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Meeting Time
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MONDAY
18th MAY
12th Edition

Editor:

Tanya Stone
Rotary Club of Pinelands



Fellow Rotarians

Well, Lockdown Level 4 is until the end of May.

There are a lot of opinions, court hearings and actions opposing the length of Level 4 – another 2 weeks to be exact. It will be interesting to see what Pres Cyril has to say in his next talk to the Nation (if anything new is mentioned...)

I see we are now being told what to wear.
I have decided not to go winter clothing shopping.

Will I be arrested if I walk my dogs in flipflops? They are open toed, so perhaps I should wear socks with them.

News, articles and documentaries are below.

Tanya



**Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak situation
MONDAY 18TH MAY 2020**

Statistics from Worldometer on COVID-19

PLEASE NOTE: Figures are time of publish and fluctuate constantly

4,870,167

Confirmed cases

Updated: 18th May

319,174

Confirmed deaths

Updated: 18th May

1,893,492

Recovered

Updated: 18th May

215

**Countries, areas or
territories with cases**

Updated: 18th May

UPDATE



SOUTH AFRICA Monday 18th May 2020

South Africa now has **16,433** confirmed cases.
South African statistics from Worldometer and Department of Health SA
on COVID-19

16,433

Positive Cases Identified

Updated: 18th May

286

Deaths

Updated: 18th May

7,298

Recovered

Updated: 18th May

UPDATE AFRICA



Monday 18th May 2020

Africa now has **87,906** confirmed cases.

Source: African Arguments; WHO; Johns Hopkins; nCoV.

87,906

Positive Cases Identified

Updated: 18th May

2,823

Deaths

Updated: 18th May

33,764

Recovered

Updated: 18th May

NEWS

SOUTH AFRICA



Something rare happened in South Africa last week – and it could help ease lockdown restrictions

Staff Writer
Business Tech



Something rare happened in South Africa last week that may have already, and could in future, influence government's thinking on the re-opening of the economy, says the Bureau for Economic Research (BER).

In a research note, the group referred to the fact that Cosatu, the biggest labour federation in the country, came out in support of the business sector's call on the government to move faster to a less restrictive lockdown.

"To some extent, government seems to have heeded the calls for re-opening more of the economy," the BER said. "On Wednesday, Ramaphosa announced that most of South Africa would move from alert level 4 to level 3 by the end of the month.

"Amongst others, this is expected to allow for the sale of all clothing, hardware sales to the general public and the re-opening of liquor outlets, albeit only on selected days and hours."

While the lifting of these restrictions may be welcomed, the BER noted that the liquor regulations, as with the short hours for exercise, may have the opposite effect of the intended goal of social distancing as consumers flock to the stores during the limited hours.

"Ramaphosa also hinted that some Level 4 regulations would be relaxed. This was followed on Thursday by a significant easing in the restriction on e-commerce. Excluding sales of alcohol and tobacco, all e-commerce is now allowed.

"This decision took way too long, but is very welcome, especially after mind-boggling regulations regarding clothing sales and vehicle repairs were gazetted earlier in the week."

Sour note

On a more sour note, the BER said that the plan to move to district-based lockdowns is unlikely to work.

"Both the Gauteng and Western Cape Premiers have since commented that district-level differences are unlikely to work due to the integrated nature of districts – including logistical supply chains.

"We have cautioned in the past that the intuition behind the district differences makes sense, but that it will be difficult to implement practically.

"However, at the same time, it is also problematic to argue the case for keeping certain districts with very few remaining active cases under a strict alert level until the hotspots see fewer cases."

The BER said that where possible, and with the necessary health protocols in place, activity (especially in those sectors that do not interact with the general public) should be allowed to return to normal to prevent a large number of permanent business closures.

[Read: Here are Cape Town's coronavirus hotspots as infections surge in South Africa's Covid-19 epicentre](#)

Coronavirus: South Africa expects economy to tank as it grapples with pandemic

By Xolisa Phillip, in Johannesburg
The Africa report

South Africa is bracing for a deep recession amid the COVID-19 outbreak, and is engaging with domestic and international financiers to mount an adequate response. This is according to finance minister Tito Mboweni, who gave an update this week about how his portfolio will deal with the two-pronged crisis: the pandemic and the ailing economy.

[READ MORE: World Bank: debt relief needed to protect African informal sector](#)

"Without doubt, given what we know since February, COVID-19 will certainly further deepen the South African downturn woes. At this stage, our central scenario is for a deep recession in 2020, followed by a rapid upswing in economic growth," said Mboweni.

The projection is in line with IMF and World Bank economic forecasts for the country and the rest of Africa. This week, Abebe Aemro Selassie, the director of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) African Department, gave an update of the regional economic outlook.

[READ MORE: Coronavirus: South Africa's Ramaphosa mounts economic relief efforts](#)

The IMF expects Sub-Saharan Africa to contract 1.6% in 2020, the lowest growth figure for the region since 1970. In its Africa Pulse report, the World Bank predicts a 5.1% contraction, which will plunge the region in recession for the first time in 25 years.

