

**Self-isolation makes training easier: Ricciardo**

Australian Daniel Ricciardo reckons self-isolation makes for a perfect training camp -- although it helps to be on the family farm in western Australia with a swimming pool and some machinery to play with. **P12**

# THE DAILY tribune

G20 leaders pledge \$5trn, 'united' response to coronavirus crisis

'Coronavirus could become seasonal'

**Thirty per cent of evacuees on Wednesday flight test positive**

TDT | Manama

Thirty per cent of the 63 Bahraini citizens who were evacuated from the Islamic Republic of Iran on a chartered flight that arrived Wednesday night have tested positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19).

This was announced last night at a press conference of the National Taskforce for Combating the Coronavirus.

As of 8pm last night, the total number of active COVID-19 cases in Bahrain, according to the Ministry of Health website, was 244. Of these, all but one were stable. There have also been 210 patients discharged and a total of 29,533 individuals tests.

**29,533**

is the total number of people who have been tested for the coronavirus

Meanwhile, Salmaniya Medical Complex Infectious and Internal Diseases Consultant Dr. Jameela Al Salman reiterated that Bahrain is amongst the first countries to use hydroxychloroquine to treat the symptoms of COVID-19, noting its success in China and South Korea.

Speaking at the conference, Dr. Al Salman expressed her condolences to the family of the 78-year-old Bahraini citizen who passed away on Wednesday. The deceased was an active COVID-19 patient with underlying medical and chronic issues. His death marked the fourth in the Kingdom related to the coronavirus.



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210 fils (includes VAT)



TDT | Manama

Interior Minister Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa announced last night the punishments of up to three years' imprisonment and up to a BD5,000 fine for anyone violating directives banning public gatherings of more than five people.

The decision stipulated the prohibition of gathering on roads, squares, beaches, parks and other public places for more than five people.

Anyone who defies this shall



General Shaikh Rashid



Shaikh Hesham

be reprimanded and given a jail term for a period not exceeding

three years plus a fine not exceeding BD5,000, or either one

of the two penalties.

The Minister called on all citizens and residents to adhere to the measures related to the ban of gatherings in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and preserve public safety in the Kingdom.

Meanwhile, Capital Governor Shaikh Hesham bin Abdulrahman Al Khalifa also urged compliance with the nation-wide precautionary measures to combat COVID-19.

He highlighted particularly the ban on gatherings exceeding five people in public places and

urged the public to avoid going out unless necessary -- whether to report to work, go to the hospital, buy medicine, or buy other essential commodities.

He underlined the need to avoid sparking panic and stressed the importance of abiding with social distancing at shopping markets and other facilities providing public services.

He stressed that all citizens and residents show awareness and comply with the mandatory instructions in support of all efforts to combat COVID-19.

## Follow the rules or face the consequences

Up to three years in jail and up to a BD5,000 fine for violators of ban on public gatherings

## Bahrain on right track to beat COVID-19



From left, Dr. Qahtani, Health Minister Al Saleh and Dr. Al Salman

### National Taskforce for Combating the Coronavirus highlights measures taken to prevent coronavirus spread

● Kingdom has shifted from containment to mitigation phase, can avoid suppression phase

● COVID-19 Test results now accessible via an online account at the Ministry of Health's website

TDT | Manama

Bahrain is headed in the right direction in its fight to contain the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in the Kingdom.

This was declared by Infectious Diseases Consultant and Microbiologist at the BDF Hospital and National Taskforce for Combating the Coronavirus member Lt. Col. Dr. Manaf Al Qahtani.

He commended the self-discipline and civic responsibility citizens and residents have shown in adhering to preventive measures in combatting COVID-19.

Dr. Al Qahtani was speaking at a press briefing of the National Taskforce, where updates were given regarding the current state of efforts and future plans to prevent the further spread of the virus.

Also in attendance were Minister of Health Faeqa bint Saeed Al Saleh and Salmaniya Medical Complex Infectious and Internal Diseases Consultant Dr. Jameela Al Salman.

The conference was held at the Crown Prince Centre for Training and Medical Research at the Bahrain Defence Force (BDF) Hospital.

Dr. Al Qahtani underscored three phases of overcoming COVID-19: containment, mitigation and suppression.

He explained that Bahrain, at present, has moved to the mitigation phase. He noted that this is a natural shift and underlined that no country can remain in the containment phase in light of the global outbreak of the virus.

Dr. Al Qahtani added that as long as citizens and residents continue to adhere to the procedures and regulations outlined by the concerned authorities, the Kingdom can overcome the virus and

avoid the suppression phase and its challenges.

He noted that there has been a slight increase in the weekly average of active cases. It was seven during the first week, five during the second week, 19 during the third week, 17 during the fourth week and 21 during the fifth week. These averages follow the registration of the first active case in the Kingdom.

Meanwhile, the Health Minister underlined the comprehensive approach of HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander, and First Deputy Prime Minister to stem the spread of COVID-19 by utilising tailored, effective and preventative strategies. She also emphasised that hospital

beds remain available to meet surge capacity in active cases. Current treatment centres' capacity stands at 1,667 beds, of which 249 beds are occupied, and current quarantine centres' capacity is at 2,504 beds, of which 139 beds are occupied. Additionally, the compartmentalised structure of quarantine centres allows for quick conversion to treatment centres, if required.

The Minister noted that Bahrain has conducted over 29,000 tests for COVID-19, with results now accessible via an online account at the Ministry of Health's website for individuals that have taken the test. Additionally, contact tracing activities are underway to reduce COVID-19 transmission by identification, isolation and treatment.

SHUTTERS DOWN

### Stores across Bahrain close temporarily as part of measures to combat COVID-19

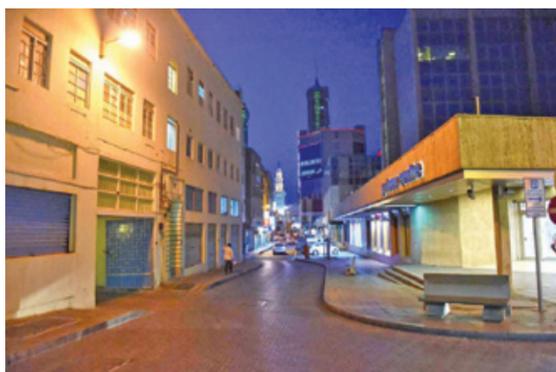
TDT | Manama

Commercial stores across the Kingdom closed up shop at or before 7pm last night in compliance with government directives to help combat the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and ensure the safety of all in Bahrain.

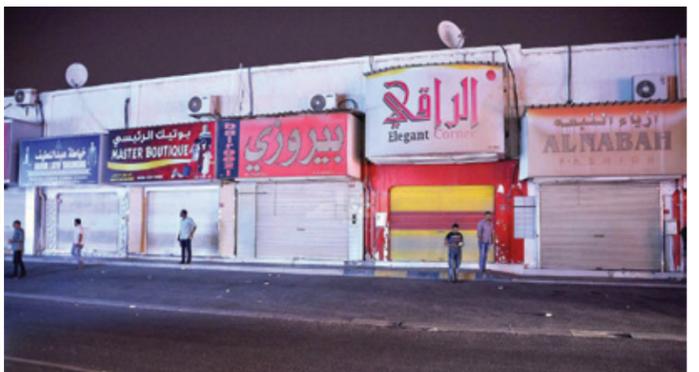
These stores will remain closed until April 9, after which they will re-open until April 23.

Only a handful of essential businesses are to remain open, as approved by the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism.

These include hypermarkets, supermarkets, cold stores, grocery stores, butcher shops



Scenes across Bahrain showing rows of shops closed in usually busy areas



and fish shops; bakeries; natural gas-fuelling stations and liquid-fuelling stations; hospitals, medical centres, pharmacies and optical centres; banks

and currency exchange bureaus; corporate administration offices of companies and organisations that conduct activities without direct engagement with custom-

ers; businesses that import, export and distribute goods; automotive garages and repair shops; businesses operating in the construction and maintenance in-

dustry; and manufacturers. Meanwhile, community police were deployed last night to help ensure that all concerned businesses adhered to the rules.

# Evacuations of Bahrainis to continue



The Minister in his office during the video conference

Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinating with Ministry of Health, diplomatic missions abroad on repatriations

● **Citizens still in Iran, Iraq, Syria and other GCC countries, plus Bahraini students abroad, to be flown home**

● **Embassies to communicate with Bahrainis abroad while allocating 24-hour call centres**

TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced yesterday that it is coordinating with the Ministry of Health and diplomatic missions abroad to evacuate Bahraini citizens who are still in Iran, Iraq, Syria and in other

GCC countries, including Bahraini students studying abroad.

This came during a video conference initiated by Foreign Affairs Minister Dr. Abdullah bin Rashid Al Zayani at the Ministry's headquarters.

It included Council of Representatives First Deputy Speaker Abdul Nabi Salman; a number of MPs including Falah Hashim, Mamdouh Al Saleh, and Ahmed Al Dimistani; and Foreign Affairs Ministry undersecretary Dr. Shaikha Rana bint Issa Al Khalifa.

The Ministry gave its directives to the Kingdom's embassies to communicate with Bahraini citizens residing abroad to meet their needs and look after them, in addition to allocating a 24-hour operation room to receive calls from citizens to answer any queries.

The ministry also issued guidelines and published

them on all conventional and social media, urging citizens to register their data at the Kingdom's embassies abroad. The ministry coordinated with diplomatic missions overseas to facilitate the shipment of medicines and medical devices from the exporting countries.

Meanwhile, the Minister stressed during the meeting His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's keenness on ensuring the safety of all citizens. His Majesty's directives stress the need to take all measures and intensify efforts to evacuate the citizens of the Kingdom wherever they are, and facilitate their quick return while providing them with the proper healthcare.

He noted the continuous follow-up of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and

First Deputy Prime Minister to confront the challenge of the coronavirus, and to contain and prevent its spread in a way that contributes to preserving the health and safety of everyone.

He also hailed the national efforts made by Bahrain as one team through full coordination between all the concerned authorities that is being carried out in accordance with a comprehensive strategic plan implemented by all state ministries and competent agencies.

The minister praised the efforts made by the Bahrain Defense Force, the ministries of the interior, health, trade, civil aviation, Gulf Air and all the competent agencies, and the continuous work they have done to face the repercussions of the spread of the Coronavirus. He also noted the efforts of the medical staff, including

doctors, nurses and technicians, and their dedication to performing their national duty.

The Foreign Minister pointed to the great effort made by the National Committee to return the first and second batches of citizens from Iran and their transfer to quarantine centers, where they are provided the necessary treatment.

This, he said, was thanks to the great efforts made by the Ministry of Health to sign contracts with private airlines, adding that efforts are underway to facilitate the return of the remaining Bahraini citizens from Iran and other countries.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that the Ministry played an important role in these efforts and worked to facilitate the return of many citizens to the country.

## Court arguments to be submitted electronically

TDT | Manama

As part of the preventive and precautionary measures taken in light of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, courts in Bahrain will receive arguments electronically.

This was confirmed in a press statement by Court of Cassation president and Supreme Judicial Council deputy chairman Councilor Abdullah bin Hassan Al Buainain, who also clarified that this is applicable starting on Sunday.

The Councilor said that these procedures would be considered as attendance, with the exception of criminal court sessions, which parties will be informed by the court about the scheduled dates of the trials.

