



(Left) A picture taken by a nurse on May 8, 2020 at the Hotel Dieu de France Hospital shows colleagues being playful during a break in the coronavirus COVID-19 section of the hospital in the neighborhood of Ashrafieh of the Lebanese capital's eastern suburbs. (Right) A picture taken by a nurse on April 30, 2020 shows a colleague doing a playing card trick during a break. — AFP

In one Beirut hospital, COVID warriors through their own eyes

BEIRUT: In the harshly-lit corridors of the Hotel-Dieu de France Hospital in Beirut, a team of nurses has been snapping pictures with their mobile phones of life behind the scenes of the battle against the coronavirus. The images offer a glimpse of their epic struggle against the pandemic. Exhaustion, prayer, pride and a strong team spirit — the photos chronicle the emotional roller coaster

these nurses have been through in two months.

As they prepare to receive another accolade for their front line role with the May 12 marking of International Nurses Day, their smiles still show behind the masks and goggles. But many of them have gone weeks without seeing their families and, while infections have remained relatively limited in Lebanon, they fear a second wave will flood their wards.

"People don't understand the difficulties we face here," said Sylvia Beudjekian, the head nurse in her unit at Hotel Dieu, one of the main hospitals in the Lebanese capital. "Everybody's tired. We do much more than administer drugs to patients, we look after people who do not have their families by their side to battle sickness," she said.

Drinking coffee, playing guitar or celebrating

Easter — the pictures document some of the little down time they have enjoyed since COVID-19 grounded them at their workplace and permanently clad them in white and blue protective gear. "We've laughed and we've cried and we've learnt a lot," Beudjekian said. "We will continue to do everything we can to be there for everyone but people should be very careful and stay home." — AFP

Burj turned into charity box...

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The donation box has raised funds for more than 1.2 million meals so far, organizing body The Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives (MBRGI) said. The fundraising drive is part of a campaign to fund 10 million meals for low-income families during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan by MBRGI, patronized by Dubai's ruler and UAE Vice President Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum.

The number of coronavirus cases in the six Gulf Arab states surpassed 100,000 on Monday, with 557 deaths, according to Reuters calculations based on official figures. Coronavirus infections in the energy producing region had initially been linked to travel. But despite taking early measures to combat the virus, Gulf states have seen a spread among low-income migrant workers living in cramped quarters, prompting authorities to ramp up testing.

Saudi Arabia, the largest Gulf state with a population of about 30 million, has the highest count at 41,014 infections and 255 deaths. It recorded 1,966 new cases and nine new deaths on Monday. The daily number of new cases in the kingdom first crossed the 1,000 threshold on April 18. Health authorities said in April the virus could eventually

infect between 10,000 and 200,000 people in Saudi Arabia.

Elsewhere in the region, the tiny state of Qatar on May 5 overtook regional business hub the United Arab Emirates as having the second highest infection count among the six states. Qatar, where health authorities last Thursday said the outbreak had entered its peak, has recorded a steady increase in cases to 23,623 while the number of deaths has held steady at 14. The UAE total has so far reported 18,198 infections with 198 deaths.

Some Gulf Arab states eased anti-virus containment measures with the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan on April 24. The UAE and Saudi Arabia relaxed curfews that had been in place since mid-March. Saudi Arabia said on Thursday it had formed a police unit to monitor violations of its lockdown rules and banned gatherings of more than five people. Kuwait, where there has been a recent spike in the number of new cases, on Sunday imposed a full curfew for 20 days, exempting only essential services, instead of the 16-hour curfew that had previously been in place.

Dubai emirate, the UAE's tourism and business hub, allowed malls and dine-in restaurants and cafes to reopen with limitations on April 23. Some other emirates have followed suit. Saudi Arabia permitted commercial stores, including malls, to reopen on April 29 with restrictions until May 15. Qatar has maintained the closure of public venues with the exception of those providing essential services and goods. — Reuters

didn't have their passports. But the problem was that their numbers were huge and the printing machines were not able to print all documents in that short period. Also, some had debts to pay and the amounts were high, so it wasn't easy to manage. And residencies that expired in March were renewed automatically, so such people were not violators anymore," Khan said.

"These 80 people were living on the streets as they didn't have a place to go to, or they came from far-flung areas such as Wafra or Abdaly and couldn't go back with the curfew situation and the absence of transportation," he added.

