORD

Across

1- Soccer legend; 5- Fiddlesticks; 9- Gush; 13- Buddy; 15- Architect Saarinen; 16- Pocket problem; 17- Hinge; 18- Animal house; 19- ... breve; 20- It may come after you; 21- Stratium; 23- More spine-tingling; 25- Fast time; 26- Country; 27- Slander; 30- Wedding words; 31- Tumults; 32- Pertaining to the management of public wealth; 37- About; 38- Member of a motorcycle gang; 40- Sat on the back of a horse; 41- Woman hired to suckle another's infant; 43- Satisfied; 44- Not for a Scot; 45- Devotees to the god of revelry; 47- Heavy hitter; 50- Oops!; 51- Dazed; 52- Growl; 53- ... Cruces, NM; 56- Neet rival; 57- Excited; 59- ... and desist; 61- Mozart's ... "Kleine Nachtmusik"; 62- Libertine; 63- Ruin; 64- K-6; 65- Carry; 66- Floating platform;

Down

1- Father; 2- Chieftain, usually in Africa; 3- As it happens; 4- Id's counterpart; 5- Erase; 6- Be a mother to; 7- Onassis, to pals; 8- Bullfighter; 9- Puppeteer Lewis; 10- Salk's conquest; 11- Actress Barkin; 12- Put on; 14- Furry swimmers; 22- Officeholders; 24- Harrow rival; 25- Admit; 26- Kind; 27- Get one's ducks in ...; 28- Kingly address; 29- Pillar; 32- Supplement, with "out"; 33- Mountain spinach; 34- Lepidopterous insect; 35- It's a thought; 36- Sign over; 38- Boastful person; 39- Of course!; 42- Go back, in a way; 43- Parch with heat; 45- Elasticized cord; 46- Gotcha!; 47- Gastropod mollusk; 48- Singer Frankie; 49- Violinist Zimbalist; 51- Arrow poison; 52- Joint problem; 53- Magma; 54- Starting; 55- Denomination; 58- Sticky stuff; 60- Musical aptitude;

Yesterday's solution

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



Cristiano Ronaldo



AFP | Turin

**C**ristiano Ronaldo returned to training with Juventus in Turin yesterday after an absence of over two months because of the coronavirus pandemic.

## Ronaldo back training at Juve after two months

The 35-year-old arrived at the Juventus Training Centre in a Jeep with tinted windows around 09:20 (0720 GMT), leaving three hours later with a smile and thumbs up for waiting photographers.

Ronaldo underwent medical and physical tests before joining up with his teammates for the first time in 72 days for individual training, according to media reports.

Coach Maurizio Sarri has been conducting training in small groups since Monday, pending the final health protocol to be agreed with the Italian government.

Juventus players got back to individual training on May 4, the day Ronaldo returned to Italy after spending lockdown in his native Portugal.

For the past two weeks, he has been in quarantine in his villa in Turin.

Ronaldo played in Juventus' last Serie A game before the season was suspended, a 2-0 win over Inter Milan behind closed doors at the Allianz Stadium on March 8.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner is the first Juventus foreign player, among those who left Italy during the lockdown, to return to the team's Continassa training centre.

Italy has been one of the countries hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic with more than 32,000 deaths.

League leaders Juventus are leading Lazio by one point as they target a ninth consecutive 'Scudetto'.

The Italian Football Federation (FIGC) announced on Monday that all its competitions, including Serie A, will remain suspended until June 14.

Serie A had hoped to return on June 13 but the FIGC has pushed back the date in line with a government decree that all sports competitions be suspended until next month.

The FIGC said the choice was made "pending any further... decision by the authorities", suggesting the possibility of a restart on June 13 might still exist.

But Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said on Saturday he needed "more guarantees" before the green light could finally be given for football to resume.

A meeting is planned in the near future between Conte and Italian football bosses.

The government's technical and scientific committee will decide in the coming days if it accepts the new health protocols proposed for a return to group training and competition.



HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa during the meeting

## Shaikh Khalid calls for developing school sports

TDT | Manama

**H**H Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa gave instructions to design a comprehensive plan for developing school sports in coordination with the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports.

First Deputy President of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports and Bahrain Olympic Committee President gave the direction as he chaired the weekly virtual meeting of the Coordination, Execution and Follow-up Committee "Response".

The meeting was attended by Dr Majid bin Ali Al Nuaimi, Minister of Education, Faeqa bint Saeed Al Saleh, Minister of Health, Dr Riyadh Hamza, President of the University of Bahrain and Dr Jamal Al Saleh, Consultant of orthopaedics and fractures. At the beginning of the meeting, HH Shaikh Khalid welcomed the

attendees, valuing their efforts in carrying out several developments projects.

After that, the meeting discussed several topics listed on the agenda, including the school sport. It was agreed to expand the use of the multiuse schools' gyms whose number is 67 for this purpose.

Moreover, the meeting also elaborated on investing in sports medicine through sketching systematic strategies with the competent authorities. This initiative reflects the Kingdom's leading position in the medical sector in line with the vision of HM King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the King of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the ambitions of HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, His Majesty the King's Representative for Charity Works and Youth Affairs, National Security Advisor, President of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports.