He also explained that all parties will be notified of the dates for the hearings via electronic means or mail, as applicable, adding that the procedure comes in consideration to reduce the number of hearings and cases in accordance with the approved court rescheduling plan.

Al Buainain added that screens have been installed outside the court halls to display the announced verdicts in cases, in cooperation with the Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments Ministry.

These help organise the attendance before the courts and to avoid all forms of assembly, in addition to a service to receive rulings and executive forms through the e-government portal.

The Councilor valued the continuous cooperation with the Bahraini Lawyers Association and the general attorneys and litigants, by ensuring everyone's commitment to the regulatory measures taken to contain spread of COVID-19 and to protect public health, in a manner that facilitates judicial procedures.



## GULF INTERNATIONAL BANK B.S.C. - RETAIL BRANCH

## Financial statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION		
	31.12.19 BHD	31.12.18 BHD
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Cash and other liquid assets	3,453,352	1,475,050
Placements	21,000,000	-
Loans and advances	109,783	9,153
Due from related parties	14,645,807	21,684,684
Premises and equipment	967,964	1,138,515
Other assets	328,839	147,135
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>40,505,745</b>	<b>24,454,537</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Deposits from customers	14,249,325	2,489,739
Due to related parties	6,860,302	3,017,352
Other liabilities	532,469	225,255
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>21,642,096</b>	<b>5,732,346</b>
<b>HEAD OFFICE ACCOUNT</b>		
Capital funds	20,000,000	20,000,000
Accumulated losses	(1,136,351)	(1,277,809)
<b>Total Head Office account</b>	<b>18,863,649</b>	<b>18,722,191</b>
<b>Total liabilities and Head Office account</b>	<b>40,505,745</b>	<b>24,454,537</b>

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME		
	31.12.19 BHD	4.5.17 to 31.12.18 BHD
Interest income	827,646	40
Interest expense	(368,501)	(17,664)
Net interest income / (expense)	459,145	(17,624)
Net fee and commission income	94,717	1,773
Foreign exchange income	86,578	26,162
<b>Total income</b>	<b>640,440</b>	<b>10,311</b>
Staff expenses	207,980	221,548
Premises expenses	155,716	163,355
Other operating expenses	1,407,378	903,217
<b>Total operating expenses</b>	<b>1,771,074</b>	<b>1,288,120</b>
<b>Net loss</b>	<b>(1,130,634)</b>	<b>(1,277,809)</b>
Other comprehensive income	-	-
<b>Total comprehensive loss</b>	<b>(1,130,634)</b>	<b>(1,277,809)</b>

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN HEAD OFFICE ACCOUNT			
	Capital funds BHD	Accumulated losses BHD	Total BHD
<b>At 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019</b>	<b>20,000,000</b>	<b>(1,277,809)</b>	<b>18,722,191</b>
Transition adjustment on adoption of IFRS 16	-	(5,717)	(5,717)
<b>At 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019 - restated</b>	<b>20,000,000</b>	<b>(1,283,526)</b>	<b>18,716,474</b>
Transfer of losses to Head Office	-	1,277,809	1,277,809
	20,000,000	(5,717)	19,994,283
<b>Total comprehensive income:-</b>			
Comprehensive loss for the year	-	(1,130,634)	(1,130,634)
<b>Total comprehensive loss</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(1,130,634)</b>	<b>(1,130,634)</b>
<b>At 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019</b>	<b>20,000,000</b>	<b>(1,136,351)</b>	<b>18,863,649</b>
<b>At inception on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2017</b>			
<b>Transactions with Head Office:-</b>			
Investment of capital funds	20,000,000	-	20,000,000
<b>Total comprehensive income:-</b>			
Comprehensive loss for the period	-	(1,277,809)	(1,277,809)
<b>Total comprehensive loss</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(1,277,809)</b>	<b>(1,277,809)</b>
<b>At 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018</b>	<b>20,000,000</b>	<b>(1,277,809)</b>	<b>18,722,191</b>

### ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and in conformity with the Central Bank of Bahrain and Financial Institutions Law. The financial statements cover the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 and have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS		
	31.12.19 BHD	4.5.17 to 31.12.18 BHD
<b>OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Net loss	(1,130,634)	(1,277,809)
Adjustments to reconcile net loss to net cash flow from operating activities:-		
Depreciation	346,392	40,698
Write-off of fixed assets	315,399	-
Increase in statutory deposit with the Central Bank	(150,999)	(53,000)
Net increase in placements	(3,590,709)	-
Net increase in loans and advances	(100,630)	(9,153)
Decrease / (increase) in amounts due from related parties	7,038,877	(21,684,684)
Net increase in other assets and liabilities	(27,323)	78,120
Net increase in deposits from customers	11,759,586	2,489,739
Increase in amounts due to related parties	3,842,950	3,017,352
<b>Net cash inflow / (outflow) from operating activities</b>	<b>18,302,909</b>	<b>(17,398,737)</b>
<b>INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Purchase of premises and equipment	(344,124)	(1,179,213)
<b>Net cash outflow from investing activities</b>	<b>(344,124)</b>	<b>(1,179,213)</b>
<b>FINANCING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Capital funds from Head Office	-	20,000,000
Transfer of losses to Head Office	1,277,809	-
<b>Net cash inflow from financing activities</b>	<b>1,277,809</b>	<b>20,000,000</b>
<b>Increase in cash and cash equivalents</b>	<b>19,236,594</b>	<b>1,422,050</b>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at 1<sup>st</sup> January</b>	<b>1,422,050</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at 31<sup>st</sup> December</b>	<b>20,658,644</b>	<b>1,422,050</b>

The financial statements have been approved on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and signed by:-

**Mushari AlOtaibi** Head of Retail Banking  
**Craig D'Souza** Head of Finance - Retail Banking

The above has been extracted from the financial statements, which have been audited by Ernst & Young (EY)  
Gulf International Bank B.S.C., P.O. Box 1017, Al-Dowali Building, 3 Palace Avenue, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain. Tel: +973 17534000  
Gulf International Bank B.S.C. - Retail Branch is licensed by the Central Bank of Bahrain as a conventional retail bank

## BDF chief inspects unit for combat and administrative readiness

TDT | Manama

Bahrain Defence Force (BDF) is steadily moving forward, under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the Supreme Commander, with providing all its units with the most advanced weapons, mechanisms and systems, BDF

Commander-in-Chief Marshall Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa said yesterday.

This will empower the BDF to maintain the high level of combat readiness for all its affiliates, so that they will always be fully prepared to protect Bahrain and be the fortified shield of the Kingdom, he added.

Shaikh Khalifa was inspect-

ing a BDF unit where he was briefed on their combat and administrative preparedness and plans to enhance performances.

He stressed the significance of maintaining its level of combat and administrative readiness and intensifying efforts in line with the vision of HM the King.



The BDF Commander-in-Chief, right, expects a BDF unit

# Food supplies adequate!

Fruits, vegetables and other goods arrive in 30 trucks and two cargo planes

● BCCI Food Wealth Committee head acknowledges abundance of foodstuffs in local markets

● More large shipments are scheduled to arrive from the Netherlands next week

TDT | Manama

Thirty trucks and two cargo planes loaded with food arrived in Bahrain yesterday.

This was confirmed by Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry Food Wealth Committee head Khalid Al Ameen.

He said that the arrival of sev-



Al Ameen, right, with Al Bustani during their tour of a local market

eral tonnes of all kinds of fruits, vegetables and other foodstuffs indicated that suppliers in Bahrain are ensuring the import of adequate food supplies to cover the country's needs.

Al Ameen yesterday conduct-

ed a tour of Bahrain's markets along with businessman and fruits and vegetables importer Redha Al Bustani.

Al Ameen acknowledged the abundance of fruits and vegetables in the local markets.

Al Ameen noted that large shipments were due to arrive in Bahrain from the Netherlands next week.

He asked people to stop panic-buying as there is enough food stock for everyone in the country

for at least the next six months.

He had pointed out yesterday that Jordanian authorities have lifted the ban on their export of fruits and vegetables more than a week following the issuance of a decision to ban supply.

Industry, Commerce and Tourism Minister Zayed R Al Zayani had stressed recently that the ministry is in constant coordination with relevant authorities to ensure that goods and products are continually available in Bahrain's markets.

Al Zayani assured that food and commodities in the Kingdom remain abundant, and noted that there is no need to purchase large quantities of goods other than what is needed.

The minister further assured that all food stores are prepared to deliver products when required, and that the supply of medicine and food remains a top priority.

## Car fire put out in East Riffa

TDT | Manama

The Civil Defense extinguished a fire yesterday in East Riffa after two vehicles parked in an open space were aflame.

This was reported by the Ministry of Interior on social media.

The Interior Ministry determined that the cause of the fire was a short circuit in one of the cars. The fire then spread to the other vehicle.

There were no injuries caused by the incident, the ministry said.

## Theoretical driving lessons online

TDT | Manama

Theoretical driving lessons will be provided online starting Sunday, Director General of Traffic Brigadier Shaikh Abdul Rahman bin Abdulwahab Al Khalifa said yesterday.

The decision to move the lessons online is part of the precautionary measures taken by Bahrain to prevent the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and ensure the safety of all.

The lessons will be offered in multiple languages and will cover the most important points and themes that are normally delivered at the driving learning building. These theoretical lessons at the building will be suspended until further notice.

## World customs official praises Bahrain initiatives

TDT | Manama

World Customs Organisation (WCO) secretary-general Kunio Mikuriya has hailed the precautionary measures taken by the Kingdom of Bahrain in the fight against the spread of coronavirus.

Mikuriya highlighting that the WCO has updated its website and urges countries of outbreaks to take the necessary steps.

In this context, the Bahrain Customs president and WCO vice-chair for North Africa, Near and Middle East region Shaikh Ahmed bin Hamad Al Khalifa highlighted the importance of countries to share their experiences with one another.

Shaikh Ahmed revealed the measures taken to protect the safety of customs officers.

## Supermarket outlet reopens following infection scare

TDT | Manama

A popular supermarket chain that was forced to close one of its outlets due to a suspected case of coronavirus (COVID-19) with one of its staff members has reopened the branch.

Management of Alosa Supermarket announced yesterday on social media that the team member expected to have been

infected with the coronavirus has tested negative. Nonetheless, the team member will still be self-isolating over a recommended period.

In light of this, Alosa's Najibi Centre branch has reopened following its temporary closure on Tuesday as a precautionary measure.

The outlet has also been "professionally disinfected and sanitised by a certified service

provider and concerned authorities," the chain said on its online post.

"We are happy to report that the team member in question tested negative (not infected) for COVID-19," it said. "As a precaution, the team member will be spending the recommended time in self-isolation."

The post added: "We understand that our move to close the Najibi Centre outlet has caused

concern and stress but we feel that we have a responsibility to help protect the communities we are privileged to serve and as such felt that we needed to act quickly and transparently the moment we had news of a potential threat."

It continued: "Our Alosa Najibi Centre outlet has since been professionally disinfected and sanitised by a certified service provider and concerned

authorities. We are open as normal from today onwards.

"We are following the advice of all government and public health authorities, and proactively implementing a range of precautionary measures. All outlets are deep cleaned every night, and we have further amplified the stringent processes that we already have in place to minimise the spread of COVID-19."