Khan said the UP NRI Forum is distributing food packages to Indians in need. "We prepare the donated food packages to distribute to those in need, especially since there are many Indian families without any resources as they lost their jobs during this crisis and don't have money to pay the rent or buy food. The Kuwaiti government has taken good care of violators and provided them everything, and we thank the government for their support," concluded Khan.

Stranded Indians finally accepted...

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pay, such as to telecommunication companies, and many didn't get the chance to enter the processing center during the last five days, as this period was for all nationalities and attendees were in thousands.

Mohammed Khaleel Khan, President of UP NRI Forum Kuwait, was present at the center during the amnesty and during the transfer of this group of Indians to the shelter on Monday. He told Kuwait Times around 80 Indian expats were transferred to the shelter in Abdaly, where visa violators who previously registered for the amnesty are housed, and will leave for India soon.

"The Indian Embassy was present at the amnesty center to help issue travel documents to those who

Zinc-HCQ found effective in some...

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patients were reviewed in the analysis, with roughly half given zinc sulfate along with hydroxychloroquine and the antibiotic azithromycin. The other half only received hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin.

Those receiving the triple-drug combination had a 1.5 times greater likelihood of recovering enough to be discharged, and were 44 percent less likely to die, compared to the double-drug combination. It did not, however, change the average time patients spent in hospital (six days), the time they spent on the ventilator (five days), or the total amount of oxygen required.

Senior investigator and infectious disease specialist Joseph Rahimian told AFP it was the first

study to compare the two combinations. But he cautioned that a controlled experiment would be needed to prove the benefits beyond doubt. "The next logical step would be to do a prospective study to see if this holds up in people that you give zinc to, and then you watch and compare," he said.

Hydroxychloroquine has been proposed as a treatment against the SARS-CoV-2 virus because it has antiviral properties that have been proven in lab settings, but not in people. It interferes with the virus' ability to enter the cells - and also seems to block them from replicating once they are already inside. Zinc itself has antiviral properties and past research has suggested it may reduce the time people suffer from common colds.

Rahimian said that it may be that when used to treat coronavirus patients, it is the zinc that does the heavy lifting and is the primary substance attacking the pathogen. Hydroxychloroquine, on the other hand, acts as an agent that transports the zinc into cells, increasing its efficacy, he suggested. — AFP

Indian trains to roll amid surge...

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The number of cases is still rising in India, with more than 3,600 new infections recorded on Monday - just below Sunday's record of more than 4,000. Major cities including Delhi, Ahmedabad and Mumbai - home to the Dharavi slum area - have been worst hit by the new surge, and health specialists say infections may only peak in June or July. Maharashtra

state, home to Mumbai, reported more than 1,000 new cases for the sixth straight day, while the southern state of Tamil Nadu, with Chennai as its capital, recorded a record jump.

Experts say India has not been testing enough of its population and has to be ready for a rise in cases. "I am sure the government is making the decisions based on data. There is nothing in the public domain that gives us confidence," said Shahid Jameel, who heads the Wellcome Trust/DBT India Alliance. "But on the other hand if we don't start opening up, more people will die of hunger than COVID," Jameel told AFP. On Monday Modi held a video conference with state chief ministers to discuss further relaxations of the lockdown when it ends on May 17. — AFP

Kuwait reports 10 deaths, 991 new...

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their duties by informing anti-corruption authorities with any information regarding suspicious contracts or spending.

The Cabinet also asked all government departments to take legal action against all those who publish false information that involve tarnishing the reputation of officials without any evidence. Health Minister Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah told the Cabinet that the ministry has filed lawsuits against those who allegedly distorted the image of ministry officials and employees over the coronavirus contracts. Some

activists have alleged that some of the contracts were made at exaggerated costs.

The health minister also explained to the Cabinet the health situation in the country and the steep rise in coronavirus cases, attributing this to failure to abide by health instructions, especially social distancing. But the Cabinet stressed in its statement that the health situation is under control and expected that the number of cases will come down once the total lockdown is strictly applied.

In the meantime, MP Hamdan Al-Azemi demanded in a series of questions that the health minister provide to the Assembly a copy of a report made by a Chinese medical team that visited Kuwait last week. He also asked about the members of the team, their specializations, experience and if they are members of the government or the private sector. Azemi asked about the value of the contract with the team and the places they visited in Kuwait.