[READ MORE](#)

5 important things happening in South Africa today

18th May

Staff Writer
Business Tech



Here's what is happening in and affecting South Africa today – 18th May

- **Coronavirus:** Global confirmed coronavirus cases are at 4.6 million infections, with over 311,000 deaths. In South Africa, confirmed cases have climbed significantly over the last few days, now sitting at 15,515, with 264 dead. Recoveries have increased to 7,006, leaving the country with 8,245 active cases.
- **Lockdown split:** Members of the advisory council to government on the coronavirus response have openly criticised leaders for continuing the countrywide lockdown, saying it has no basis in science. Government has admitted that the advisors had no input and were not informed about the 'risk-based approach' to lockdown that is now being implemented, saying it was not their mandate to advise on this. Government has been criticised for the extended lockdown and many seemingly arbitrary regulations that go with it. [EWN]
- **Electricity hike:** South Africans can expect electricity prices to increase, after energy regulator Nersa has granted Eskom permission to recoup R13.3 billion through its regulatory clearing account. Eskom requested R27.3 billion. Previously Nersa pushed back against Eskom price hikes, including the billions of rands paid to the power utility by government into its calculation of what is allowed. However, this was overturned in court. Nersa said this would lead to a catch-22 of rising electricity prices, pushing demand down, leading to more pricing gaps. [702]
- **Rate cut:** The reserve Bank Monetary Policy Committee is expected to meet again this week, with analysts expecting another rate cut. The bank has already cut rates by 225 basis points so far in 2020, but economists believe that there is room for at least another cut of 50 points in May and a further 35 points in June. The rate cuts would help to boost economic activity, which is currently under pressure, with inflation expected to be subdued in the near term. [Daily Maverick]

- **SAA stalemate:** SAA's business rescue practitioners says the failed airline has spent under R10 billion since entering into business rescue. A fifth of the money was spent on aviation fuel and 16% went on salaries and allowances, they said. While they have agreed to not sell assets, and have been ordered to freeze retrenchments, the administrators have told parliament that the business should be wound down – and that liquidation should be avoided, as it would destroy value. [Reuters]
- **Markets:** South Africa's rand fell on Friday and ended lower on the week as fears about a resurgence of coronavirus infections hurt sentiment toward the emerging markets. Looking at the week ahead, while SA is desperately trying to resume economic activity, several mines had to shut down again over the weekend following cluster outbreaks of Covid-19. With a light data calendar, markets will focus on Sino-US trade and Covid-19 developments for direction. On Monday, the rand is at R18.51 to the dollar, R22.40 to the pound and R20.03 to the euro.

Lifting eCommerce restrictions will breathe some life back into a broken economy

By By Sizwe Dlamini
IOL



CAPE TOWN – Following the government's move to lift restrictions on eCommerce, allowing e-tailers to sell everything except alcohol and cigarettes, South Africans are no longer limited in terms of the products that they would like to buy online, with immediate effect.

E-tailer Loot.co.za, along with several other eCommerce platforms, had called for the government to widen the definition of essential goods and services, driven by the spike in demand for online shopping since the start of the lockdown.

Loot.co.za's chief executive, Greg le Roux, welcomed the government's move and said all Loot's delivery partners were essential service providers and had implemented contactless delivery mechanisms to ensure smooth and safe delivery. He said all delivery partners adhered to the Covid-19 safety guidelines through the use of hand sanitisers, masks and gloves.

[READ MORE](#)

Schools in Cape Town and Joburg could stay closed for longer

[Staff Writer](#)

Business Tech

17 May 2020



Government is looking at staggered start dates for South African schools, based on their lockdown level and district, the Sunday Times reports.

While a number of the country's schools are expected to begin reopening in June, the department wants schools in 'hotspots' such as Buffalo City, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, eThekweni, Mangaung and Nelson Mandela Bay to be regarded as being on lockdown level 5 and remain closed in June.

In parts of the country where fewer cases have been reported, the schools would be considered as being on level 3. Grade 7 and Grade 12 students at these schools would resume lessons from 1 June, while the rest of the grades would return on a staggered basis.

The Sunday Times reports that government is also considering a proposal that will allow different grades to attend school on different days of the week as part of social distancing measures.

The Department of Basic Education is expected to provide a full outline of when the country's schools will open on Monday (18 May).

Universities

The Department of Higher Education has indicated that the country's university students will return based on the country's lockdown levels.

In a parliamentary briefing on Thursday, the department said that the academic year was highly dependent on the trajectory of the coronavirus pandemic, with plans to end the year anywhere between January and April 2021.

To accommodate this, from 1 June all institutions to be offering forms of remote multi-modal flexible teaching and learning, supported by approved resourced plans.

It added that it plans to allow a number of students back in a phased approach based on the level of the lockdown:

Level 4 – Strictly controlled phased-in return of final-year undergraduate students in programmes requiring clinical training, beginning with MBChB (medical) students from 11 May 2020;

Level 3 and Level 2 – Further phasing in of groups of students (undergraduate and postgraduate) based on national criteria to ensure controlled return, social distancing and other protocols to support student and staff health and safety. The final decision for return of students in these categories will only take place once the National Command Council have taken into account all necessary health and other considerations;

Level 1 – Full return of all groups of students with social distancing and health protocols still in place. This includes 27 weeks of contact teaching planned to ensure effective completion of the academic year and a fair chance of success for all students.