## Closure of fast lane on Shaikh Kalifa bin Salman Highway

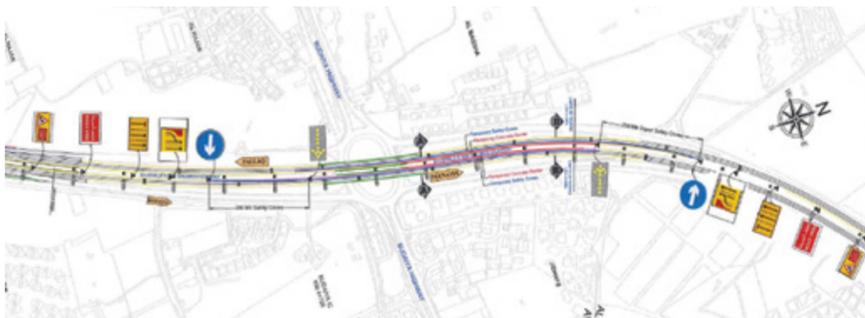
TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Works, Municipality Affairs and Urban Planning announced yesterday that, in co-operation with the General Directorate of Traffic of the Ministry of the Interior, improvement works of Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman High-

way has required the closure of the fast lane in both directions between Budaiya and Saar flyovers.

The closure was effective from last night and it will be in effect for one month.

All road users are requested to observe and obey the traffic rules for the safety of all.



An illustration of the closed lane

## Closure of two lanes on Shaikh Salman Highway

TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Works, Municipality Affairs and Urban Planning announced yesterday that its Roads Affairs, in cooperation with the General Directorate of Traffic of the Ministry of the Interior, will be

conducting maintenance work of expansion joints on Shaikh Salman Flyover.

This will necessitate the closure of the slow and middle lanes for southbound traffic and the closure of the slow lane of the loop from Shaikh Isa bin Salman

Highway to Shaikh Salman Highway leading to Salmabad Area.

The closure will be effective from tomorrow 5am until Tuesday, March 31, at 5am.

Road users are requested to observe and obey the traffic rules for the safety of all.



An illustration of the closed lanes

TDT | Manama

The Bahrainouna National Plan to Promote the Spirit of Belonging to the Nation and Reinforce the Values of Nationalism celebrated its first anniversary yesterday.

It was launched last year by Interior Minister Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa in the presence of other ministers, senior officials and high-ranking citizens.

There are 105 programmes and initiatives within the plan targeting several stakeholders, and there is a huge focus on youth.

Among them are student awareness programmes, summer camps, programmes against violence and addiction, campaigns to

# Bahrainouna National Plan marks first anniversary

## More than 100 initiatives implemented within remarkable community participation

appreciate and promote Bahraini products, and Youth City 2030, to name just a few.

The initiatives have specific goals and objectives, targeting all segments of citizens.

The plan started out as an idea and it transitioned into an initiative. It was an enlightened roy-

al thought in which His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa dedicated to considering the reinforcement of loyalty and national belonging as the foundations of the comprehensive reform project.

In this context, Bahrainouna was launched and it took solid steps through a framework to build a

stronger and more cohesive nation. During the launch, the Interior Minister expressed its noble meaning and the national goals that the plan works to achieve.

More than 100 initiatives that are committed to its goals were determined in the early stages in January of 2018 until it was approved

by the Cabinet and the formation of the ministerial follow-up and implementation committee.

A committee of specialists and experts was then formed to set an indicative document as a general framework for the work of all authorities in the public and private sectors, NGOs and the media to reinforce national values.

The plan received positive responses and the appreciation of the community. Its goals focus on the protection of genuine values of the people of Bahrain that promotes the spirit of brotherhood,

solidarity between citizens, and national spirit to develop efforts to protect the security and stability of the nation.

An executive office for the follow-up committee of the initiatives was then formed with representation from authorities concerned and community figures. Those initiatives are either an enforcement of previously launched projects and initiatives, were launched as part of the plan, or were developed during coordination meetings of the executive office and several organisations.



General Shaikh Rashid

## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2019 Retail Bank, Bahrain

Standard Chartered

Licensed by the CBB as a Conventional Retail Bank and a Wholesale Bank

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION as at 31 December 2019

Bahraini Dinars 000's	2019	2018
<b>Assets</b>		
Cash and balances at central banks	52,047	62,018
Due from other entities of the Head Office	87,351	58,988
Deposits and amounts due from banks	24,778	12,720
Loans and advances to customers	431,413	452,162
Investment securities	161,966	138,104
Property, equipment and software	4,188	4,088
Interest receivable and other assets	27,379	23,097
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>789,122</b>	<b>751,177</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Due to other entities of the Head Office	20,232	21,459
Deposits and amounts due to banks	7,755	6,903
Customers accounts	659,981	637,573
Interest payable and other liabilities	41,531	37,095
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>729,499</b>	<b>703,030</b>
<b>Head Office funds</b>		
Capital	10,743	10,743
Retained earnings	7,238	2,726
Other reserves	41,642	34,678
<b>Total Head Office funds</b>	<b>59,623</b>	<b>48,147</b>
<b>Total liabilities and Head Office funds</b>	<b>789,122</b>	<b>751,177</b>

### STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS for the year ended 31 December 2019

Bahraini Dinars 000's	2019	2018
Interest income	36,247	34,836
Interest expense	(8,039)	(6,524)
<b>Net interest income</b>	<b>28,208</b>	<b>28,312</b>
Fee and commission income	11,300	11,189
Fee and commission expense	(3,126)	(2,587)
<b>Net fee and commission income</b>	<b>8,174</b>	<b>8,602</b>
Net trading income	3,243	4,171
Other income	186	246
<b>Total operating income</b>	<b>39,811</b>	<b>41,331</b>
Staff costs	11,578	12,533
Depreciation and amortisation	631	510
Premises and equipment costs	635	885
Other expenses	16,209	15,978
<b>Total operating expenses</b>	<b>29,053</b>	<b>29,906</b>
<b>Operating profit before impairment losses</b>	<b>10,758</b>	<b>11,425</b>
Net impairment losses	(3,491)	(8,699)
<b>Profit for the year</b>	<b>7,267</b>	<b>2,726</b>

### STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS for the year ended 31 December 2019

Bahraini Dinars 000's	2019	2018
Net cash generated from / (used in) operating activities	53,095	(2,083)
Net cash (used in) / generated from investing activities	(35,227)	40,159
Net cash used in financing activities	(2,757)	(913)
<b>Increase in cash and cash equivalents during the year</b>	<b>15,111</b>	<b>37,163</b>
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January	109,185	72,022
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at 31 December</b>	<b>124,296</b>	<b>109,185</b>

### STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME for the year ended 31 December 2019

Bahraini Dinars 000's	2019	2018
<b>Profit for the year</b>	<b>7,267</b>	<b>2,726</b>
<b>Other comprehensive income</b>		
Items that will not be reclassified to profit or loss:		
Equity instruments - Net fair value movement during the year	1,926	-
Items that may be reclassified to profit or loss:		
Debt instruments - Net fair value movement during the year	5,038	(1,538)
<b>Total other comprehensive income for the year</b>	<b>6,964</b>	<b>(1,538)</b>
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>	<b>14,231</b>	<b>1,188</b>

### STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN HEAD OFFICE FUNDS for the year ended 31 December 2019

Bahraini Dinars 000's	Other reserves				Total
	Capital	Retained earnings	General reserve	Fair value reserve	
<b>2019</b>					
At 1 January 2019	10,743	2,726	34,056	622	48,147
<b>Comprehensive income for the year</b>					
Profit for the year	-	7,267	-	-	7,267
Other comprehensive income					
Fair value reserve:					
Net fair value movement during the year	-	-	-	6,964	6,964
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>		<b>7,267</b>		<b>6,964</b>	<b>14,231</b>
Amounts remitted to Head Office during the year	-	(2,755)	-	-	(2,755)
<b>At 31 December 2019</b>	<b>10,743</b>	<b>7,238</b>	<b>34,056</b>	<b>7,586</b>	<b>59,623</b>
<b>2018</b>					
At 1 January 2018	10,743	5,622	34,056	1,430	51,851
Transition adjustment on adoption of IFRS 9	-	(4,709)	-	730	(3,979)
At 1 January 2018 - restated	10,743	913	34,056	2,160	47,872
<b>Comprehensive income for the year</b>					
Profit for the year	-	2,726	-	-	2,726
Other comprehensive income					
Fair value reserve:					
Net fair value movement during the year	-	-	-	(1,538)	(1,538)
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>		<b>2,726</b>		<b>(1,538)</b>	<b>1,188</b>
Amounts remitted to Head Office during the year	-	(913)	-	-	(913)
<b>At 31 December 2018</b>	<b>10,743</b>	<b>2,726</b>	<b>34,056</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>48,147</b>

Abdulla Bukhwa  
Chief Executive Officer, BahrainShaikha Tareef  
Chief Financial Officer, BahrainAudited by: KPMG  
Public Accountants

sc.com/bh

## An Overview of Bahrainouna



Promotes the Spirit of Belonging to the Nation and Reinforces the Values of Nationalism



The first national document for the 18 values of the Kingdom of Bahrain distributed under 4 pillars:

- National
- Political
- Social
- Humanitarian



In the first phase, 105 initiatives were approved through 25 government and semi-government entities



75% of 105 initiatives are active and being executed under 5 streams

- Belonging
- Media
- Regulations
- Public Relation
- Curricula

## Condolence cables sent to Indonesian President

TDT | Manama

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa yesterday sent a cable of condolences to Indonesian President Joko Widodo over the death of his mother.

HM the King prayed to Allah the Almighty to rest the soul of the deceased in eternal peace

and to bless President Widodo with patience and fortitude.

HRH Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, the Prime Minister, and HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Premier, also sent cables of condolences to Indonesian President Widodo.

## Education continues with online classes at AGU

TDT | Manama

The Arabian Gulf University (AGU) has stressed its commitment to undertaking all possible measures to compensate its students for the lost time and use all available capabilities to reduce graduation delays.

All educational institutions in Bahrain have been shut amid precautionary measures taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and ensure the safety of the citizens, residents and visitors.

The closures were initially for two weeks, but the period was extended to ensure the safest conditions are met.

However, despite the closure, AGU moved to ensure that education continues and this week, it resumed teaching the theoretical parts of the curriculum online.

Classes in the College of Medicine and Medical Sciences for the first to the fourth academic years of the Doctor of Medicine programme started on March 22.

The fifth and sixth academic years of the Doctor of Medicine programme and postgraduate studies in all the programmes of the College of Graduate Studies and the College of Medicine and Medical Sciences and will start today, AGU said.

The university said it has a large team that specialises in distance-learning and information technology.

It has played a central role in preparing platforms and ensuring their steady performance in delivering information to students. Faculty members of both colleges participated last week in several detailed workshops for training on the platforms to be used in distance teaching.

# BUSINESS

## Seef Properties AGM approves BD 6.9m cash dividends

● **Approved financial results for year ended 2019**

● **Transferred BD 1.1 million to statutory reserve account**



Ahmed Yusuf, Chief Executive Officer



Dr Mustafa Al Sayed, Vice Chairman

TDI | Manama

Shareholders of Seef Properties (SEEF), an integrated real estate development company, announced approving cash dividends of 15 per cent, an equivalent of BD 6.9 million (15 fils per share).