## BREEF keen on active participation in FEI programs

TDT | Manama

**H**H Shaikh Isa bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, President of Bahrain Royal Equestrian and Endurance Federation (BREEF), has stressed the extent of cooperation with the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI) in overcoming global obstacles caused by the spread of Corona virus, especially with regard to the possibility of postponing the 2020 World Endurance Championship to next year.

There is still a debate going



HH Shaikh Isa bin Abdullah Al Khalifa

on between the FEI and the Organizing Committee, and in the event that the tournament is postponed, the FEI will inform all members, he said.

BREEF, under the guidance of

HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Representative of His Majesty the King for Humanitarian Works and Youth Affairs, National Security Adviser, President of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports and BREEF Honorary President, is keen to discuss all matters related to developing cooperation with the FEI, he added.

HH Shaikh Isa said BREEF was in constant contact with the international federation to discuss all the activities organized by the FEI, including the upcoming world championship to be held

in Italy.

BREEF is keen to participate in all events and activities organized by the FEI that it deems appropriate, he said.

BREEF is fully prepared to continue the cooperation that contributed to the development of equestrian sports across the world and to positive effects on the local championships organized by BREEF.

BREEF is keen to have an active participation in the FEI programs and activities and achieve joint success for the two parties, HH Shaikh Isa added.

## Button shocked Vettel will not be at Ferrari next season

Reuters | London

**F**ormer world champion Jenson Button says he is shocked Sebastian Vettel will not drive for Ferrari next season and that it would be "madness" if the team had pushed him out.

Ferrari said last week that four-times world champion Vettel would leave them at the end of the 2020 season, after talks on a new contract ended without a deal.

They then replaced the German with Spaniard Carlos Sainz to race alongside Charles Leclerc.

German media had reported that Vettel, who won 14 races with Ferrari and is their third-most successful driver, had rejected a one-year extension with a reduced salary but the 32-year-old said financial matters played no part in the joint decision.

"If he was pushed, for me it's madness," Button, the 2009 world champion, told Sky Sports.

## Man Utd urge fans to stay away if matches resume

AFP | London

**M**anchester United have warned fans to stay away from matches played behind closed doors at Old Trafford if the Premier League restarts amid the coronavirus crisis.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side are set to resume small group training on Wednesday as Premier League clubs step up the "Project Restart" plan to finish the season.

But all 92 remaining matches will have to be played in front of empty stands due to the pandemic, leading United to activate a refund or rebate to ticket holders for their remaining home fixtures.

If the Premier League get their wish to play at clubs' normal stadiums rather than at neutral venues, then United will have four home league matches to play.

Aware of the danger of supporters gathering in large groups during the health crisis, United have pleaded with their fans to stay away from matches and watch on television.

"We share your disappointment that you will not be able to watch United in person from within the stadium, but we



The United Trinity statue is pictured outside Old Trafford Stadium, home of Manchester United

**This united effort to stay at home will give us the best chance of protecting the health of everyone in our community**

MANCHESTER UNITED

would encourage you to give your continued loyal support from the comfort and safety of

your home," United said in an email to supporters.

"To help with that, the Premier League and their media partners will work to deliver the very best broadcast coverage of our games.

"We also ask for your co-operation not to travel to any stadiums at which we are playing on matchdays. By supporting from home and following Government guidance, you will be playing your part to keep your friends, your family and all United fans safe."

## BMF praises BIC, Batelco for sponsoring Bahrain GT Esports series

TDT Manama

**B**ahrain Motor Federation (BMF) Board of Directors Chairman Shaikh Abdulla bin Isa Al Khalifa praised Bahrain International Circuit (BIC), "The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East", and Bahrain Telecommunications Company (Batelco) for sponsoring the Bahrain Esport Gran Turismo Championship 2020.

Shaikh Abdulla expressed his thanks and appreciation to BIC, led by Chief Executive Shaikh Salman bin Isa Al Khalifa, for the valuable support, which he said will help achieve success in the inaugural competition, which begins May 29 with the first of six rounds.

The BMF chief also hailed Batelco for its sponsorship of various activities and events in the Kingdom, valuing the role of General Manager Corporate Communications and CSR Shaikh Bader bin Rashid Al Khalifa.

For his part, Shaikh Salman expressed his delight in BIC's support of the Bahrain Esport Gran Turismo Championship 2020, and praised the great efforts of BMF, headed by Shaikh Abdulla.

Shaikh Salman noted the series' valuable contribution to all motorsport fans in Bahrain amidst the current challenges the world is facing. He stressed that BIC is keen to contribute to the success of the championship and enhance the experience for those competing from home.



Shaikh Abdulla

This series' first season consists of six rounds, with each taking place on a virtual version of world-famous race tracks. A one-time Qualifying event is scheduled for May 22.

Round One will then be on May 29, with Round Two on June 5. Round Three will be on June 19, while the fourth round is set for July 3, the fifth on July 17, and the season-fina- le on July 24.

Cash prizes will be allocated to the winners of the top three and the driver who registers the fastest lap in each round. First place gets BD50, the runner-up takes home BD30, and third place receives BD20. BD10 will be awarded for fastest lap.

The overall championship winner will win an additional BD500 at the end of the season, while second place will get BD300 and third BD200.

The series is open to all interested participants of all ages. Registration has begun and it is scheduled to end today. Those wishing to take part can register for the competition, or for more information, visit begtc.azurewebsites.net