The department noted that a similar approach will be followed for TVET colleges and other higher education institutions, with no student allowed to return under level 4 restrictions (before the start of June).

Read: [These are the most important questions parents are asking about schools opening again in South Africa](#)

Covid-19 testing: 'It's useless if you have to wait 5 days for results'



By CAPE TALK

It takes between 5 to 14 days for Covid-19 test results to come back – making them useless, warns Professor Shabir Madhi (Wits).

The South African government is bumping heads with leading academics and scientists. Last week, Professor Shabir Madhi (Wits), a member of the ministerial advisory committee (MAC), helped pen an article entitled ["South Africa's COVID-19 strategy needs updating: here's why and how"](#).

Clement Manyathela, Cape Talk, interviewed Madhi.

They spoke about academics' criticism of the current method of testing for Covid-19.

Professor Shabir Madhi (Wits), member - ministerial advisory committee

"It's true that the way to slow the rate of transmission is to identify the infectious cases in a community and then to put them in isolation, to trace their contacts, and to put them in quarantine – that is the correct strategy... but it only works if you get the results within 12 to 24 hours..."

"There's a huge backlog in terms of testing. It takes between five to 14 days for results to come back... [By that time the person is] probably no longer infectious. There is very little reason to put that person into isolation..."

"Each individual has about 20 contacts per day, on average... You need to trace all the contacts from three days before they became symptomatic up to the time, they went into isolation... 120 contacts... For it to be effective, you need to trace at least 70% of contacts... We weren't even able to trace 20%..."

"There needs to be a prioritisation [of limited testing resources] ... [Who should be prioritised?] Without question, it's hospitalised individuals suspected of having Covid-19..."

"It doesn't help to test anyone if you can't get the results within 12 to 24 hours... Getting results five days later is meaningless..."

[LISTEN TO INTERVIEW](#)

What you need to know about your home finance in the time of Covid-19

Staff Writer
Business Tech



With lockdown and its economic fallout causing untold damage to the economy, more and more South Africans are finding themselves on unpaid leave, reduced salary packages or laid-off entirely.

This places many homeowners under severe stress when it comes to keeping up with their mortgage repayments and could well be deterring new buyers from entering the market as well.

Under difficult circumstances like these, it's easy to give in to feelings of hopelessness. However, according to Leonard Kondowe, National Admin Hub Manager for Rawson Finance, there are actually some very achievable solutions for homeowners and prospective buyers trying to navigate home finance in the time of Covid-19.

"The most important thing for existing homeowners to know right now is that there is hope – they are not powerless in the face of their challenges," said Kondowe. "In fact, lenders are being extremely supportive of clients in financial difficulty due to the impact of Covid-19."

Many loan agreements have built-in credit insurance which could help homeowners cover bond repayments until they're back on their feet. For those without insurance, however, Kondowe said payment holidays and bond restructuring are both popular compromises offered by lenders.

"Keep in mind, any delay to your repayments will increase the total amount of interest you pay over the lifetime of your loan," he pointed out.

[READ MORE](#)

Cape man who was on ventilator due to Covid-19 discharged from hospital

By Shakirah Thebus
Cape Argus

Cape Town - Western Cape Health MEC Nomafrench Mbombo on Monday visited the Melomed Gatesville Hospital to see off a patient who had fully recovered from Covid-19 after three weeks of hospitalisation.

Bathandwa Zuzo, 48, from Gugulethu was successfully discharged from the hospital on Monday. Hospital staff, family and supporters were present and filled the entrance hallway, singing the national anthem.

In a press statement, Melomed Gatesville said Zuzo, a father of five, works for the City of Cape Town as a driver for the Sanitation Division.

Zuzo had suffered from body pain, shortness of breath and high fever for two weeks prior to being admitted to Melomed Gatesville Emergency Unit on April 26.

By May 9, he showed signs of improvement and was then weaned off the ventilator and continued on supplementary oxygen.

"We are here to celebrate the best moments ever, because we always hear about – generally not only in the province but at a national level – about the deaths. Most of the time you don't know about the people who have recovered. So today we are so happy and celebrating the best moment ever," said Mbombo. She added: "People have asked about people who have been on a ventilator, whether they survive or not. So we want to welcome and celebrate with him."

Zuzo completed a successful 14 days of quarantine and retesting was not required, said Mbombo.

Zuzo's wife Victoria, a nurse at Karl Bremer, was also tested and her results were negative. She said: "I am very excited today because it's the first day to see my husband. I last saw him on April 26. That time he was very sick and the doctors told me he was ill and I must be strong. I was crying a lot at home. Dr Solomons used to call me every day and said I must be strong for my husband and kids."

Zuzo became cognizant of his surroundings late last week. Dr Zaraina Solomons, the primary doctor responsible for Zuzo and Specialist Physician at Melomed Gatesville, said: "For Covid-19 positive patients who respond successfully to intensive care treatment and are able to be discharged from hospital, the road to recovery can still be a lengthy one, but we are extremely overjoyed by the successful outcome.