The decision came as Seef Properties held its annual general meeting held via videoconferencing from Bahrain Bourse Business Centre in Bahrain Financial Harbour.

SEEF Vice Chairman Dr Mustafa Al Sayed chaired the meeting in the presence of board members and Chief Executive Officer, Ahmed Yusuf.

Among other decisions, shareholders approved the company's financial results for the year ended 31 December 2019, transferring BD 1.1 m to the statutory reserve account, allocating BD 0.17m in support of charitable and community causes and transferring BD 2.5m as retained earnings for next year.

**We are currently preparing for the launch of the largest family entertainment centre in the Kingdom within Al Liwan Project, in addition to the expansion of the Jumpoline across the Kingdom. Commercial Malls will continue to be at the core of our operations, while simultaneously working on diversifying our investment portfolio**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, AHMED YUSUF

The company reported a net profit to the shareholders worth BD 10.93 m, for the year ended 31 December 2019, compared with BD 10.91 m for the same period of the previous year, achieving an increase of 0.11pc. Gross revenue increased by 0.67pc in 2019, reaching BD 11.19 m, compared to BD 11.12 m in the same period of the previous year. As for operating profit for the year 2019, the Company reported an increase of 1.86pc, reaching BD 15.13 m, compared to BD 14.85 m in the

same period of the previous year. Dr Mustafa Al Sayed attributed the positive results to the company's capability to "control spending, implement plans designed to grow existing business activities and create new sources of income and returns, as well as strengthening internal frameworks and corporate governance."

Looking ahead, Chief Executive Officer, Ahmed Yusuf, said it's opening Al Liwan Project in the fourth quarter of this year, a

unique shopping and entertainment destination in the Kingdom.

He added: "We are currently preparing for the launch of the

largest family entertainment centre in the Kingdom within Al Liwan Project, in addition to the expansion of the Jumpoline across the Kingdom. Commer-

cial Malls will continue to be at the core of our operations, while simultaneously working on diversifying our investment portfolio."

### Citibank, N.A. - Retail Bank - Bahrain Branch

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION as at 31 December 2019		31-Dec-19 (Audited)	31-Dec-18 (Audited)	BD'000s	
<b>ASSETS</b>					
Cash and bank balances		10,287	10,406		
Investment securities		61,212	56,317		
Loans and advances to customers		63,534	62,791		
Due from other group entities		34,156	28,851		
Interest accrued		503	446		
Other assets		5,562	6,559		
<b>Total assets</b>		<b>175,254</b>	<b>165,370</b>		
<b>LIABILITIES AND HEAD OFFICE FUNDS</b>					
Head office account		4,540	4,540		
Reserves		809	774		
Unremitted profit		8,307	9,486		
<b>Total head office funds</b>		<b>13,656</b>	<b>14,800</b>		
Due to group entities		3,009	2,201		
Deposits by banks		1,021	204		
Deposits by non-banks		151,058	142,177		
Interest accrued		99	369		
Other liabilities		6,411	5,619		
<b>Total liabilities</b>		<b>161,598</b>	<b>150,570</b>		
<b>Total liabilities and head office funds</b>		<b>175,254</b>	<b>165,370</b>		
<b>Memorandum items</b>		<b>44,414</b>	<b>41,292</b>		
STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS for the year ended 31 December 2019		31-Dec-19 (Audited)	31-Dec-18 (Audited)	BD'000s	
Interest income		15,535	15,070		
Interest expense		(1,365)	(2,668)		
<b>Net interest income</b>		<b>14,170</b>	<b>12,402</b>		
Other income		4,304	4,395		
<b>Total income</b>		<b>18,474</b>	<b>16,797</b>		
Staff cost		1,570	1,432		
Other operating expenses		8,331	7,972		
Net impairment charge		4,753	2,388		
<b>Total expenses</b>		<b>14,654</b>	<b>11,792</b>		
<b>Profit for the year</b>		<b>3,820</b>	<b>5,005</b>		
STATEMENT OF OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME for the year ended 31 December 2019		31-Dec-19 (Audited)	31-Dec-18 (Audited)	BD'000s	
<b>Profit for the year</b>		<b>3,820</b>	<b>5,005</b>		
Other comprehensive income					
Items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss					
Investment securities at FVTOCI: net fair value change		35	(3)		
<b>Total other comprehensive income for the year</b>		<b>35</b>	<b>(3)</b>		
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>		<b>3,885</b>	<b>5,002</b>		
STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN HEAD OFFICE FUNDS for the year ended 31 December 2019				BD'000s	
2019 (Audited)	Head office account	Stock option reserve	Investment securities fair value reserve	Unremitted profit	Total
At 1 January	4,540	208	566	9,486	14,800
<b>Comprehensive income:</b>					
Profit for the year	-	-	-	3,820	3,820
Other comprehensive income:					
Net change in fair value of investment securities at FVTOCI	-	-	35	-	35
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>			<b>35</b>	<b>3,820</b>	<b>3,885</b>
Remittance during the year	-	-	-	(4,999)	(4,999)
<b>At 31 December</b>	<b>4,540</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>8,307</b>	<b>13,656</b>
2018 (Audited)	Head office account	Stock option reserve	Investment securities fair value reserve	Unremitted profit	Total
At 1 January	4,540	208	(15)	7,942	12,675
Impact of adopting IFRS 9 as at 1 January 2018	-	-	584	(860)	(276)
<b>Restated balances at 1 January 2018</b>	<b>4,540</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>7,082</b>	<b>12,399</b>
<b>Comprehensive income:</b>					
Profit for the year	-	-	-	5,005	5,005
Other comprehensive income:					
Net change in fair value of investment securities at FVTOCI	-	-	(3)	-	(3)
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>			<b>(3)</b>	<b>5,005</b>	<b>5,002</b>
Remittance during the year	-	-	-	(2,601)	(2,601)
<b>At 31 December</b>	<b>4,540</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>9,486</b>	<b>14,800</b>
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS for the year ended 31 December 2019		31-Dec-19 (Audited)	31-Dec-18 (Audited)	BD'000s	
<b>Operating activities</b>		<b>3,820</b>	<b>5,005</b>		
Profit for the year					
Adjustment for:					
Depreciation and amortisation		978	919		
Net impairment on loans and advances		4,753	2,388		
Net interest income		(14,170)	(12,402)		
Dividend income		(56)	(70)		
Foreign exchange gains		(1,029)	(959)		
<b>Net cash before changes in operating assets and liabilities</b>		<b>(5,704)</b>	<b>(5,119)</b>		
<b>Change in operating assets and liabilities:</b>					
Loans and advances to customers		(5,496)	(5,888)		
Deposits by banks		817	(132)		
Deposits by non-banks		8,881	(95)		
Other Assets/ Other Liabilities		1,112	419		
Central Bank of Bahrain reserve balance		(22)	(31)		
<b>Net cash after changes in operating assets and liabilities:</b>		<b>(417)</b>	<b>(10,828)</b>		
Interest received		15,478	14,962		
Interest paid		(1,635)	(2,554)		
<b>Net cash from operating activities</b>		<b>13,426</b>	<b>1,582</b>		
<b>Cash flow from investing activities:</b>					
Acquisition of equipment		(298)	(124)		
Dividend received		56	70		
<b>Net cash used in investing activities</b>		<b>(242)</b>	<b>(54)</b>		
<b>Cash flow from financing activities:</b>					
Profit remitted to Head Office		(4,999)	(2,601)		
<b>Net cash used in financing activities</b>		<b>(4,999)</b>	<b>(2,601)</b>		
<b>Net change in cash and cash equivalents</b>		<b>8,185</b>	<b>(1,073)</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year		88,404	89,518		
Effect of currency fluctuations on cash and cash equivalents		1,030	959		
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at end of the year</b>		<b>97,619</b>	<b>88,404</b>		
<b>Cash and cash equivalents are included in the following:</b>					
Cash and bank balances		5,870	6,016		
Treasury bills		60,602	55,798		
Due from group entities		34,156	28,851		
Due to group entities		(3,009)	(2,201)		
		<b>97,619</b>	<b>88,404</b>		

The financial statements were approved by the management on 26 March 2020 and signed on its behalf by:

Usman Ahmed  
Chief Executive Officer

Christoph Geidner  
Consumer Business Senior

Zahra Jamali  
Chief Financial Officer

The published figures have been extracted from financial statements audited by KPMG, who expressed an unqualified audit opinion on 26 March 2020

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## Batelco introduces same-day home delivery

TDI | Manama

Batelco announced introducing a same-day Home Delivery service to support the community during the current period of shop closures and people staying at home.

The service which started functioning yesterday will accept orders for devices and services through batelco.com, Batelco App, Live Chat and WhatsApp Sales.

Orders placed before 11 am will be delivered on the same day, while orders placed after 11 am will be scheduled for next day delivery.

All orders will be delivered to the door by Batelco's team using Batelco's branded fleet



of cars.

Batelco said has precautionary measures in place for the Home Delivery service, in line with Ministry of Health guide-

lines such as limiting numbers in any location and encouraging social distancing.

Batelco said customers can manage their mobile and internet services, including package upgrades, prepaid refills and bill payments, and also get the necessary support for any enquiries, through Batelco's support channels, such as batelco.com and Batelco App with both including quick links to complete transactions conveniently.

Additionally, a Call Centre team (196) are available around the clock. A step-by-step animation is available on Batelco social media channels to help customers with the home delivery service.

## US weekly jobless claims soar to record 3.28 million

Reuters | Washington

The number of Americans filing claims for unemployment benefits surged to a record of more than 3 million last week as strict measures to contain the coronavirus pandemic brought the country to a sudden halt, unleashing a wave of layoffs that likely ended the longest employment boom in US history.

Initial claims for unemployment benefits rose 3.00 million to a seasonally adjusted



Job seekers and recruiters gather at TechFair in Los Angeles

3.28 million in the week ending

March 21, eclipsing the previous record of 695,000 set in 1982, the Labor Department said. That also dwarfed the peak of 665,000 in applications during the 2007-2009 recession, during which 8.7 million jobs were lost.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast claims would rise to 1 million, though estimates were as high as 4 million.

The Labour Department attributed the surge to COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the coronavirus.

# Bahrain Kuwait Insurance agrees 15pc cash dividend

TDT | Manama

Bahrain Kuwait Insurance Company's Annual General Meeting approved to distribute a cash dividend of 15 per cent (BD 2,140,349) of the paid-up capital to shareholders, excluding treasury shares.

The General Assembly held at the company's head office in Seef District on Wednesday also approved the appointment of new board members for the financial period (2020-2022). The new members are Khalid Saoud Alhasan, Shawqi Ali Fakroo, Dr Emad Jawad Bukhamseen, Bijan Khosrowshahi, Thamer Ebrahim Arab and Mubarak Al Ayyar.

Also, the AGM approved the election of Murad Ali Murad, Hasan Mohamed Zainalabedin, Mohamed Ebrahim Zainal and Mohamed Ahmed Alrayes to the new board for the same period.

## Keeping pace with tech

Outlining the challenges faced by the insurance industry during the year 2019, Murad Ali Murad said, in going forward, it is important to utilise technology in keeping pace with modern developments in the field of insurance.

He further revealed that the board approved a business plan for the next three years.

