[War-ravaged Yemen moves to stem spread of virus](#)

Author:
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AL-MUKALLA: Authorities in the southeastern Yemeni province of Hadramout have scrambled to contain the spread of coronavirus in the port city of Al-Sheher by imposing further measures, government officials and residents said Saturday.
Yemen announced its coronavirus patient zero on Friday in Al-Sheher. Health officials told Arab News that he worked at the city's seaport and might have contracted the virus after coming into contact with foreign sailors.
The patient developed symptoms after staying for one week at the city's hospital. Local authorities locked the seaport and gave workers two weeks' leave. The seaport and neighboring areas are being disinfected.
A curfew from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. was imposed in all cities of the province as health workers recorded the names of those who had come into contact with the patient.
Hadramout Gov. Maj. Gen. Faraj Salmen Al-Bahsani urged residents to comply with the measures and stay indoors as much as they could.
"In this difficult time, our most important weapon is harmony, cooperation and helping each other. We will confront those difficulties and we will win," the governor said in a televised speech on Friday. "I urge those who met that person to see our health teams for their safety. This will help us contain the pandemic."
Health authorities believe that the man mixed directly with at least 19 people, including some health workers, and that at least 300 came into contact with his relatives and friends.
"We isolated doctors and health workers who treated the man inside Al-Tayser Hospital in Al-Sheher," a senior health official told Arab News on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to reporters. "We have also increased the number of health teams to trace the people who came into contact with the man." He added that military vehicles and soldiers were deployed outside the man's family home and the homes of his relatives after some of them refused to stay indoors.
A lockdown in Yemen was introduced last month but local authorities in Hadramout said they were forced into easing it to allay people's fears, after receiving information that the measures had caused psychological problems.
"The lockdown caused great panic in the city and some hospitals received patients suffering from psychological problems. So we eased the restrictions during the day," a health official said.
An awareness campaign was launched in the city to educate people about how to prevent the spread of the disease as teams searched for suspected cases. Cars with loudspeakers roamed around the city telling people about the importance of social distancing, washing hands and other guidelines.

HIGHLIGHTS

• **Yemen announced its coronavirus patient zero on Friday in Al-Sheher.**

• **The patient worked at the city's seaport and might have contracted the virus after coming into contact with foreign sailors.**

Saeed Al-Moulem, from the Ministry of Health's office in Al-Sheher, said life had returned to normal on Saturday. People had reopened their businesses as vehicles were seen leaving and crossing into the city.
"Life is normal today," Al-Moulem told Arab News. "Markets are bustling with people. Yes, the news of the coronavirus case caused a brief shock as people did not expect to find the first case in their city."
But some residents blasted local authorities for easing the lockdown, expressing concerns that the disease would spread rapidly if people were allowed to move freely.
"I am really surprised to see people moving again," Ahmad, who preferred to be identified by his first name, told Arab News by phone. "They should have closed the city for 24 hours for two or three days. Everywhere in the world when the first case is detected, the state closes the infected area for several days. Here people are roaming freely as if nothing has happened," he said, adding that he was forced into isolating one of his relatives at home because he was at the hospital where the first case of coronavirus was discovered.

Unabated fighting The first case of coronavirus in Yemen did not lead to a halt in fighting on raging battlefields in the country's north as many local and international health officials had demanded.
Last week the Yemeni government welcomed the Arab coalition's declaration of a truce in Yemen to allow health workers to fight the coronavirus pandemic.
Col. Rabia Al-Qurashi, the army's spokesman in Al-Jawf, said Houthis had launched two simultaneous attacks on two military bases controlled by government forces in the northern province.
"They keep breaching the truce," he told Arab News. "We pushed back two Houthi attacks on Al-Khanjar and Labenat military bases in Al-Jawf."

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Yemen's Houthis sentence 4 reporters to deathYemen confirms first coronavirus case

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[Lebanon scrambles to fight pandemic, as cases reach 619](#)

Author:
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BEIRUT: Lebanon on Saturday reported 10 new cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), pushing the total number to 619.
The number of people in quarantine in hospitals is 1,282, 387, most of whom are from Mount Lebanon and 311 from the north.
During a tour to parts of Khroub district, where COVID-19 cases have been recorded, Health Minister Hamad Hassan described the results of the general mobilization as "good." "We must continue to restrict movement and ban gatherings. We have been seeing stability in the cases' figures," he said.
The authorities have decided to impose a curfew on Sunday and during Easter to restrict people's movement.
Bsharri district has entered a mass quarantine, starting on Saturday, in light of the growing number of cases. Eddie Lazem, the director of Bsharri's

government hospital, announced that the number of tests carried out in a few hours had reached 70.

The number of COVID-19 cases in northern Lebanon is 125, and there are 329 cases in Mount Lebanon. Matn district in Mount Lebanon continues to have the highest number of cases in Lebanon, with 124 infected people as of Saturday.

Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Bizri, an infectious disease specialist and member of the emergency committee on coronavirus, told Arab News: "Tracking the sources of the novel coronavirus infection continues and might reduce the number of cases of unknown sources to three cases only."

Meanwhile, video footage of a Lebanese doctor went viral on social media on Saturday. The date of the recording is unknown but it shows an exhausted doctor wearing a face mask in a room inside a medical center. An ambulance siren can be heard in the background. He speaks on the phone and says: "Can you recognize me? I cannot take my mask off. I'm very exhausted. I have been working for 30 hours, standing on my feet. Things are out of control here. One batch of patients after the other. We received yesterday a batch from Sayyida Zainab (in Damascus), all of whom are infected (with coronavirus). Everyone you ask would tell you they have been with an Iranian. Iranians have become producers of coronavirus. It is a catastrophe. I do not know why Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah is not interfering. It is a catastrophe. No one can carry on like this."

Hashem Safieddine, head of Hezbollah's executive council, spoke two weeks ago about Hezbollah's plan to fight COVID-19. He talked about "the assigning of 24,500 doctors and paramedics to implement the plan, in addition to another team of 4,500 people from the party, municipalities (controlled by Hezbollah), and a medical team from Amal Movement."

FASTFACTS

• **The number of COVID-19 cases in northern Lebanon is 125, and there are 329 cases in Mount Lebanon.**

• **Four Middle East Airlines aircraft arrived in Beirut on Saturday, carrying Lebanese expatriates from Kuwait, Dubai, Rome and Lunda.**

• **A curfew will be imposed on Sunday and during Easter.**

"This plan is in line with the government's agencies and measures," he said, highlighting that "it aims to stop the spread of coronavirus."

Safieddine announced that St. George Hospital was prepared to receive coronavirus patients. He said: "We have rented and equipped private hospitals as a precautionary measure, and they will be used when needed. We have also established diagnostic centers to evaluate and examine the cases and determine the required procedures."

"We have prepared 32 backup medical centers to fight coronavirus in all Lebanese regions, trained 15,000 people to fight coronavirus, conducted training workshops for some paramedics in the Palestinian camps, and equipped 25 ambulances with respirators and devices," he said.

The administration of Al-Rassoul Al-Aazam Hospital, which is affiliated with

Hezbollah, was quick to respond to the video footage. They said: "This (footage) was not recorded inside the hospital, and the doctor does not work here. The hospital does not receive any coronavirus patients because St. George Hospital has been prepared for this purpose."

Meanwhile, four Middle East Airlines (MEA) aircraft arrived in Beirut on Saturday, carrying Lebanese expatriates from Kuwait, Dubai, Rome and Lunda. The airplane returning from Kuwait carried 123 passengers, most of whom were families, some of whom had particular health conditions, in addition to Lebanese citizens whose residence permits in Kuwait had expired.

Lebanon's Ambassador to the UK Rami Mortada announced that the embassy would implement measures to prevent anyone who did not have a negative PCR result from boarding the plane from London to Beirut, to ensure the safety of the journey and the Lebanese community.

MP Fadi Alame, a member of the Development and Liberation parliamentary bloc, headed by Nabih Berri, said that the measures taken were "on the right track."

Alame, who is the owner of Sahel General Hospital in the southern suburb of Beirut, said: "The capacity of government hospitals is still within an acceptable range. There are quarantine centers in the districts that have contributed to relieving these hospitals. The challenge is to continue to secure the supplies for the medical and nursing staff, who are in direct contact with coronavirus (patients). These supplies are declining around the world. There are attempts to manufacture them locally, and we are seeking to do so."

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Netanyahu rival Gantz seeks more time to form coalition government

Author:
Reuters
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JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's election rival Benny Gantz asked for additional time on Saturday to try to form a government with the long-time leader, to end more than a year of political deadlock.
A 28-day mandate to put together a governing coalition, following an inconclusive March 2 election, expires on April 14. Gantz, an ex-armed forces chief who heads the centrist Blue and White party, asked President Reuven Rivlin for a 14-day extension to the mandate.
Gantz had run on a promise not to serve in a government with Netanyahu, citing the prime minister's indictment on corruption charges. Netanyahu denies those charges.
But in a reversal that dismayed many of his supporters, Gantz said the coronavirus crisis had made a national emergency government with Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party an imperative.
"The political, health and social crisis have brought me to the decision that even at a heavy political and personal price, I will do all I can to establish a government with the Likud," Gantz wrote in a letter to the president, published by his party.
Rivlin gave no immediate word on whether he would grant more time to Gantz, who in his letter said the two political rivals appeared close to a final agreement.
According to Israeli media reports, the parties have already agreed on a power-sharing deal in which Netanyahu would serve as prime minister for 18 months, after which Gantz would take over. Israel has held three inconclusive elections since last April.
With more than 10,000 reported cases of COVID-19 and 101 deaths, Israel's tight restrictions on movement aimed at curbing the coronavirus spread have forced many businesses to shut down and have sent unemployment rates soaring to about 25%.