"I thank my fellow colleagues and the exceptional nursing team who was instrumental in his recovery – this was truly a team effort. Through the grace of the Almighty and the commitment of the medical staff, we look forward to many more successful patient outcomes and recoveries during the Covid-19 pandemic."

Zuzo thanked staff members at the hospital for supporting him. "I have my life now because of them. I'm alive because of them."

WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND THE WORLD



Coronavirus latest: at a glance A summary of the biggest developments in the global coronavirus outbreak

By Helen Sullivan
The Guardian



US Federal Reserve Chair says unemployment could reach 25%

US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said on Sunday that US unemployment could peak at 25%, but expressed optimism Sunday that the economy could begin to recover from a devastating recession in the second half of the year, assuming the coronavirus doesn't erupt in a second wave.

Japan's falls into recession

Japan dived into its first recession since 2015, according to official data Monday, with the world's third-largest economy contracting by 0.9% in the first quarter as it wrestled with the fallout from the coronavirus. The cabinet office reported a drop of 3.4% annual pace in seasonally adjusted real gross domestic product, or GDP, the total value of a nation's goods and services, for the January-March period, compared to the previous quarter.

South Africa reports highest daily increase in cases

South Africa on Sunday reported 1,160 new coronavirus infections, the highest daily number since the first case was recorded in March "As of today, the total number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in South Africa is 15,515, with 1,160 new cases identified in the last 24 hour cycle of testing," the health ministry said in a statement. The Western Cape province, popular with tourists, accounted for nearly 60% of the national numbers.

São Paulo, Brazil mayor says hospitals 'near collapse'

In Brazil, the BBC has reported that the mayor of São Paulo, the country's largest city, has warned that hospitals have reached 90% capacity and are "near collapse"; they could run out of space in just two weeks' time, he said. Brazil has the fourth-highest number of infections worldwide, with 241,080, according to Johns Hopkins University figures. It has recorded 16,118 deaths. Meanwhile, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro greeted hundreds of supporters and joined some in a series of push-ups who gathered before the presidential offices Sunday.

Death tolls fall in UK, Spain and Italy

In a possible glimmer of hope, Sunday saw lower death tolls reported in the UK, Spain and Italy. The UK's daily coronavirus death toll was the lowest since lockdown began, with 170 deaths recorded. However, the Sunday and Monday figures tend to be lower than other days because of weekend testing rates. Meanwhile Spain recorded its lowest single-day death toll in two months. Italy on Sunday recorded its lowest daily toll, 145, since lockdown was declared. There were 153 deaths registered during the previous 24 hour period.

Move Rohingya on Bangladesh island to refugee camps, says UN chief

Hundreds of Rohingya rescued by Bangladesh and sent to a flood-prone island after being stranded at sea for weeks should be moved to existing refugee camps, the UN secretary general has said. The appeal by Antonio Guterres to Bangladesh's foreign minister in a letter obtained Sunday by AFP comes as concern grows over a coronavirus outbreak in the sprawling camps near the border with Myanmar. A fourth virus case has been detected in the crowded camps, officials said Sunday.

WHO committee to discuss Taiwan exclusion

The World Health Organization (WHO) is to raise the question of Taiwan's participation as an observer at the World Health Assembly, [which opens virtually on Monday](#), before one of its committees. Diplomatic allies of Taiwan, including Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Paraguay, have formally requested to invite Taiwan to the meeting as an observer. The US secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, has also said publicly he wants Taiwan in the room.

India extends lockdown by another two weeks

India has extended its lockdown to 31 May, but with some easing of restrictions. States are being given greater power to reopen markets and standalone stores, bus and other public transport travel being allowed between and within states. However, shopping malls, air travel, cinemas, schools and places of worship will remain closed. Mumbai, New Delhi, Chennai and other key regions are still fighting to control the rising curve of coronavirus infections. The health ministry on Sunday reported a record jump of nearly 5,000 cases of Covid-19 in the past 24 hours, raising the number of confirmed cases to 90,927, with 2,872 deaths.

China is under the spotlight at the World Health Assembly

Tim Walker
The Guardian

Beijing faces pressure over Taiwan's status and an investigation into the origins of Covid-19. Plus, how the lockdown could leave us with cleaner, greener cities.



Taiwan's health minister holds a press conference on its bid to become a member of the World Health Organization.

China's early handling of the coronavirus outbreak will come back under scrutiny on Monday, as the World Health Assembly – the governing body of the World Health Organization – [begins a two-day global video conference](#), which Beijing claims has already been politicised by other members. More than 120 countries have backed a draft resolution, pushed by the EU and Australia, calling for an investigation into the origins of Covid-19.

In the run-up to the meeting the US led a campaign to allow Taiwan to attend as an observer – very much against the wishes of Beijing, which considers Taiwan part of China. Julian Borger and Emma Graham-Harrison ask whether Donald Trump and Xi Jinping are setting their nations on course for a new cold war.