On the decrease in the company's profits, Murad Ali Murad attributed it to the extraordinary expenses/provisions during the



Murad Ali Murad, Chairman



Ebrahim Alrayes, CEO

year. These include VAT on UPR of policies issued in 2018 and in force in 2019 which were not collected from customers, compensation paid to the employees on the voluntary early retirement programme and the increase in technical reserves based on the external actuary's recommendation report.

Meanwhile, Ebrahim Alrayes, the CEO, raised concerns on the fierce competition adversely affecting companies operating, especially in the motor and medical insurance sector.

As for the financial results, the company achieved net premium revenue of BD 33.3 million, compared to BD 31.7m in the previous year, recording a growth of 5pc. The loss ratio also improved, as it decreased from 76.8pc to 73.6pc. It reflected positively

in technical profits which increased by 14pc from BD 1.95 m in 2018 to BD 2.22 m in 2019.

Looking ahead, Alrayes said the company places great importance to the development within the company, whether through training of individuals or through developing services and finding new products.

He said the company expects better results in going forward, despite the instability of political and economic conditions in the world in general.

He added: "Besides, the company's business plan aims towards limiting the increase in expenses. However, we must take into account the impact of the outbreak of COVID 19 in the global economy in general and Bahrain in particular."

## G20 leaders pledge \$5trn, 'united' response to coronavirus crisis

Riyadh

G20 nations pledged a "united front" yesterday in the fight against coronavirus, saying they were injecting \$5 trillion into the global economy to counter the pandemic amid forecasts of a deep recession.

US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin joined the emergency videoconference chaired by Saudi Arabia's King Salman, who called for coordinated action while facing pressure to end an oil price war between Riyadh and Moscow that has roiled energy markets.

"We are strongly committed to presenting a united front against this common threat," the leaders said in a joint statement after the summit.

"We are injecting over \$5 trillion into the global economy, as part of targeted fiscal policy, economic measures, and guarantee schemes to



Saudi Arabia's King Salman

counteract the social, economic and financial impacts of the pandemic."

G20 leaders also pledged to work with bodies such as the International Monetary Fund to deploy a "robust" financial package to support developing nations.

"It is our responsibility to extend a helping hand to developing countries and (the) least developed countries to enable them to build their capacities and improve their infrastructure to overcome this crisis and its repercussions," King Salman said.

## Coronavirus outbreak could lead to rising demand for IT products: Huawei CEO

Reuters

Most employees at Huawei Technologies Co. are back at work following the coronavirus outbreak, though the pandemic is likely to hit the Chinese telecom giant's financial results this year, the company's chief executive said.

Ren Zhengfei, who is also Huawei's founder, also told The Wall Street Journal in an interview Wednesday that the company plans to boost its research and development budget this year by \$5.8 billion to more than \$20 billion.

Huawei, like all global companies, is coping with the fallout of the coronavirus outbreak, which is curbing economic activity around the world. Ren said Shenzhen-based Huawei resumed some operations beginning Feb. 3, losing little production time and in line with a government ruling that allowed some critical industries to restart early despite a broader work stoppage.

More than 90 per cent of its approximate 150,000 China-based workforce is now back to work, though workers have cut overseas travel and increased their reliance on remote conferencing to carry on business. He added that the company has been helping hard-hit suppliers, including with medical supplies.

"For a large number of international contracts, you don't need to send people into the field," he said. "Even in light of the current situation we can still manage to grow our revenue from our businesses."

The outbreak has also caused the company to lower its financial targets for the year, Ren said, though the specifics won't be clear until next month. Already, smartphone sales are falling outside of China, he said, although the decline has been offset by strong domestic sales. Globally, Huawei is selling about 22 million units a month, a slight rise over last year's pace.

China is slowly returning to work after nationwide clo-



Ren Zhengfei, CEO of Huawei

sures following the novel coronavirus outbreak, which began late December. The pandemic is just the latest obstacle for Huawei, the world's largest maker of telecom equipment and No. 2 smartphone vendor, which has been fighting an avalanche of attacks from the Trump administration.

Ren said he was confident Huawei would reach its new, downwardly adjusted financial goals for this year, despite the U.S. campaign and the coronavirus that is prompting a seizure in global economic activity.

"In markets outside of China, we don't see significant growth," he said. "We are taking measures to address that."

Despite the restart of most of its business, some locations where Huawei operates remain on lockdown. One Huawei office in Wuhan, the center of the coronavirus outbreak, employs about 8,000 people, mostly in R&D functions. It remains largely closed even though Chinese authorities have begun lifting movement restrictions on residents in Wuhan's province.

However, Ren said he is optimistic that the outbreak could lead to increased demand for information-technology products amid a boost in network usage, as more people work and meet remotely.

"After this pandemic is over, I think people would even more obviously see the value" of Huawei products, he said. "There is a possibility of accelerated demand in the network rollout, so it is a concern that we might not have enough capacity to supply."



BNP PARIBAS

BNP PARIBAS - CONVENTIONAL RETAIL BANK - BAHRAIN BRANCH

(Licensed as a Conventional Retail Bank by the Central Bank of Bahrain)

### FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019

Statement of financial position (Expressed in thousands of Bahraini Dinars)		Statement of comprehensive income (continued) (Expressed in thousands of Bahraini Dinars)	
	At 31 December 2019	2018	Year ended 31 December 2019
<b>ASSETS</b>			<b>2018</b>
Cash and balances with banks and the Central Bank	2,998	3,154	2,411
Placements with banks	34,000	10,391	520
Due from other offices of the Bank	18,714	36,137	
Financial assets at amortised cost	30,584	30,118	(7)
Loans and advances to banks	471	939	(7)
Loans and advances to customers	33,549	35,617	(18)
Other assets	844	1,320	2,404
Furniture and equipment	35	45	502
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>121,195</b>	<b>117,721</b>	
<b>LIABILITIES AND HEAD OFFICE FUNDS</b>			
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
Due to other offices of the Bank	12,063	3,478	
Due to customers	47,468	55,319	
Other liabilities	18,611	18,275	
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>78,142</b>	<b>77,072</b>	
<b>HEAD OFFICE FUNDS</b>			
Capital	2,700	2,700	
Other reserve	1,424	1,431	
Unremitted profit	38,929	36,518	
<b>Total Head Office funds</b>	<b>43,053</b>	<b>40,649</b>	
<b>Total liabilities and Head Office funds</b>	<b>121,195</b>	<b>117,721</b>	
<b>Statement of comprehensive income</b> (Expressed in thousands of Bahraini Dinars)			
			<b>Year ended 31 December</b>
Interest income	4,507	3,860	<b>2019</b>
Interest expense	(542)	(238)	<b>2018</b>
<b>Net interest income</b>	<b>3,965</b>	<b>3,622</b>	
Fees and commissions - net	938	1,332	
Loss on derivatives and foreign exchange transactions	(3)	(18)	
<b>Total operating income</b>	<b>4,900</b>	<b>4,936</b>	
<b>Operating expenses</b>			
Staff costs	(545)	(522)	
Depreciation	(17)	(35)	
Premises and equipment costs	(53)	(99)	
Other operating expenses	(1,796)	(1,290)	
Reversal of impairment on loans and advances and placements with banks	9	17	
Impairment on other financial assets at amortised cost	(36)	-	
Impairment on loans and advances to customers	(43)	(686)	
Impairment on guarantees	(8)	(1,801)	
<b>Total operating expenses</b>	<b>(2,489)</b>	<b>(4,416)</b>	
<b>Profit for the year</b>	<b>2,411</b>	<b>520</b>	
<b>Statement of comprehensive income (continued)</b> (Expressed in thousands of Bahraini Dinars)			
<b>Profit for the year</b>			
Other comprehensive loss for the year:			
Items that may be reclassified to profit or loss			
Change in other reserve			(7)
Other comprehensive loss for the year			(7)
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>			<b>2,404</b>
<b>Statement of cash flows</b> (Expressed in thousands of Bahraini Dinars)			
			<b>Year ended 31 December</b>
			<b>2019</b>
			<b>2018</b>
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>			
Profit for the year	2,411	520	
<b>Adjustments for:</b>			
Provision for retirement benefits - net	16	5	
Reversal of impairment on loans and advances and placements to banks	(9)	(17)	
Impairment on Financial assets at amortised cost	36	-	
Impairment on loans and advances to customers	43	686	
Impairment on guarantees	8	1,801	
Depreciation	17	35	
<b>Changes in operating assets and liabilities:</b>			
Balances with the Central Bank	(61)	(35)	
Loans and advances to banks	477	1,611	
Loans and advances to customers	2,025	(335)	
Due from other offices of the Bank	-	3,991	
Other assets	476	(480)	
Deposits from banks	-	(1)	
Due to customers	(7,851)	2,756	
Due to other offices of the Bank	8,585	(1,348)	
Other liabilities	296	254	
<b>Net cash generated from operating activities</b>	<b>6,469</b>	<b>9,443</b>	
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>			
Purchase of furniture and equipment	(7)	(10)	
Purchase of financial assets at amortised cost	(99,777)	(141,009)	
Redemption of financial assets at amortised cost	99,275	145,776	
<b>Net cash (used in) / generated from investing activities</b>	<b>(509)</b>	<b>4,757</b>	
<b>Net increase in cash and cash equivalents</b>	<b>5,960</b>	<b>14,200</b>	
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	48,557	34,357	
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year</b>	<b>54,517</b>	<b>48,557</b>	
<b>Non-cash transactions</b>			
There were no non-cash transactions during the year ended 2019. During the year 2018, transfer from available-for-sale financial assets to financial assets at amortised cost amounting to 34,932 represented non-cash transactions.			
<b>Mr. Jamal Tartir</b> General Manager		<b>Mr. Abid Hussain</b> Chief Financial Officer - MEA	

The above have been extracted from the audited financial statements. The auditors, PricewaterhouseCoopers ME Limited, Kingdom of Bahrain, have expressed an unqualified opinion on 26/03/2020.

# Iraqi-American artist Michael Rakowitz: The history maker

REBECCA ANNE PROCTOR

The Jameel Arts Center in Dubai recently hosted an exhibition of work by Iraqi-American artist Michael Rakowitz. It is the artist's first solo exhibition in the Middle East and Asia, although he previously took part in the Sharjah Biennial during 2007.

"Coming back to the Middle East makes me feel like I am engaging with the texture of the memories of my grandparents that I would hear about," Rakowitz told Arab News. "Being able to show in Dubai is meaningful to me. It's one of several cities where I have

been able to work with people who activate and mobilize some of these materials, stories and memories around Iraq not just as simple nostalgia but as something that is a proposition or a blueprint for a futurist kind of approach."

Rakowitz's thought-provoking work straddles the realms of contemporary art, politics and society. Art, for Rakowitz, serves as a means to foster public debate. He is best known for his conceptual art which challenges perceptions of social and historical topics.

He first came to prominence in the late Nineties thanks to with his ongoing series "par-



Michael Rakowitz's thought-provoking work straddles the realms of contemporary art, politics and society.

asITE" inflatable shelters for homeless people that attach to the exterior vents of a building's HVAC (heating, ventilation and air-conditioning) system, which heats and inflates the structure.

Rakowitz is the 2020 winner of the Nasher Prize for Sculpture. In a statement, Jeremy Strick, director of the Nasher Sculpture Center, said Rakowitz "wrestles in unique and revelatory ways with many of the complex questions of history, heritage and identity that are so much at the forefront of contemporary culture and politics."

