

Syrian govt ends school early for over 4 mln students

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Sun, 2020-04-26 16:42

DAMASCUS: More than four million students in Syria confined at home due to the coronavirus will not resume classes this year but will advance to the next grade, the government said Sunday.

The decision was taken weeks after schools were closed in mid-March to combat the spread of the virus, leaving many students and teachers to adapt to distance learning.

“All primary and secondary school students will move on to the next class,” the government announcement said, according to state news agency SANA.

Brevet and baccalaureate examinations – usually taken at the end of secondary school and high school respectively – will still be sat by 557,000 students, according to the education ministry.

The government will increase the number of exam centers to ensure “distance” between students, SANA reported.

After schools were shuttered, some institutions moved to online teaching, while a specialized education ministry TV channel broadcast Arabic, English, mathematics and science courses.

But daily power cuts that can last for hours and capped, costly household Internet have posed challenges to distance learning efforts in the country wracked by war since 2011.

Universities will remain closed at least through the end of the holy month of Ramadan in late May, according to SANA.

Damascus has officially reported 42 cases of COVID-19 and three deaths from the disease in government-controlled territory.

Authorities have adopted a series of measures to stem the spread of the virus, closing shops and restaurants as well as imposing a strict curfew and movement restrictions.



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Syrian dancer takes a spookily empty Paris as her canvas

[Lebanon has avoided coronavirus worst case scenario, health minister says](#)

Author:

Sun, 2020-04-26 11:25

DUBAI: Lebanon's Public Health Minister Hamad Hassan has praised the way the government managed the coronavirus outbreak, saying it has avoided a "bad scenario" of mass infections and deaths, state-run National News Agency has reported.

The country's COVID-19 toll stood at 704 on Sunday – one of the countries with the lowest cases in the region. There have been 24 deaths from the virus so far.

Hassan said this figure was due to Lebanon's "cooperation and collaboration

between the ministries concerned.”

He said it was particularly notable given the country’s “financial and catastrophic conditions,” adding other more capable countries “have not been able to cope with the widespread of the disease.”

But the Lebanese government should not be lenient, Hassan said, as it gradually eases down lockdown measures.



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Hariri blames Prime Minister Diab for Lebanon’s economic crisis

[UN chief slams Israel’s ‘unilateral’ actions that harm Palestinians amid](#)

[COVID-19 outbreak](#)

Author:

Sun, 2020-04-26 10:27

DUBAI: The United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres has criticized Israel for its intention to annex parts of the West Bank, especially amid the coronavirus outbreak that poses risks to the fragile Palestinian community.

Guterres was responding to a letter penned by the Arab League Secretary General Ahmad Aboul Gheit warning Israel might exploit the pandemic to annex parts of the Palestinian territories, the Jordan News Agency reported.

The UN chief said such “unilateral Israeli actions” would jeopardize negotiations between the two groups, as well as kill other efforts of a peace deal.

Aboul Gheit had earlier urged the UN to take seriously Israel’s actions against regional stability and security.



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Thousands demonstrate against Israeli coalition deal
Pompeo: West Bank annexation plans an ‘Israeli decision’

[Jordan allows expats to leave without paying fines amid coronavirus pandemic](#)

Author:

Sun, 2020-04-26 09:08

DUBAI: The Jordanian government has agreed to waive all labor-related fines and fees for expat workers wanting to return to their home countries, state-run Jordan News Agency has reported.

The country's labor minister, Nidal Bataineh, has called on migrant workers to apply through Hemayah.jo, an online platform that coordinates their repatriation amid the coronavirus outbreak.

The application deadline is May 4.

Bataineh added fines and fees related to work permits will be waived, even for illegal migrant workers in the country.



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US pledges \$8 million aid in Jordan's coronavirus fight Jordan mulls further easing of coronavirus lockdown, to reopen some public institutions

Thousands demonstrate against Israeli coalition deal

Author:

By SHLOMO MOR | AP

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Sat, 2020-04-25 18:35

TEL AVIV, Israel: Several thousand Israelis on Saturday demonstrated against a unity government deal reached last week that leaves Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in power as he prepares to go on trial for corruption charges. The protesters oppose having Netanyahu as prime minister as long as he is a criminal suspect. The protesters say the unity government agreement, which gives Netanyahu influence over the appointment of judges and legal officials, "crushes democracy" and is meant to rescue Netanyahu from his legal troubles. Netanyahu is scheduled to face trial next month on charges of fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes. He denies the charges.

The protest filled central Tel Aviv's Rabin Square, although demonstrators maintained distance from each other in line with health regulations in place for weeks meant to halt the spread of the coronavirus. Protesters, wearing face masks, waved Israeli flags and signs calling out Netanyahu for corruption.

Netanyahu and former military chief Benny Gantz, leader of the Blue and White party, signed the power-sharing agreement after weeks of negotiations for what they termed a "national emergency" government meant to steer the country through the coronavirus outbreak.

The agreement delivered Netanyahu a significant boost as he fought to hold on to power while fending off the corruption charges. His party will gain influence over judicial appointments, which could help Netanyahu if his case reaches the Supreme Court.

The deal requires the approval of both parties on key appointments, including the attorney general and the state prosecutor, granting Netanyahu veto power over the officials who hold sway over his legal fate.



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