The narrative of unmatched Chinese success in disease control relies on ignoring the cover-ups and missteps that allowed the disease to spread so far, the death of the whistleblower doctor Li Wenliang and the chaos that engulfed Wuhan at the peak of its crisis.

What is the WHA? Ben Doherty explains [the make-up of the World Health Assembly](#) and why this week's virtual meeting comes loaded with unprecedentedly high stakes.

The Fed chairman says US unemployment could reach 25%

Alison Rourke
The Guardian



Unemployed people wait in line at a food bank in Brooklyn, New York.

The chairman of the federal reserve, Jerome Powell, has said US unemployment could peak as high as 25% as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and consequent lockdown, warning that the economic figures for 2020's June quarter "will be very, very bad." As businesses begin to reopen in the summer, the jobless numbers could come down. But Powell warned Americans not to get overly hopeful, saying: "We won't get back to where we were by the end of the year."

[READ MORE](#)

South Korean football team apologises for using sex dolls to fill stands

By Justin McCurry in Tokyo
The Guardian



South Korean football club FC Seoul has apologised after using sex dolls to fill up its empty stands during a game at the weekend.

K-League club FC Seoul said the dolls, used to make stadiums look less empty, had been ordered inadvertently after a 'misunderstanding'

A professional football team in South Korea has apologised after "mannequins" it used as substitute fans during a match at the weekend turned out to be sex dolls.

The K-League club FC Seoul said the dolls, which had been dotted around stands currently off-limits to supporters due to the coronavirus outbreak, had been ordered inadvertently after a "misunderstanding" with the supplier.

[READ MORE](#)

'It eats him alive inside': Trump's latest attack shows endless obsession with Obama

By David Smith
The Guardian



The president seems more interested in blaming his predecessor than tackling the coronavirus – so what's driving Trump's fixation?

President Barack Obama and President-elect Donald Trump once sat together in the Oval Office. "I was immediately struck by Trump's body language," wrote [journalist Jon Karl](#) in his memoir Front Row at The Trump Show. "I was seeing a side of him I had never seen. He seemed, believe it or not, humbled."

It was November 2016 and, just for once, Trump was not in charge of the room, Karl recalls. Obama was still president, directing the action and setting the tone. His successor "seemed a little dazed" and "a little freaked out". What the two men discussed in their meeting that day, only they know.

But what became clear in the next three and a half years is that Obama remains something of an obsession for Trump; the subject of a political and personal inferiority complex.

Observers point to a mix of anti-intellectualism, racism, vengeance and primitive envy over everything from Obama's Nobel peace prize to the scale of his inauguration crowd and social media following.

Ben Rhodes, a former Obama national security aide, [tweeted this week](#): "Trump's fact-free fixation on Obama dating back to birtherism is so absurd and stupid that it would be comic if it wasn't so tragic."

"Birtherism" was a conspiracy theory that Trump started pushing in 2011 ("He doesn't have a birth certificate. He may have one but there is something on that birth certificate – maybe religion, maybe it says he's a Muslim, I don't know.") .

Nine years later, he has come full circle with "[Obamagate](#)", which accuses his predecessor of working in league with the "deep state" to frame Trump for colluding with Russia to win the 2016 election.

There is zero evidence for this claim. Indeed, a case could be made that the supposed "deep state" did more to help Trump than hurt him when the FBI reopened an investigation into his opponent, Hillary Clinton, just before election day. When questioned by reporters, Trump himself has struggled to [articulate what "Obamagate" means](#). Ned Price, a former CIA analyst, dubbed it "a hashtag in search of a scandal".

[READ MORE](#)

Moderna vaccine shows promising early results

Joan Greve
The Guardian



The biotechnology company Moderna said it has seen promising results in its first human safety tests for a potential coronavirus vaccine.

The Washington Post [reports](#):

The company reported that in eight patients who had been followed for a month and a half, the vaccine at low and medium doses triggered blood levels of virus-fighting antibodies that were similar or greater than those found in patients who recovered. That would suggest, but doesn't prove, that it triggers some level of immunity. The antibody-rich blood plasma donated by patients who have recovered is separately being tested to determine whether it is an effective therapy or preventive measure for covid-19. ...

The data released Monday by Moderna is encouraging, but represents only a first step in a long process to bring a vaccine to market. It comes from an interim report on dozens of patients followed over weeks, whereas vaccine studies require broad testing in thousands of patients followed over many months or years.

The news comes days after Moderna director **Moncef Slaoui** stepped down to take a role at the White House to help speed up vaccine development. Slaoui's move has sparked conflict of interest concerns, considering he still owns millions of dollars worth of company stock.

Fed chairman **Jerome Powell** said in his "60 Minutes" interview, which aired yesterday, that the [US economy](#) may not "fully recover" until there's a coronavirus vaccine.

"Assuming there's not a second wave of the coronavirus, I think you'll see the economy recover steadily through the second half of this year," Powell said. He added, "For the economy to fully recover, people will have to be fully confident. And that may have to await the arrival of a vaccine."