Here, Rakowitz talks us through some of his most significant work.

## 'The Breakup'

This was commissioned for The Jerusalem Show in 2010 and considers the intricacies of The Beatles' 1969 breakup as an example of a collaborative cultural phenomenon that, over time, stops functioning and reaches a point where negotiation fails as a tactic and communication is halted. I hosted a 10-part radio program — broadcast across Palestine — dissecting the tapes of The Beatles' contentious final sessions that pinpointed the cause of their 1969 breakup; an allegory for breakdowns of political negotiations in Israel, Palestine and across a Middle East that once dreamed of Pan-Arabism.

The tapes revealed The Beatles planned concerts in the Middle East in 1969. Unable to agree, they instead performed atop their studios. "The Breakup" culminated with a recreation of this final rooftop concert in Jerusalem. Sabreen, a Palestinian band, reunited for the event, and interpreted the songs using Arabic instruments."



## The Ballad of Special Ops Cody

In 2005, an Iraqi insurgent group posted a photo of a captured US soldier named John Adam. They threatened to behead him in 72 hours if prisoners being held in US jails in Iraq were not freed. The US military took the claim seriously but couldn't locate a John Adam within their ranks. John Adam, it turned out, was actually Special Ops Cody, a souvenir action figure. The dolls were available for sale exclusively on US bases in Kuwait and Iraq, and were often sent home to soldiers' children as a surrogate for a deployed parent.

In this work, which takes the form of a stop-motion video, Cody confronts Mesopotamian votive statues in vitrines at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, speaking unspeakable truths voiced by a veteran of the Iraq War. While Cody offers the statues liberation, and urges them to leave their open vitrines and return home, the statues remain — petrified and afraid — unable to return in the current context."



## The flesh is yours, the bones are ours'

In the 1870s, fires destroyed many of Istanbul's traditional wood-ten houses, inaugurating a new era of stone structures. The new buildings mixed the novel Western aesthetic of Art Nouveau with the characteristics of Turkish Ottoman architecture, and rose at a time when Istanbul's Armenian population was about to fall as a result of the Armenian Genocide. A member of this community, the artisan Garabet Cezayirliyan, was responsible for crafting the moldings and friezes installed on the façades of these edifices. Many remain visible today. As part of my project for the 14th Istanbul Biennial, I collaborated with Garabet Cezayirliyan's former apprentices, including Kemal Cimbiz, who owns and operates the atelier that continues to produce these decorative architectural elements. When giving Cimbiz over as an apprentice to his master, his parents told Cezayirliyan, "The flesh is yours, the bones are ours." A customary Turkish saying, the phrase is meant to convey that the teacher is granted influence over the learner.



## 'White man got no dreaming'

This work responds to indigenous life in Australia and creates new associations with the history of visionary architecture and its failures, and with the collapse of narratives of revolution. Produced with an Aboriginal neighborhood in Sydney called The Block, the project includes a contemporary version of Tatlin's Monument to the Third International (1919-20). The Block's tower recycles discarded materials from old Aboriginal-owned houses — to be demolished as part of a controversial, racially motivated gentrification project — while drawings tell the neighborhood's story. The tower also doubles as a broadcast tower for Koori Aboriginal Radio.



## 'What Dust Will Rise?'

In 2012, I collaborated with Afghan sculptor Abbas Allah Dad — who survived threats from the Taliban for his realistic work — and restorer Bert Praxenthaler on a workshop with local students in a monastery cave close to the niche where one of the Bamiyan Buddhas stood. "What dust will rise?" recreates selections from the State Library of Hesse-Kassel in Germany that were destroyed in a fire in the Fridericianum Museum during bombing by the British Royal Air Force in 1941. The museum is where my project was sited. With the help of stone carvers from Afghanistan and Italy, I remade these lost volumes out of travertine quarried in the hills of Bamiyan, where two monumental sixth-century sandstone Buddhas were dynamited by the Taliban. The undertaking conjures up tombstones and recalls the tradition of stone books serving as surrogate reading material for the illiterate.



## 'The invisible enemy should not exist'

This ongoing project began in 2006 and was initially just responding to the looting of the National Museum of Iraq, reappearing these artifacts that were looted using materials that are vulnerable and urgent — like the packing of Middle Eastern food stuffs and the Arabic and English newspapers that one finds in cities where there are Arabic populations in the US — so they become these fragments of cultural visibility that are being enlisted to make these things that are now invisible. The project is unfortunately continuing because the looting and destruction keeps happening. It is a project that I would love to see become obsolete.



# WORLD



## 'Coronavirus could become seasonal'

- Virus does better in colder weather than it does in hot and humid conditions
- Viruses degrade more quickly on hotter surfaces, possibly because a protective layer of fat that envelops them dries out quicker
- Reduced infection rate does not mean the virus gets eliminated



Anthony Fauci, who leads research into infectious diseases at the National Institutes of Health, told a briefing the virus was beginning to take root in the southern hemisphere, where winter is on its way

AFP | Washington

There is a strong chance the new coronavirus could return in seasonal cycles, a senior US scientist said,

underscoring the urgent need to find a vaccine and effective treatments.

Anthony Fauci, who leads research into infectious diseases at the National Institutes of

Health, told a briefing the virus was beginning to take root in the southern hemisphere, where winter is on its way.

"What we're starting to see now... in southern Africa and

in the southern hemisphere countries, is that we're having cases that are appearing as they go into their winter season," he said. "And if, in fact, they have a substantial outbreak, it will be inevitable that we need to be prepared that we'll get a cycle around the second time."

"It totally emphasizes the need to do what we're doing in developing a vaccine, testing it quickly and trying to get it ready so that we'll have a vaccine available for that next cycle."

There are currently two vaccines that have entered human trials -- one in the US and one in China -- and they could be a year to a year-and-a-half away from deployment. Treatments are also being investigated -- some new drugs and others that have been repurposed, including the antimalarials chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine.

"I know we'll be successful in

putting this down now, but we really need to be prepared for another cycle," Fauci concluded.

Fauci's comments suggesting the virus does better in colder weather than it does in hot and humid conditions follows a recent Chinese research paper -- still preliminary and awaiting peer-review -- that reached the same conclusion.

The reasons are thought to include that respiratory droplets remain airborne for longer in colder weather, and that cold weather weakens immunity.

Another potential reason is that viruses degrade more quickly on hotter surfaces, possibly because a protective layer of fat that envelops them dries out quicker.

But reduced infection rate does not mean the virus gets eliminated -- Australia has had almost 2,500 confirmed cases and 8 deaths, for example.

Coronavirus Cases:

503,274

Deaths

22,342

Recovered:

121,227

Active cases

359,705

Closed cases

143,569

Country	Total cases	Total Deaths
China	81,285	3,287
Italy	74,386	7,503
USA	68,905	1,037
Spain	56,188	4,089
Germany	40,585	229
Iran	29,406	2,234
France	25,233	1,331
Switzerland	11,575	172
SKorea	9,241	131
UK	9,849	477
Canada	3,409	36
Turkey	2,433	59
Russia	840	3
India	719	16
B'desh	44	5
Pakistan	1,130	9
Thailand	1,045	4
Indonesia	893	78
Philippines	707	45

### Pope reportedly tests negative after Vatican scare

Pope Francis was reported yesterday to have tested negative for the novel coronavirus after a person in his residence was said to have contacted COVID-19.

Several Italian newspapers with reputable sources in the Vatican said the Italian clergyman who got sick had lived for years in the pope's Saint Martha's residence.

Il Messaggero said the person is "one of the pope's closest collaborators, an official of the Secretariate of the State, who was found to have a slight temperature after going in for a routine check".

The daily La Stampa said the unnamed person has been hospitalised in Rome and that his office has been disinfected.

Il Messaggero later reported that the pope himself was tested for the virus and came out clean.

The 83-year-old pontiff has remained largely secluded at his residence since coming down with a cold late last month.

### World leaders to hold crisis talks as virus toll tops 21,000

Madrid

World leaders are to hold online crisis talks on the coronavirus pandemic that has forced three billion people into lockdown and claimed more than 21,000 lives.

With the disease tearing around the globe at a terrifying pace, warnings are multiplying over its economic consequences, with experts saying it could cause more damage than the Great Depression.

"COVID-19 is threatening the whole of humanity -- and the whole of humanity must fight back," UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said, launching an appeal for \$2 billion to help the world's poor.



US President Donald Trump said he would have a recommendation 'before Easter' on whether parts of the US can reopen

"Global action and solidarity are crucial," he said. "Individual country responses are not going to be enough."

### \$2 trillion rescue package passes US Senate, heads to House

Washington

The US Senate unanimously passed the nation's largest-ever rescue package late Wednesday, a \$2 trillion lifeline to suffering Americans, critically depleted hospitals and an economy ravaged by a rapidly spreading coronavirus crisis.

The measure cleared the Senate 96-0 after days of tumultuous, sometimes bitter negotiations and debate, as the US death toll for the pandemic soared past 1,000, with 68,000 confirmed infections.

The measure now heads to the House of Representatives, where a Democratic leader said he expected it to pass by voice vote Friday before it goes to President Donald Trump for his signature.

### India outlines \$23bn stimulus to help poor hit by lockdown

Reuters | New Delhi

India announced yesterday a 1.7-trillion-rupee (\$22.6-billion) economic stimulus plan providing direct cash transfers and food security measures to give relief to millions of poor people hit by a nationwide lockdown over a coronavirus pandemic.

People queued in some cities for essential items, with trucks stranded at state borders and public transport suspended two days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi ordered the 21-day lockdown to protect a population of 1.3 billion.

"We do not want anyone to remain hungry, so we will be giving them enough to take care of food grain requirements and protein requirements, in terms of pulses," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told a news briefing.

Police have enforced the lockdown strictly, even though Modi said essential services would be maintained.

Yesterday's package would tackle the welfare concerns of the poor and suffering workers, and those who need immediate help, Sitharaman added.

The government aims to distribute 5 kilograms of staple foodgrains wheat or rice for



India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das arrive to attend the RBI's central board meeting in New Delhi

each person free of cost, with a kilogram of pulses for every low-income family, helping to feed about 800 million poor people over the next three months.

It also aims to hand out free cooking gas cylinders to 83 million poor families, in addition to direct cash transfers to 200 million women and the elderly, over a similar period.

The government outlined plans for medical insurance cover of 5 million rupees (\$66,000) for every frontline health worker, from doctors, nurses and paramedics to those involved in sanitary services.

Among other financial relief, the government plans to release funds for the Employees' Provident Fund in some small firms in a measure aimed at covering 48 million workers.

### China will continue to support global virus fight, Xi tells WHO

Reuters | Beijing

China's control of the coronavirus outbreak continues to improve and the country will keep offering anti-epidemic support globally to the best of its ability, state media cited President Xi Jinping as saying in a letter to the World Health Organization (WHO) yesterday.

China will adjust its anti-virus focus in accordance with changes in the situation at home and abroad, and continue to support the WHO in the fight against the virus, Xi told WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom, the official Xinhua news agency reported.



### Beware second waves if lockdowns eased early: study

Reuters | London

Extending school and work closures at the coronavirus' ground zero in China may delay a second wave of infections, researchers said yesterday, urging the rest of the world to take note.

