[Funding shortage means UN programs in Yemen will start closing down: Aid chief](#)

Thu, 2020-04-16 17:55

LONDON: A funding shortage means UN programs in Yemen will start closing down in the next few weeks, the organization's emergency relief coordinator Mark Lowcock said on Thursday.

"Of the UN's 41 major programmes, 31 will start closing down in the next few weeks if we can't secure additional funds. This means we will have to start eliminating many of the activities that may offer Yemenis' best chance to avoid COVID-19," Lowcock told the UN Security Council.

He added that the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) will have to stop immediate assistance for families displaced by conflict or natural disasters which means that "up to 1 million displaced people would not receive critical supplies."

Nutrition programmes will also be cut, Lowcock added, and this will affect 260,000 severely malnourished children and 2 million other children who are moderately malnourished in the country.

The UN relief coordinator also thanked Saudi Arabia for its pledge last week of $500 million for the UN-led response in Yemen and $25 million for COVID-19 activities.

Meanwhile, United Nations Yemen envoy Martin Griffiths said on Thursday he expects the opposing parties in the country to formally adopt "in the immediate future" agreements on a nationwide ceasefire, key economic and humanitarian measures and a resumption of political talks.
Griffiths said he has been negotiating with the parties on the texts for the past two weeks. "We expect them to agree on and formally adopt these agreements in the immediate future," he told the UN Security Council.

Griffiths told the UN Security Council he has been negotiating with the parties on the texts of his proposals for the past two weeks. "We expect them to agree on and formally adopt these agreements in the immediate future," he said.
He said the economic and humanitarian measures could include: release of prisoners and detainees, opening Sanaa airport, paying civil servant salaries, opening access roads, and ensuring entry at Hodeidah ports for ships carrying commodities that will help in the fight against COVID-19.
"The conversations we had with the two parties, and our consultations with the Saudi-led Coalition among other international actors … are continuous, detailed and constructive," Griffith said.
He said "good progress" was being made and the United Nations was redoubling its efforts to bridge outstanding differences "before we convene them at a

meeting where … these agreements will be tabled, confirmed — I hope — and published."

(With Reuters)

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UN thanks Saudi Arabia for Yemen humanitarian aid amid coronavirusHealth of Yemen's only coronavirus case improves

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[UAE ranks among top 10 countries in coronavirus treatment efficacy](#)

Thu, 2020-04-16 14:55

DUBAI: The UAE has been ranked as the world's 10th best for the treatment of coronavirus according to the Deep Knowledge Group, placing as the first among

Arab nations.

Germany's COVID-19 treatment efficacy received the top score, followed by China, South Korea, Austria, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Israel and Japan.

The Deep Knowledge Group, headquartered in the UK, is a collection of commercial and non-profit organizations active in research, investment, entrepreneurship and more in the realms of DeepTech and Frontier Technologies, such as AI, Longevity and Fintech.

Meanwhile, Dubai's authorities have transformed the World Trade Center into a 3,030-bed hospital for coronavirus patients.

UAE also continues to ramp up testing services, as they launch a home-testing service for people with disabilities and drive-through centers.

The country has detected 5,365 people infected with COVID-19, and reported 33 deaths.

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UN praises UAE's support for African countries during coronavirus crisisUAE COVID-19 cases up by 412 after health ministry tests over 32,000