[READ MORE](#)

Detroit priest sprays holy water from squirt gun to maintain social distancing

By The Guardian



Father Timothy Pelc conducts the traditional Blessing of the Easter Baskets, using a squirt gun to distribute holy water

A Catholic priest using a squirt gun to spray holy water has become a meme. The photos of Father Timothy Pelc conducting a traditional Easter Blessing in unconventional style [to adhere to social distancing guidelines](#) were posted on social media by his church, St Ambrose, near Detroit.

[READ MORE](#)

Texas reports largest single-day increase in coronavirus cases

BY CAROLINE LINTON
CBS NEWS

The [Texas Department of Health](#) reported Saturday that there are more than 47,000 confirmed cases of the coronavirus in the state, with over 1,800 new cases reported Saturday, as the state ramps up testing in areas that it has declared high risk. It's the largest single-day increase in confirmed cases in Texas since the pandemic began.

There were 33 additional deaths reported Saturday, bringing the total number of fatalities in the Lone Star State to 1,305.

Meanwhile, Texas is moving forward with plans to reopen. On Monday, gyms can open with 25% capacity, and they must space equipment and provide cleaning products throughout the gym, CBS Houston affiliate KHOU-TV reports. Nonessential manufacturing and work offices can reopen with 25% capacity as well.

Currently, the largest number of cases have been reported in the state's two largest counties: Dallas County and Harris County, which includes the city of Houston. Potter County, which includes the city of Amarillo in the Texas Panhandle, accounts for more than 2,100 of the state's cases. There are more than 600 confirmed cases in neighboring Randall County. More than 700 cases were reported Friday in the Amarillo region, which includes Potter County and Randall County, where meat packing plants have been targeted for increased testing. [Governor Greg Abbott said in a press release](#) Saturday that on May 4, he had deployed a Surge Response Team to Amarillo consisting of medical workers and the Texas National Guard to test the meatpacking facilities.

[READ MORE](#)

BREAKING: Premier League training set to resume this week



By Sports Reporter
IOL

The Premier League shareholders have voted unanimously to return to small-group training from Tuesday afternoon. It has been over two months since the league was stopped due to the coronavirus pandemic.

According to a statement by the Premier League, when training does resume players will have to maintain social distancing and no player contact is permitted yet.

After consultation the resumption of the first stage of training has got the go-ahead from players, managers, Premier League club doctors, independent experts and the UK government.

The statement went on to say that strict medical protocols will be in place in order to maintain the safest environment possible.

Full consultation will now continue with players, managers, clubs, the PFA and LMA as protocols for full-contact training are developed.

After weeks of uncertainty this is the first time concrete plans have been made in a bid to restart the season.



[Premier League](#)
[@premierleague](#)

Premier League Shareholders today voted unanimously to return to small group training from Tuesday afternoon – the first step towards restarting the Premier League, when safe to do so

Full statement: <https://preml.ge/6d82k>



India prepares to evacuate a million as Cyclone Amphan nears

West Bengal, Odisha and coastal areas of Bangladesh on high alert for super-cyclone



By Hannah Ellis-Petersen
South Asia correspondent
The Guardian

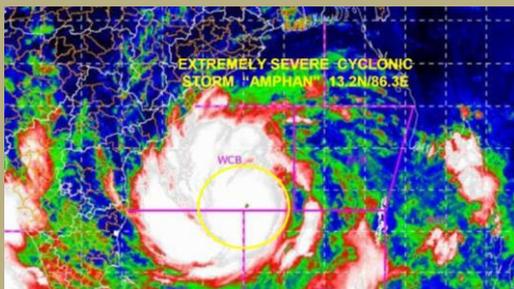
India is preparing to evacuate more than a million people, with a “super-cyclone” due to hit the country this week and cause devastation in vulnerable areas.

The Indian states of West Bengal and Odisha, as well as coastal areas of Bangladesh, have been put on high alert over Cyclone Amphan, which is gathering strength as it moves across the Bay of Bengal and is due to make landfall on Wednesday.

Heavy rains, storm surges and high winds with speeds of up to 115mph are expected to pummel the east Indian and Bangladesh coast, causing flooding and power outages and uprooting homes and crops.

In Odisha, preparations have begun to evacuate 1.1 million people living in vulnerable and low-lying areas, while more than 550 cyclone shelters have been prepared and 7,000 concrete buildings identified to house evacuees.

The Indian meteorological department advised fishermen not to “venture into the south Bay of Bengal during the next 24 hours, and north Bay.



[India Met. Dept. @Indiametdept](https://twitter.com/Indiametdept)

The SUPER CYCLONE ‘AMPHAN’ over west-central Bay of Bengal, lay centered at 1730 hrs IST of today, the 18 th May, 2020 over west-central Bay of Bengal near latitude 14.0°N and longitude 86.3 °E, about 700 km nearly south of Paradip (Odisha).

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Restaurant blacklight experiment shows speed of how virus may spread

By Cape Talk

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

A Japanese simulation experiment using fluorescent paint shows how the virus could spread using a buffet-style scenario.

Japan's national broadcaster NHK conducted a blacklight experiment in a simulated buffet-style restaurant scenario. A blob of fluorescent lotion was put on one diner's hand and within 30 minutes particles had spread far and wide among the group of diners.