A study in The Lancet Public Health journal suggested continuing Wuhan's shutdowns until April would push a potential second wave of COVID-19 - the disease



Residents bid farewell from their homes to a medical team from Guizhou province who is leaving Wuhan

caused by the new virus - until later in the year. That would give health services more time to recover and expand, potentially saving

lives.

"The city now needs to be really careful to avoid prematurely lifting physical distancing measures, because that could lead to an earlier secondary peak in cases," said Kie-sha Prem, a specialist at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), who co-led the research.

"If they relax the restrictions gradually, this is likely to both delay and flatten the peak."

### Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases	Serious, Critical	Tot cases/1m pop
Bahrain	457	+38	4		204	249	1	269
Saudi Arabia	1,012	+112	3	+1	33	976	6	29
UAE	333		2		52	279	2	34
Kuwait	208	+13			49	159	7	49
Oman	109	+10			23	86		19
Jordan	154				1	153		21
Iraq	382	+36	36	+7	105	241		9
Egypt	456		21		95	340		4

## Bolsonaro triggers backlash for downplaying coronavirus

AFP | Brasília

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro drew blistering criticism from the medical community and opponents Wednesday for downplaying the coronavirus pandemic, but renewed his attacks on containment measures to slow its spread.

The far-right leader has repeatedly lashed out at restrictive measures to fight the virus, which he has called a "little flu" that caused an "overblown" reaction.

He triggered new outrage among critics with a national address Tuesday night condemning "scorched-earth" containment measures by local authorities, such as closing businesses and confining people in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's biggest cities.

He said such measures risked wrecking the Brazilian economy, Latin America's largest.

His stance, which flies in the face of World Health Organization recommendations, drew a strongly worded letter of condemnation from a group of eight medical professional associations.

They called Bolsonaro an "enemy of the people's health" whose response to the crisis was "incoherent and criminal."

"He denies the body of scientific evidence guiding the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide, disdaining the serious and dedicated work by a national and global network of researchers and health technology professionals," it said.

Politicians of various stripes also attacked Bolsonaro, including center-right Senate president Davi Alcolumbre,



Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro

who said Brazil "needs a serious, responsible leader who cares about the people's lives and health."

Undeterred, Bolsonaro doubled down.

"Companies aren't producing anything. They can't pay their employees... We are facing chaos," he told journalists outside the presidential residence in Brasilia.

"We could end up with problems like people looting supermarkets... What do we need to do? Get people back to work. Protect the elderly, protect people with health problems, but that's it."

Bolsonaro, a former army captain who has been criticized for praising Brazil's brutal military dictatorship (1964-1985), also warned the fallout of the coronavirus crisis could put democracy at risk.

"What if this derails the 'democratic norm' you all defend so staunchly?" he asked, adding: "It wouldn't come from me, don't worry."

He compared his approach to the pandemic to that of US President Donald Trump, whom he admires.

"We're following a similar line," he said.

## Ex-FBI agent missing for 13 years died in Iran custody, family says



Former FBI agent Bob Levinson is seen in 2007, before his disappearance in Iran, in a family photo

AFP | Washington

A former FBI agent who mysteriously vanished in 2007 died in Iranian custody, his family concluded Wednesday, saying US intelligence had made them give up 13 years of hope.

President Donald Trump did not confirm Bob Levinson's death, saying that Iran had not communicated any news on the former agent, who would have turned 72 this month.

But Levinson's family said that it had learned that he was dead, although it gave no information on how or when.

"We recently received information from US officials that has led both them and us to conclude that our wonderful husband and father died while in Iranian custody," the family said in a statement.



A photograph of the captive Bob Levinson released in January 2013 by his wife, who said the image was nearly two years old

"We don't even know when, or even if, his body would be returned to us. This is the very definition of cruelty."

The family said Levinson died before the coronavirus pandemic, which has hit Iran hard and led authorities to release thousands of prisoners temporarily.

The father of seven vanished in March 2007 in Kish, an island that has more lenient visa rules than the rest of Iran, and was said to have been investigating cigarette counterfeiting.

But The Washington Post reported in 2013 that Levinson, who had retired from the FBI, was working for the CIA and had gone on a rogue mission aimed at gathering intelligence on Iran.

It said at the time that the CIA paid \$2.5 million to Levin-



Daniel Levinson, son of Bob Levinson

son's wife Christine, accepting responsibility for his disappearance.

### Years of mystery

Iranian officials have repeatedly said they had no information about Levinson.

In 2010, a videotape of a haggard, bearded Levinson emerged in which he wore an orange jumpsuit of the sort worn by prisoners being held indefinitely at the US naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The footage raised speculation that he may have been held by extremists in Pakistan, but US officials later discounted the possibility.

"I don't accept that he's dead," Trump told reporters when asked about the family's statement.

"They haven't told us that he's dead, but a lot of people are thinking that that is the case," he said.

## Russia to ground all international flights from midnight



Travellers wait for flights to get back home at Moscow's Vnukovo airport

Moscow

Russia will halt all international flights from midnight today under a government decree listing new measures against the coronavirus outbreak.

The decree published on Thursday orders aviation authorities to halt all regular and charter flights, with the exception of special flights evacuating Russian citizens from abroad.

## Rockets hit Iraq's Green Zone, US-led coalition leaves base

Qayyarah Base | Iraq

Two rockets slammed into the Iraqi capital's high-security Green Zone early yesterday, hours before US-led forces were set to pull out of a second base in the country.

Some 7,500 troops are in Iraq as part of the US-led coalition helping local troops fight jihadist remnants.

The alliance is temporarily bringing some trainers home as a precautionary measure against the coronavirus pandemic and is also leaving other Iraqi bases altogether.

## Fake cures, risky rumours: virus misinformation hits home

AFP | Hong Kong

From being duped into taking poisonous "cures", to watching businesses crumble and avoiding life-saving medication, people are suffering devastating real-world impacts of a deluge of online virus misinformation.

As the new coronavirus that has killed more than 20,000 people causes markets to crash and sets scientists scrambling for a solution, rumours and false claims are fuelling confusion and deepening the economic misery.

The effects can be tragic -- in Iran, one of the hardest-hit countries, more than 210 people died from drinking toxic alcohol after claims circulated online that it could treat or ward off COVID-19, the official Irna news agency reported.

Dangerous fake cures debunked by AFP include consuming volcanic ash and fighting infection with UV lamps or chlorine disinfectants, which health authorities say can harm the body if used incorrectly.

Another remedy that "kills the coronavirus", according to misleading social media posts, is drinking silver particles in liquid, known as colloidal silver.

"I am making colloidal silver now. I have asthma and does it really work... worried/stressed over virus. Does this help if I take a teaspoon a day. New to this..." said a post by a user named Michelle in a pub-



*And a man died in the US from taking a form of chloroquine -- hailed by President Donald Trump as a potential "gift from God" remedy -- after he took a form of the drug his wife had used to treat her pet fish.*

lic Facebook group, alongside a photo of a jar of water with a metal rod in it.

The side effects of taking colloidal silver can include a bluish-grey skin discoloration and poor absorption of some medicines including antibiotics, according to the US National Institutes of Health.

But this has not put some people off. An Australian man who said he regularly buys the concoction said it had "sold out in my town ... but before the virus, I could always get some".

Cocaine and bleach-like solutions are also among the risky fake cures touted online. "No, cocaine does NOT protect against #COVID-19," the French government tweeted in response.

### Businesses hit hard

As panic buying leaves supermarket shelves empty around the world, some Indian traders and farmers have had the opposite problem -- people shunning their products due to false information.

Retailers in Delhi told AFP they had stocked up on Chinese-made goods such as toy guns, wigs and other colourful accessories ahead of Holi festival earlier this month.

But "misinformation about Chinese products -- that they might transmit coronavirus -- caused a downfall in the sales of Holi goods. We witnessed a reduction in sales of around 40



Researchers are working to develop a vaccine for the new coronavirus but theoretical papers on unproven cures have sparked confusion among some of the public

percent compared to previous year", said Vipin Nijhawan from the Toy Association of India.

The World Health Organization has said the virus does not last long on inanimate surfaces, so it is unlikely imported goods would remain infectious even if contaminated.

### Heart meds

The rapid spread of information online means that when scientists discuss as-yet unproven theories, anxious patients can take unnecessary risks.

**Cocaine and bleach-like solutions are also among the risky fake cures touted online.**

Confusion has been sparked by letters and theoretical papers published in scientific journals about whether some types of heart medication can raise the chance of developing a serious form of COVID-19.

This has prompted health authorities across Europe and America to advise heart patients -- already more at-risk for the disease -- to continue taking their drugs.

Carolyn Thomas, who runs a blog for women living with heart disease, said dozens of her readers had contacted her for advice after seeing tweets warning about ACE inhibitors and angiotensin receptor blockers.

"Until I get in to see my own cardiologist, I'm still taking my own drugs, even as I wonder if

they are increasing my own vulnerability to catching the virus," Thomas, who is self-isolating at home in Canada, told AFP.

"I'm afraid to take them, yet I'm afraid to stop," she said.

Professor Garry Jennings, chief medical advisor for Australia's Heart Foundation, said the theoretical papers were "based on a number of factors which are all disputed" and warned that if patients stopped taking their medication there could be an upshot in heart attacks and deaths.

"In the absence of any other evidence that it's actually happening, and with the knowledge that these drugs are beneficial... it's not a good idea to stop," he said.

And a man died in the US from taking a form of chloroquine -- hailed by President Donald Trump as a potential "gift from God" remedy -- after he took a form of the drug his wife had used to treat her pet fish.

The woman told NBC News: "I saw it sitting on the back shelf and thought, 'Hey, isn't that the stuff they're talking about on TV?'"

Banner Health, a non-profit health care provider based in Phoenix, said on its website that "a man has died and his wife is under critical care after the couple, both in their 60s, ingested chloroquine phosphate, an additive commonly used at aquariums to clean fish tanks."



# SPORTS

## Stokes preparing for IPL despite likely virus shutdown

AFP | London

England all-rounder Ben Stokes says he is preparing to play in the Indian Premier League, even though he knows the tournament is unlikely to go ahead.

Stokes has signed to play for Rajasthan Royals and is one of 13 English players set to feature in the IPL.

But the Twenty20 tournament has already been delayed until April 15 in response to the pandemic and India entered a three-week lockdown in a bid to contain the spread on Wednesday.

"At the moment my next competitive cricket is going to be in the IPL," Stokes told the BBC on Wednesday.

"That hasn't changed yet so I have to think I will be playing on April 20."

Last week, the England and Wales Cricket Board announced that the English county season would not start until at least the end of May, while England's tour of Sri Lanka was also postponed due to the virus.

With IPL chiefs yet to call off or further delay their event,



England's Ben Stokes looks dejected after he is caught out by South Africa's Beuran Hendricks (file photo)

Stokes has to continue to keep himself in shape to play in the unlikely event he is asked to travel to India.

"I have to get my head round that I am playing even though in the back of my mind I know I am probably not," he added.

"I have to build up and get myself physically in a position that if it does happen I am good to go.

"I cannot take three weeks off and expect the body to be ready for April 20 because it doesn't work like that. It might happen and if it does I don't want to be behind.

## Staying home is like 'nirvana' for Australian players - coach

Reuters | Melbourne

Staying home during the national lockdown to contain the coronavirus is like "nirvana" for Australian cricketers as they generally have to live out of a suitcase, head coach Justin Langer has said.

