

IN BRIEF



Warne's gin distillery shifts to hand sanitiser
SYDNEY
Australian cricket great Shane Warne has halted production of gin at a distillery he co-owns to make medical-grade hand sanitiser for hospitals in these "challenging times". He responded to PM Scott Morrison's plea for companies to help during the COVID-19 crisis. The company halted gin production and is now pumping out 70% alcohol hand sanitiser. AFP



FB scrambles as use soars in time of isolation
SAN FRANCISCO
Facebook has said it would place "authoritative" coronavirus content at the top of user feeds as it scrambled to keep up with increased usage and stem the flow of misinformation on its platform and WhatsApp messaging. It has nearly doubled server capacity to power WhatsApp. AFP



Church forgives sins of those stricken by virus
VATICAN CITY
The Catholic Church on Friday granted forgiveness — under certain conditions — for the sins of the faithful struck by COVID-19. The Vatican decree also covers healthcare workers and relatives who care for their sick family members. The condition involves the sick saying a certain number of prayers. AFP

Dating prescription: chat now, meet later

In the time of pandemic, people take the 'opportunity' to know each other better before hooking up

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW YORK

With governments clamping down on social interactions to contain COVID-19 spread, dating sites are discouraging dates and asking users to get to know each other virtually instead.

"We don't know who needs to hear this, but now is NOT the time to go out with your date to a bar," leading match-maker OkCupid tweeted on Monday.

"FaceTime, Skype, call, text, call, message on our app... all very romantic right now," it added.

Dating sites contacted by AFP refused to divulge their traffic since COVID-19 starting shutting down U.S. cities this week but it appears their usage is far from slowing.

Even if some academics would like them to suspend their activities entirely. "It's time to shut down Tinder and all online dating services," tweeted U.S. writer Matt Stoller. "No more Internet-enabled interactions among random people until the #coronavirus crisis has passed," he added.



Love is viral: Sites are offering ideas for remote interactions, including an online video game date. • GETTY IMAGES

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COVID-19

Joking about COVID-19 has become popular on dating sites, although not necessarily effective at endearing matches to each other.

"If someone seems like they're not taking the crisis seriously or they're making fun of it for me personally that's a turnoff," said comedian and author Lane Moore. She helped created the show "Tinder Live," in which she interacts with matches in real time, and thinks COVID-19 could be an "opportunity" for people to bond.

"I'm talking to a guy right now who I met on Tinder

Live and we're both talking about how this coronavirus stuff is impacting our lives so that can be a good way to know somebody," she said.

Ms. Moore, from New York, says many of the men she meets on Tinder want to cut the conversation short and jump straight to meeting in the flesh.

She thinks it's a good thing that now men are being forced to chat more first.

"That's something that women have always wanted because it's an opportunity to meet someone you like the first time but also try to make sure that they're safe," Ms. Moore explained.

The dating site Coffee Meets Bagel (CMB) is proposing several different ideas for remote interactions, including an online video game date. "This is going to be important for us to think outside the box in crazy times like this," said CEO Dawoon

Kang. CMB is also organising an online group discussion, which it has never done before.

Jump in user base

Yale University student Ileana Valdez and five friends spent just a few hours setting up a dating site for students, whose classes have been cancelled.

The site, OKZoomer, a nod to the popular expression "Ok boomer", which millennials use to refer to older people, picked up 6,500 users in less than a week, according to Ms. Valdez.

"Social distancing allows us to focus on conversations and building up existing and new relationships," the computer science student said.

She feels that the big dating apps are focused on "hookups," and argues that OKZoomer sets the ground for "meaningful relationships."

Organisers postpone Cannes Film Festival

New dates may be in June-end, July

REUTERS
PARIS

The Cannes Film Festival, the world's largest, was forced to postpone its latest edition in May due to the spread of SARS-CoV-2, organisers of the annual event on the French Riviera said on Thursday.

The postponement follows weeks of speculation over whether the festival, which draws thousands of filmmakers, celebrities and executives to the city, would be able to go ahead between May 12-23.

"At this time of global health crisis, our thoughts go to the victims of the COVID-19 and we express our solidarity with all of those who are fighting the disease," the statement said.

France is in its third day of a lockdown aimed at containing the spread of the coronavirus. Almost 11,000

cases have now been officially diagnosed and 372 people have died.

The organisers, who had announced U.S. director Spike Lee as president of the jury, said that several new dates were under consideration, including the end of June-beginning of July.