Tribute to eNCA cameraman Lungile Tom

By eNCA



JOHANNESBURG - It's been a tough week at eNCA. Cameraman Lungile Tom passed away after a battle with COVID-19.

Based in Cape Town, Lungile was a fearless journalist.

A loving husband and a magnificent father. Tom loved to sing, smile and taking selfies.

He was larger than life, a man with mischief in his eyes and joy in his heart.

READ: [eMedia Investments mourns the loss of top cameraman](#)

Lungile made a mark wherever he went.

Just days after he died, a local artist paid tribute to him by projecting the images onto a building in Cape Town. We will never hear his voice again.

We will never see his smile but he will live in our hearts because that's where he belongs. Goodbye brother, we love you and we will miss you.

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ENVIRONMENT TOPICS AROUND THE GLOBE



China sees post-lockdown rise in air pollution



By Kate Abnett
Daily Maverick

BRUSSELS, May 18 - China's levels of some air pollutants have risen back to above last year's levels after dropping when the government imposed strict lockdown measures to contain the coronavirus pandemic, according to a study published on Monday.

The rebound was likely due to industrial activity, the researchers said, adding there were concerns that after months of unusually low pollution levels, a drive to kickstart economic activity was causing emissions to spike.

“There are early warning signs that China’s recovery from the COVID-19 crisis is reversing air quality gains,” the Helsinki-based Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA), which produced the study, said.

Average levels of some air pollutants in China dropped in February to significantly below levels for the same period in 2019, as lockdown measures shuttered factories, curbed electricity demand and slashed transport use as swathes of the population stayed home.

[READ MORE](#)



Tell us about your tree of the week

From Sudan to Arizona, Guardian readers have been telling us about their favourite trees for a new [weekly series](#). This week’s is an apple tree that has been [part of a family’s life for 40 years](#). If you have a beloved candidate, [let us know](#).

[READ MORE](#)

The end of plastic? New plant-based bottles will degrade in a year

By Jillian Ambrose
The Guardian

Carlsberg and Coca-Cola back pioneering project to make 'all-plant' drinks bottles



A mound of plastic bottles at a recycling plant near Bangkok in Thailand. Around 300 million tonnes of plastic is made every year and most of it is not recycled.

Beer and soft drinks could soon be sipped from "all-plant" bottles under new plans to turn sustainably grown crops into plastic in partnership with major beverage makers.

A biochemicals company in the Netherlands hopes to kickstart investment in a pioneering project that hopes to make plastics from plant sugars rather than fossil fuels.

The plans, devised by renewable chemicals company Avantium, have already won the support of [beer-maker Carlsberg](#), which hopes to sell its pilsner in a cardboard bottle lined with an inner layer of plant plastic.

Avantium's chief executive, Tom van Aken, says he hopes to greenlight a major investment in the world-leading bioplastics plant in the Netherlands by the end of the year. The project, which remains on track despite the coronavirus lockdown, is set to reveal partnerships with other food and drink companies later in the summer.

The project has the backing of Coca-Cola and Danone, which hope to secure the future of their bottled products by tackling the environmental damage caused by plastic pollution and a reliance on fossil fuels.

Globally around 300 million tonnes of plastic is made from fossil fuels every year, which is a major contributor to the climate crisis. Most of this is not recycled and contributes [to the scourge of microplastics in the world's oceans](#).

Microplastics can take hundreds of years to decompose completely.

"This plastic has very attractive sustainability credentials because it uses no fossil fuels, and can be recycled – but would also degrade in nature much faster than normal plastics do," says Van Aken.

Avantium's plant plastic is designed to be resilient enough to contain carbonate drinks. Trials have shown that the plant plastic would decompose in one year using a composter, and a few years longer if left in normal outdoor conditions. But ideally, it should be recycled, said Van Aken.

The bio-refinery plans to break down sustainable plant sugars into simple chemical structures that can then be rearranged to form a new plant-based plastic – which could appear on supermarket shelves by 2023.

The path-finder project will initially make a modest 5,000 tonnes of plastic every year using sugars from corn, wheat or beets. However, Avantium expects its production to grow as demand for renewable plastics climbs.

In time, Avantium plans to use plant sugars from sustainable sourced biowaste so that the rise of plant plastic does not affect the global food supply chain.

Giant turbine farm set to harvest West Coast wind

By John Yeld
Daily Maverick



Environment minister dismisses appeals against new wind farm.

Appeals against plans for a huge new wind farm on the West Coast have been dismissed by environment minister Barbara Creecy, paving the way for the addition of up to 140 megawatts of renewable energy into the national grid.

This is the Juno Wind Energy Facility, planned for a farm in the West Coast District Municipality area about five kilometres from the coast. It will consist of up to 49 turbines, some of which will stand nearly 180m high, and associated infrastructure to connect it to the Eskom national grid.

It is one of 12 wind and solar renewable energy projects currently in the planning phase within just 35km of each other in this region, according to Juno project documentation.

Some of these projects already [have environmental authorisation](#) and others are in the statutory environmental impact assessment (EIA) phase.