Australian cricket is in its off-season and has been largely insulated from the impact of the coronavirus outbreak, which has suspended all of the country's major sporting competitions that run during the autumn and winter.

Some Australian players are signed with teams in the Indian Premier League but the lucrative T20 tournament has been postponed at least until mid-April and may end up be-

ing scrapped like many other tournaments that have succumbed to the pandemic.

"The truth is for me personally and for all the players, this is like nirvana in the fact we're home with our families, we sleep in our own beds, we eat home cooked dinners and we can still work in one degree or another from home," Langer told reporters yesterday.

Government containment measures to shut down virtually all non-essential businesses have already hit the economy, with thousands of workers laid off or stood down without pay.

Australia has recorded more than 2,550 infections, with 12 dead. Globally, the flu-like virus has killed more than 21,200.

## IOC working toward July-August Olympics in 2021: Yomiuri

Reuters | Tokyo

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is working with sports bodies to arrange a July-August window for the postponed Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and hopes to confirm the schedule within a month, Japan's Yomiuri newspaper reported yesterday.

John Coates, the IOC's Co-ordination Commission chief for Tokyo, told the Yomiuri the Games would have to be held between the tennis Grand Slams of Wimbledon, slated to end in mid-July, and the U.S. Open, which starts in late August.

"We want to more or less finalize the dates in four weeks' time," the paper quoted Coates as saying.

Coates, who is also president of the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC), said the summer scheduling would be dependent on avoiding clashes with the world championships for swimming (July 16-Aug. 1) and athletics (Aug. 6-15).

World Athletics boss Sebastian Coe has said the world athletics championships in Eugene, Oregon could be moved back to 2022 if necessary.

Coates told the newspaper the hope was to follow the same arrangements next year that had been planned for 2020, including holding the marathon in the northern city of Sapporo instead of Tokyo to escape the heat.



The Olympic rings are pictured in front of the IOC headquarters in Lausanne

**“We want to more or less finalize the dates in four weeks’ time”**

JOHN COATES

The AOC confirmed the Yomiuri report's veracity and also told Reuters in a statement that Coates had "proffered a view

but confirms a range of options are on the table for the IOC".

The IOC and Japanese government succumbed to intense pressure from athletes and sporting bodies around the world on Tuesday, agreeing to push back the Games by as much as a year because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Yesterday, the Tokyo 2020 organizing committee launched a taskforce to resolve issues linked to the postponement, such as reviewing dates for the

Games and securing venues.

No specifics have been discussed yet on the timing of the delayed Games, but a date needs to be decided as soon as possible, Hidemasa Nakamura, a senior official at Tokyo 2020, told reporters after the taskforce's first meeting.

IOC President Thomas Bach said on Wednesday "all options" were on the table for rescheduling, including holding the Games before the Japanese summer.

## ICC postpones World Cup qualifiers due to coronavirus

Reuters | Mumbai

The International Cricket Council (ICC) said yesterday that all qualifying events for the 2021 Twenty20 World Cup and 50-overs version in 2023 that were scheduled to be held before June 30 have been postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The flu-like virus has infected more than 470,800 people around the world and killed over 21,200, according to a Reuters tally, since appearing in China at the end of last year.

The pandemic has also



ICC logo at its headquarters in Dubai

brought global sport to a standstill and the ICC said in a statement the World Cup qualifiers would also be impacted.

"In light of the significant global health concerns at the current time and the restrictions on movement imposed by governments across the world,

the ICC has taken the decision to postpone all events up until the end of June subject to further review," Chris Tetley, ICC head of events, said.

"Work will continue on contingency plans and options for both men's qualification pathways. We will provide updates

in due course on these plans and decisions on the staging of the remaining events this year."

India host next year's T20 World Cup and the 50-overs event in 2023. As many as eight events will now be postponed due to the ICC decision.

This year's women's T20 World Cup was held in February-March in Australia, which will also host the men's version starting in October. The World Cup trophy tour for the men's event, which was scheduled to start next month, was also postponed.

## Italian football chief ready to finish season in August

AFP | Milan

Italian football federation (FIGC) president Gabriele Gravina said Wednesday he was determined that the Serie A season would be concluded even going into August.

All sport in Italy has been suspended until April 3 as a result of the coronavirus pandemic which has forced the postponement of Euro 2020 and the Tokyo Olympics.

"We will do everything to complete the championships, if necessary we will ask for the support of UEFA and FIFA to go beyond June 30 and play also in July or August," Gravina told Radio Marte.

"It's premature to think of a date, but we must think positively, also for the health of



Italian Football Federation (FIGC) president Gabriele Gravina looks on during a press meet

Italians and hope that this situation will end as soon as possible."

The FIGC chief had last week expressed his hope that the championship could resume on the weekend of May 2.

A meeting was scheduled yesterday between the representatives of the Italian league, FIGC, the players' union, coaches and the government to evaluate the future.

"There are many issues," said Gravina. As for the suspended championship, Gravina rejected either cancelling or assigning the title as the table stands where champions Juventus were leading by a point when the season was halted.

"This would lead to an unpleasant scenario. As long as possible, I will continue to reject these options."

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# Self-isolation makes training easier: Ricciardo

Reuters | London

Australian Daniel Ricciardo reckons self-isolation makes for a perfect training camp -- although it helps to be on the family farm in western Australia with a swimming pool and some machinery to play with.

Speaking in a live Instagram Q+A organized by his Renault Formula One team, the Australian talked about what he was doing to pass the time waiting for a coronavirus ravaged season to start.

The opening race in Melbourne on March 15 was cancelled, along with the Monaco Grand Prix, and Formula One has said it hopes to start a reduced season some time in the European summer.

Six races have been postponed and await rescheduling.

"I know it's probably going to be a while till we race again, but I'm not allowing myself to go back into holiday mode," said Ricciardo.

"Training is definitely the thing that's keeping me with that competitive mindset. You get some anger out when you train, so that's my medicine for now."

"I feel like now it's kind of perfect to get in shape," added the 30-year-old. "We're forced



Daniel Ricciardo holds his helmet after a press meet

Training is definitely the thing that's keeping me with that competitive mindset. You get some anger out when you train, so that's my medicine for now. I feel like now it's kind of perfect to get in shape," added the 30-year-old

DANIEL RICCIARDO

to stay in, there's no jet lag, no airports, we can really create a

real training camp, which we don't always have."

Ricciardo said he expected to see other drivers looking pretty fit when they finally got back together again, even if they might have so much pent up aggression that they all collided at the first corner.

The Australian said he might just qualify last to avoid the carnage and cash in.

Ricciardo obligingly jumped into his swimming pool after agreeing to do so if enough people urged him to and revealed his other activities involved driving buggies and watching the sheep being sheared.

He also posted a picture on Instagram of himself singing along while driving a tractor.

# Wimbledon to hold 'emergency meeting' with postponement or cancellation on cards

AFP | London

Wimbledon could be postponed or even cancelled after All England Club chiefs called an "emergency meeting" for next week to discuss whether to go ahead with this year's tournament amid the coronavirus outbreak.

Wimbledon is set to start in London on June 29, but the continuing spread of the virus has caused havoc with the sporting schedule and the grass-court Grand Slam could be the next major event to be delayed.

"The AELTC can confirm that it is continuing a detailed evaluation of all scenarios for The Championships 2020, including postponement and cancellation, as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak," an All England Club statement said on Wednesday.

"An emergency meeting of the AELTC Main Board is scheduled for next week, and in preparation we are communicating closely with the LTA, and with the ATP, WTA, ITF and the other Grand Slams."

The French Open was the first of this year's three remaining Grand Slams to be postponed due to the virus.

Originally scheduled to run from May 24 to June 7, the clay-court tournament was moved to September 20 by the French Tennis Federation in a move that angered some players.

The new date for Roland Garros is just one week after the US Open finishes and clashes with the Laver Cup, the popular exhibition team competition set up by Roger Federer and featuring leading players from Europe and the rest of the world.

Wimbledon, whose singles titles were won by Novak Djokovic and Simona Halep last year, is the crown jewel of the



Serbia's Novak Djokovic (R) holds the winner's trophy and passes runner up Switzerland's Roger Federer (L) during the presentation at the end of 2019 Wimbledon Championships.

sport's four Grand Slams.

But moving it deeper into the tennis calendar might be tricky after the outcry over the unilateral French Open switch.

Euro 2020 and the Tokyo Olympics have both been put back by a year to allow the health crisis to be resolved.

## 'Significant risk'

Pressure is growing on the All England Club to make a decision and organisers have ruled out playing the tournament behind closed doors.

"The build for The Championships is due to begin at the end of April," the statement said.

"At this time, based on the advice we have received from the public health authorities, the very short window available to us to stage The Championships due to the nature of our surface suggests that postponement is not without significant risk and difficulty. Playing behind closed doors has been formally ruled out."

Given it takes two months to get the Wimbledon site

ready for the event, a decision needs to be made soon and All England Club chief executive Richard Lewis expects the call will be made at the emergency summit.

"The unprecedented challenge presented by the Covid-19 crisis continues to affect our way of life in ways that we could not have imagined, and our thoughts are with all those affected in the UK and around the world," Lewis said.

"The single most important consideration is one of public health, and we are determined to act responsibly through the decisions we make."

"We are working hard to bring certainty to our plans for 2020 and have convened an emergency meeting of the AELTC main board for next week, at which a decision will be made."

The Indian Wells Masters 1000 was the first ATP Tour event to be hit by the impact of the pandemic.

The men's and women's tours are currently suspended until June 7, which includes the entire clay-court campaign.

## Leeds players, coaches agree wage deferral so club staff can be paid

Reuters | London

Leeds United's players, coaching staff and senior management have voluntarily deferred their wages to ensure the club's 272 members of full-time and casual staff are paid in the coming months, the English second-tier club said.

The coronavirus pandemic has brought sport to a virtual standstill worldwide and English soccer is suspended until at least April 30, with the hiatus hitting the revenue of clubs across the country.

Leeds said the lack of matches among other things will cost the club "several million pounds" each month, which led to coach Marcelo Bielsa and his squad deciding collectively to defer wages to keep the club running in "uncertain times".

"My players have demonstrated an incredible sense of unity and togetherness and I'm proud of their actions," Leeds' director of football Victor Orta said.

## French sports minister evokes Tour de France spectator ban



Cyclists ride down the Champs Elysees avenue with the Arc de Triomphe in background

AFP | Paris

French sports minister Roxana Maracineanu says this year's Tour de France could be staged without spectators in a bid to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

The French government is in talks with Tour organisers about the future of the June 27-July 19 edition of world cycling's top event which draws more than 10 millions fans annually to the roads of France.

All options are being considered including postponement or cancellation of the event which has been raced every year in peacetime since 1903, the minister said.

"Everything is imaginable. We have (imposed spectator bans) for other competitions

before, even though it won't have the same impact because the business model of the Tour doesn't depend on ticket sales like football or rugby," she told France Bleu radio station.

The postponement of the Tokyo Olympics and the Euro 2020 football championships has focused attention on the Tour which winds its way for thousands of miles through the towns and villages of France in a wide loop for three weeks ending on the Champs Elysees in Paris.

"I think that today everybody is aware and responsible about the period of isolation we are going through and everyone knows the reasons and the benefits that it can bring to all," she said.

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