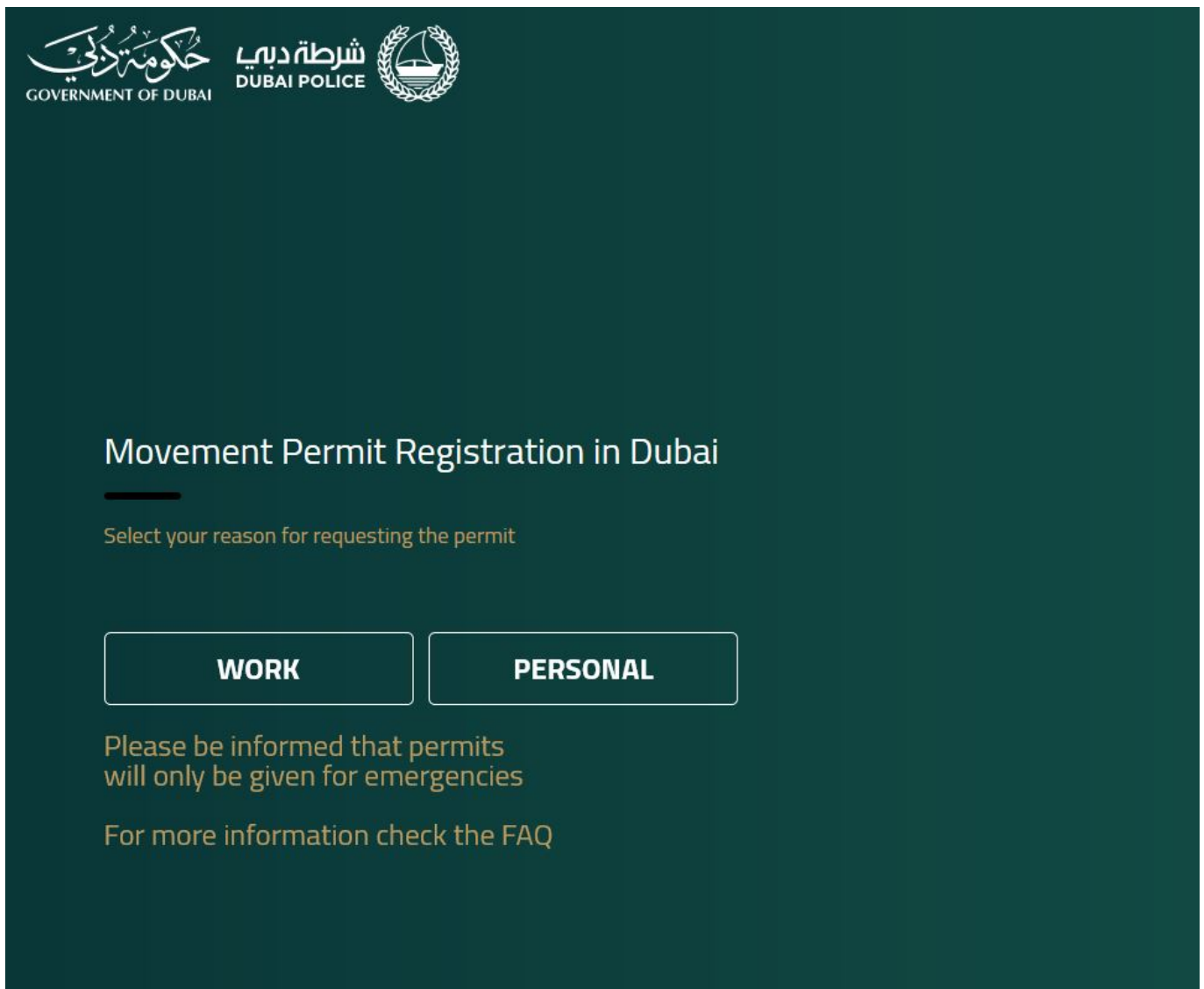
Dubai issues new movement permit

[restrictions](#)

Author:
Thu, 2020-04-16 14:00

DUBAI: New restrictions have been imposed on Dubai's movement permits, rationing households to one every three days, as the country continues in its efforts to contain the coronavirus spread.
People will only be allowed to leave their homes once every three days to buy essential goods at grocery stores or pharmacies, while withdrawing cash from ATMs will be allowed once every five days, according to the permit application website.

Individuals with emergency cases will be allowed to leave their homes twice a day, the statement added.
The movement permit system was introduced in March, while imposing fines on violators of the system was later announced.
The total number of infected people with coronavirus in the UAE has reached 5,365, with 33 deaths. The country has also recorded 1,034 recoveries.

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Iran's coronavirus death toll rises by 92 to 4,869: health officialDubai Heights Academy shares tips for home learning

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[Lebanon suspends repatriation flights for virus-stranded nationals until April 27](#)

Author:
Wed, 2020-04-15 22:50

BEIRUT: Lebanon has suspended repatriation flights until April 27 for thousands of nationals trapped abroad by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak.

The Lebanese Cabinet committee tasked with bringing home stranded citizens said the move was designed "to maintain the capacity of hospitals and hotels designated for isolation and to re-evaluate the measures taken."

Meanwhile, Alwaleed Bin Talal Humanitarian Foundation announced that it would bear the costs of flying home students from Italy, France and Ukraine, while Middle East Airlines (MEA), Lebanon's national flag carrier, has offered a 50 percent discount for students and allowed their family members to pay for flight tickets in Lebanese pounds.

The number of recorded COVID-19 cases in Lebanon on Wednesday rose by 17 — including five nationals returning from abroad — to 658.