Although not all are likely to become operational as "preferred bidders" under REIPPP (government's Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Programme), the proliferation of proposals indicates the important potential of this West Coast region as the renewable energy industry looks to meet government's ambitious REIPPP target of 17,800MW of electricity by 2030. (To see this in perspective, Eskom claims its current coal-powered plant capacity is about 35,000MW, about double the 2030 renewable energy target.)



[READ MORE](#)

Something to Smile About

Written by Stephan Pöltner

Isztan nyatasek! (Cheers everybody!) That's what you will say in Hungary after the meal, accompanied by a glass of well chilled white wine and you will say it again when you round off the meal with a generous tot (or tots) of Barack.

Budapest has, like Vienna, very famous restaurants or 'Gourmet-Temples' and, also like Vienna, many restaurants which one would not find in a Tourist-Guide for one simple reason: one nearly has to join in a conspiracy in order to get the name and address of secret eating places.

Towards the end of the 70's I visited, not for the first time, a friend in Budapest. Hungary was still part of the Warsaw Pact, the Communist Counterpart of NATO, and travelling to Budapest by car took at least 6 hours although the distance is only 250 km. After getting through the 'ceremony' at the Hungarian border I arrived at the Hilton Budapest, checked in and phoned my friend.

Hungarians are very special. Their hospitality is beyond imagination.

Being invited for lunch requires at least one week of very strict fasting to begin with and after having had lunch one does not care anymore if one drinks Barack or Kerosene. As long as it helps the stomach, which is forcefully widened to at least four times its normal volume, because the Hungarians are of the opinion that a healthy man must be able to eat at least three complete meals at a time.

Thank God they are also very generous with their medicine. The average half-life of a bottle of Barack, once it is opened, is not more than half-an-hour (if it lasts as long).

Having survived lunch and being more or less ready for a four-week course of slimming treatment, my friend announced that we would have supper at the 'Bor-Catacomba', a wine cellar on the outskirts of Budapest.

Since I did not fit behind the steering wheel of my car anymore we took the bus and I meekly bowed to my fate.

Regrettably I told my friend that Hungarian music is one of my favourites (and still is).

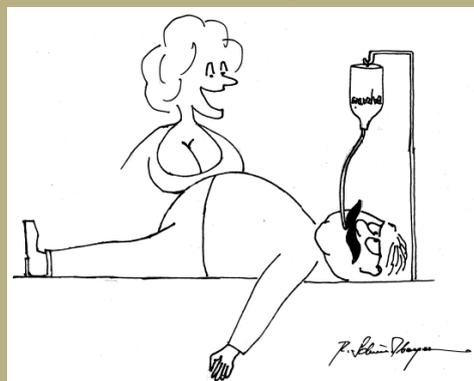
For the next four hours I was permanently entertained by the Gipsy Band, from time to time interrupted by the waiters who seemingly did not run out of food, the waitresses who most definitely did not run out of 'Tokayer' (a fantastic Hungarian wine) and my new friends (when we arrived we were four at the table, later on this number increased significantly) who seemed to have an unlimited supply of Barack.

I was born with a stomach made of stainless steel, practically indestructible.

But for the Hungarians nothing is impossible.

Just before I was about to fall into a coma I somehow managed to pull the 'emergency brake' demanding water instead of the normal Hungarian staple drink.

Someone suggested a kill-or-cure treatment in the form of 'Paradis-Water'.



Believe me, this so-called water (in fact it is water, but what type of water) brings you back from a deep coma in a fraction of a millisecond.

'Paradis-Water' contains an enormous amount of sulphur and is used to cure gastric sickness.

I am pretty sure that any patient would prefer to be healthy again rather than to have to drink this water, smelling revoltingly like rotten eggs.

Next day some shopping was on the agenda.

What shopping meant was shop until you drop: several Hungarian Salamis (each weighing about 3 kg), at least ten litres of Tokayer, more or less the same amount of Barack, traditional Hungarian clothes for young girls (my daughter Verena looked really stunning in them) and of course Hungarian Cherry-Chillies, lots of them.

How was I to cross the border back to Austria with all that 'food' in the boot?

I had to come up with a plan.

If one is thinking and the right idea does not surface, the Hungarians have a remedy: have a Barack.

It worked! I had a brilliant idea.

I went to the shop and bought ten bottles of 'Paradis-Water' and placed them in the boot of my car in such a way that the custom officials would easily find them.

As I arrived at the border and my car was checked for Salami, Tokayer and Barack, I, like a little innocent, answered the question "Have you something to declare?" in the negative, which transformed me automatically into a suspicious person and the Customs Officials started searching.

Pretty quickly they found the 'Paradis-Water' and they accused me of camouflaging Barack as 'Paradis-Water'.

This was the moment I was waiting for.

"Officer, this is 'Paradis-Water' and if you want I will gladly open one bottle so that you can taste it!"

This Official's face changed colour from a mixture of rosy (with a rather reddish nose) into a healthy pale green. He closed the boot of my car and let me pass.



**When you go
winter clothes
shopping in
South Africa
during
Lockdown Level 4**

Stay safe, healthy and take care.

Till next time....

Tanya