'Not the first time'

It is not the first time the festival has been postponed. Its inaugural event in 1939 was cut short after the opening screening of the *Hunchback of Notre Dame* because of Germany's invasion of Poland the next day. The prizes were eventually awarded in 2002.

It was also interrupted in May 1968 amid student and labour protests sweeping across France.

The announcement is another blow to the film industry.

Finland is again world's happiest

'People feel a sense of belonging, trust and enjoy each other'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HELSINKI

Good cheer may feel in short supply as the world reels under a global pandemic, but experts at the UN on Friday declared Finland to be the world's happiest nation for the third year running.

Researchers for the World Happiness Report asked people in 156 countries to evaluate their own levels of happiness, and took into account measures such as GDP, social support, personal freedom and levels of corruption to give each nation a happiness score.

As in each of the previous seven reports, Nordic states dominated the top 10, along

with countries such as Switzerland, New Zealand and Austria.

Luxembourg also edged into the 10th spot for the first time this year.

The happiest countries are those "where people feel a sense of belonging, where they trust and enjoy each other and their shared institutions," John Helliwell, one of the report's authors, said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the countries at the bottom are those afflicted by violent conflicts and extreme poverty, with Zimbabwe, South Sudan and Afghanistan classified as the world's least happy nations.

Finland's top spot in the happiness list has previously been met with raised eyebrows in the country whose population of 5.5 million is said to shy away from spontaneous demonstrations of joy, valuing instead the quiet and solitude of the country's vast forests and lakes.

The country's long dark winters were reputed to be behind high levels of alcoholism and suicide, but a decade-long public health drive has helped cut rates by more than half.

Finland's residents enjoy a high quality of life and security, with rates of inequality and poverty among the lowest of all OECD countries.

Doctors on call, WhatsApp in Kashmir

Numbers shared on social media for patients to reach out for advice from home

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Hundreds of doctors in the Kashmir Valley on Friday volunteered to post their contact numbers on social media platforms to hold free online consultations for patients in order to control footfalls and mingling in hospitals and private clinics in view of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Dr. Salim Khan, Professor and Head of the Department of Community Medicine at Srinagar's Government Medical College, initiated the process, especially at tertiary care medical facilities like the Shri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital.



"We requested all hospitals and clinics to voluntarily share their contact numbers on social media so that patients can call them from their homes without venturing out. It will help a great deal in containing the spread of COVID-19 as hospitals are the most vulnerable spaces otherwise," said Dr. Khan.

There was a fast response to his call, with doctors volunteering contacts and setting up WhatsApp groups to attend to medical emergencies. The positive effect was visible as the Karanagar area of Srinagar, a hub of private clinics, saw negligible patient footfalls on Friday.

Swift response

"I attended to over 50 calls from patients on Friday. Since I know the medical history of many, I was able to prescribe drugs and attend to even severe cases. This has indeed helped to reduce patient flow to my private clinic as well as the hospital significantly," said Dr. Ar-

shad Hussain, Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Government Medical College.

The Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK), a body of Valley-based doctors, made public the numbers of 21 doctors.

"People suffering from general ailments can limit visiting hospitals as doctors have volunteered online consultations on WhatsApp groups as well as on telephone..." DAK president Dr. Suhail Naik said, adding, "This approach is going to decrease the large cohort of people visiting hospitals and is a successful method to contain the spread of COVID-19."

COVID-19 HAS SHOWN US THAT FAKE NEWS IS A REAL ISSUE.

It seems fake news on social media is spreading faster than the virus itself. And answers are harder than ever to come by. Now we aren't medical experts, but we know how to get to the truth. By thoroughly researching and verifying every word before it's actually printed. So in these uncertain times, might we ask you to wait. Wait before you share something you have no way of confirming. Wait until the truth in print makes its way to your doorstep.

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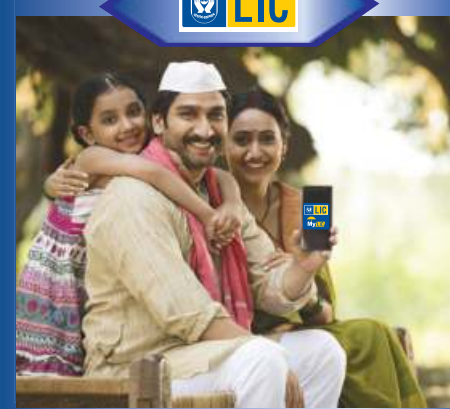
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