There were 34 people newly infected by the virus among the 2,317 citizens returned to Lebanon between April 6 and 13 on 20 commercial flights, and 356 returnees on 53 private jets, that landed at Rafic Hariri International Airport on the permission of Lebanese authorities.

The COVID-19 cases had flown in from the UK, France, Spain, Liberia, Turkey, Qatar, and the UAE. The remainder of the returnees were still undergoing two weeks of home isolation to ensure that they had not contracted the deadly virus.

Thousands of people have registered with Lebanese embassies around the world to return home because of the COVID-19 outbreak, and they have been put on waiting lists drawn up by the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Some have been unable to cover their expenses due to the interruption of their business and difficulties in getting bank transfers in dollars from Lebanon, a problem which has particularly affected students.

Abdel Salam Marini, Alwaleed Bin Talal Humanitarian Foundation's manager, said: "We are coordinating with the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and we have informed them that we will cover the cost of a full plane of students from France and another from Italy and there are hundreds of these (students) still stuck in these two countries."

Two MEA flights, funded by the foundation, brought back 110 students last Saturday from Rome and 55 from Paris.

Marini added: "We are ready to bear the expenses of the return of more students, especially those stranded in northern Italy, and we propose to send a plane to Milan so that students can reach the airport without being exposed to infection during their movements. We will also bear the expenses of about 600 students who are still in France."

The cost of returning Lebanese students from Ukraine would also be footed by the foundation, he said. "About 400 students are studying in the semi-free universities of this country (Ukraine) and their families cannot afford to bring them back. We are ready and communicating with (Lebanese) Foreign Minister Nassif Hitti who asked us to sponsor these students and we agreed."

Alwaleed Bin Talal Humanitarian Foundation was established in 2003 and its initiatives and programs in Lebanon focus on addressing the social and medical needs of the country.

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Lebanon considers new repatriation flights for stranded nationalsLebanon puts Bcharri town under lockdown as stranded nationals return

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[Iran's virus death toll likely 80% higher than official number](#)

Wed, 2020-04-15 22:34

TEHRAN: The death toll in Iran from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is likely nearly double the officially reported figures, due to undercounting and because not everyone with breathing problems has been tested for the virus, a parliament report said.

Iranian health officials offered no comment on the report, released on Tuesday, which represents the highest-level charge yet from within the country of its figures being questionable, something long suspected by international experts.

Iran on Wednesday put the death toll at 4,777, out of 76,389 confirmed cases of the virus — still making it the Middle East's worst outbreak by far.

The report comes as Iranian President Hassan Rouhani continues to push for a

slow reopening of the country's economy, which remains targeted by crushing US sanctions. If its own figures offered to the World Health Organization are wrong, it adds to fears by some that encouraging people to return to work will spark a second wave of infections.

"In order to have more compatibility between protocol and estimated statistics, it is necessary to increase laboratory and testing capabilities in the country," the report said.

"Needless to say that through increasing the capacities, diagnosis of disease will be more possible and the spread of the disease will be more limited."

The 46-page report by Iran's parliament research center, published online, carries the weight of being written by nonpartisan experts within the country.

The explosive charge was merely a footnote on page 6 in what appeared to be an otherwise routine report.

It said Health Ministry death toll figures counted only those who died in hospitals and had gotten positive test results for the virus. That disregarded all coronavirus victims who died in their homes. The report also said that aggressive testing, something experts have seized upon as necessary in the pandemic, has not been done in Iran — meaning other cases likely have been missed. It suggested the true death toll in Iran is probably 80 percent higher than figures now given, or nearly double.

As far as the positive cases are involved, and given the undertesting, the number of people infected is probably "eight to 10 times" higher than the reported figures, the report said.

If correct, the report's worst-case figures would put Iran's death toll potential as high over 8,500, with some 760,000 total cases. That would catapult Iran to the country with the highest number of infections in the world.

International experts long have suggested they suspected Iran's numbers, as its mortality was higher than other nations. While other countries also have seen cases spike, Iran's reported numbers so far have offered a gradual slope.

The report also accused authorities of not providing its authors with "detailed figures" over the disease. It also warned that more than 30,000 people could die if strict quarantine measures are not taken.

Deputy Health Minister Ali Reza Raisi on Wednesday acknowledged that the "limits of testing" faced by Iran mean it does not have accurate figures of all those infected.

"The real figures are more than the official statistics but it is not correct to multiply official figures by two or three," he said, without elaborating or directly addressing the parliament report.

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Iran's coronavirus death toll rises to 4,777Iranian lawmakers refuse to be quarantined in parliament building