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[israeli elections](#)

Israel's Gantz nominates himself to be parliament speakerNetanyahu challenger Gantz chosen to form new Israeli government

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[Sudan's health minister says country needs $120 mln to fight coronavirus](#)

Author:
Reuters
ID:
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KHARTOUM: Sudan urgently needs $120 million to fight the new coronavirus, the country's health minister told Reuters on Saturday, amid a shortage of the equipment to fight the epidemic which has ravaged richer countries.

Although Sudan has so far reported relatively few cases, the global outbreak has arrived at a time when it faces an economic crisis.

"We are preparing a strategy to face coronavirus that extends until the end of June, but to execute it we urgently need $120 million to provide protective equipment for health care workers and to prepare health care facilities and advanced lab testing equipment," said health minister Akram Ali Altom.

Altom serves in the civilian-led government which has run Sudan following a power-sharing agreement with the military signed in August. Exactly one year ago, months of protests brought down three-decade ruler Omar Al-Bashir.

Until now, Sudan has reported 19 confirmed coronavirus cases, including two deaths, but Altom said that "if it spreads, Sudan's situation health-wise and economically means it cannot handle a large outbreak."

Current capacity for beds with ventilators was just in the "hundreds," he said. The coronavirus outbreak is the latest epidemic to face Sudan, which has had to deal with outbreaks of cholera with a depleted infrastructure.

Sudan began testing for those who arrived at its international airport in February. In March it closed all airports and border crossings to non-commercial traffic.

The government also imposed a twelve-hour curfew, shut down schools and universities, and banned events and gatherings. Some of its measures have been met with a lack of cooperation.

The minister said that his ministry has recommended a complete lockdown of the capital Khartoum for three weeks, as well as an increase in the number of quarantine centers and testing capacity.

A major barrier to any lockdown is likely to be the large number of Sudanese people who work in the informal economy.

The minister said that he expected that a new health emergency law would be introduced on Sunday.

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Sudan still in crisis a year after Bashir's ousterSudan raises bread price, year after Bashir's fall

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[Pandemic raises questions over Egypt's health care system](#)

Author:
Sat, 2020-04-11 00:18

CAIRO: Egyptian society is facing controversy over its handling of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak.
As of Thursday, Egypt had recorded 1,699 cases of the disease, with 118 deaths.

Many believe that hospitals have been contributing to the spread of the virus amid daily announcements of doctors and nurses resulting positive.

In March, several hospitals were shut down including the University of Alexandria Hospital, the Al-Shorouk Hospital in Cairo and the Al-Salam Hospital in Mohandessin when medical staff were infected by COVID-19, according to sources in the Ministry of Health.

The National Cancer Institute in downtown Cairo was also closed after discovering that 17 doctors and nurses were infected by the virus.

Authorities ordered an investigation amid accusations that information regarding the spread of the virus in the institute was being concealed.

The institute is the largest of its kind in the Middle East. It treats 300,000 patients annually and employs 600 nurses and 750 doctors.

"COVID-19 infections started a week before the discovery from a nurse who showed symptoms of the virus," said the institute's director, Hatem Abu Al-Qasim.

"The nurse was later quarantined after her test resulted positive."

Al-Qasim told an Egyptian satellite TV channel that the nurse, considered case zero, worked in another hospital assumed to be the source of the virus.

Comments of this nature have reinforced Egyptians' fear of healthcare in the country.

Hajar Ashmawi, a pharmacist at the National Cancer Institute, accused the director of rejecting calls to close down the institute until it was disinfected.

"Those who fear getting infected by the virus should submit their resignation and stop coming to the institute," Ashmawi quoted Al-Qasim as saying.

NUMBER

300,000 — Patients are treated annually at the National Cancer Institute in Cairo that employs 600 nurses and 750 doctors.

She said Al-Qasim had threatened pharmaceutical staff who refused to work by taking unspecified measures against them and saying that he was able replace them with new staff members.

MP Hatem Bashat disclosed the discovery of 22 cases of infected doctors and nurses at Al-Zaytoun Specialized Hospital in Amiriya.

Talking to Arab News, Bashat confirmed that the infection was transmitted to the hospital after a 72-year-old woman was admitted on March 23 for kidney dialysis.

According to Bashat, she manifested symptoms of the virus during her stay in the intensive care unit. She later tested positive for COVID-19. She died in the hospital on April 4.

"I understand the concerns and fears toward doctors at this stage," Dr. Ahmed Youssef, a chest specialist at a quarantine hospital in Cairo, said.

"I too am afraid of becoming infected, but we must all join forces to fight this virus," Youssef said.

Many people who, until recently, praised medical staff for their efforts in fighting the infection have now become pessimistic with regard to how well the healthcare system is coping.

This bleak outlook has prompted some people and institutions to launch awareness campaigns about the role of doctors in fighting the virus.
On Wednesday, Egypt extended the nationwide night-time curfew by two weeks in an attempt to curb the spread of the virus.
The country also extended other preventative measures, including the closure of schools and universities and the suspension of international flights.

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