



Australia to host women's basketball World Cup in 2022

MIES, Switzerland (AP) — Australia will host the women's basketball World Cup in 2022 after winning a bidding contest with Russia. The International Basketball Federation (FIBA) said its board made the decision after seeing “two excellent presentations” by video conference link. Russia's basketball federation, led by former National Basketball Association (NBA) star Andrei Kirilenko, was able to bid despite the country facing a four-year ban from hosting world championships imposed by the World Anti-Doping Agency in December. The sanction is being challenged by Russia's anti-doping agency at the Court of Arbitration for Sport. The 2022 Women's World Cup will feature 12 teams instead of 16. FIBA said Sydney will host the event over 10 days in September and October, playing at two venues in the Olympic Park used for the 2000 Summer Games. Australia won the women's world title in 2006, and took silver and bronze in the past two editions both won by the United States. Russia was a three-time runner-up from 1998 to 2006.

Pakistani cricketers can play in T20 leagues around world

ISLAMABAD (AP) — The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) will allow its centrally contracted players to participate in a maximum of four Twenty20 leagues around the world, including the Pakistan Super League. The PCB said in a statement that its international cricket operations department and national team coach will assess a player's workload and international commitments before giving permission to compete in Twenty20 leagues in other countries. “The chief executive of the board will then be the final approving authority at the final stage of the process (of granting permission),” the PCB said. At present, several Pakistan cricketers play in major T20 leagues in Australia, England, Bangladesh, the West Indies, and South Africa. “We have given primacy and importance to player workload, international and domestic commitments, but at the same time it was important that players are given the opportunities to make additional earnings and develop their skills around the world,” PCB chief executive Wasim Khan said. Khan said the permission to a player once granted could only be revoked if there are any injury concerns or “there are international or domestic playing obligations that need to be fulfilled.”

Professor at Japanese university accused of espionage

BEIJING (AP) — A Chinese citizen who was working as a professor in Japan was detained in China for alleged espionage and has confessed to spying and other unspecified wrongdoing, Beijing's foreign ministry said. Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said the case against Yuan Keqin was backed up by “clear fact and conclusive evidence” and has been transferred to prosecutors. “He confessed to the crime,” Geng said at a daily briefing. The case is being “processed according to law” and his legal rights are being “fully protected,” he said. Yuan was a professor of East Asian political history at the Hokkaido University of Education in northern Japan. He has not been heard from by colleagues since last June, after he left to attend his mother's funeral in China the previous month. Chinese state security legislation is often extremely vague and can criminalize acts such as passing on research that could be retroactively labelled as confidential. Confessions are also widely relied on for convictions in lieu of hard evidence, and many who make them later say they were coerced through torture or threats. China demands strict political loyalty both from academics and students who go abroad and closely monitors their work and social-media postings for any content that could be considered subversive or disrespectful to the country's communist leadership.

Electronics maker Sharp making masks at display plant

TOKYO (AP) — Electronics maker Sharp Corp. is now making surgical masks, which are in high demand because of the virus outbreak, using a plant in central Japan that usually makes displays. Sharp, owned by Hon Hai Precision Industry Co., also known as FoxConn, of Taiwan, said mask production at its Mie prefecture plant started at 150,000 masks per day, then rose to 500,000 per day. Electronics displays are generally made in what are called “germ-free” plants for the sake of high quality, so small particles can't get into the manufacturing process, making it a good place for mask-making. Masks are hard to find on store shelves in many places. In Japan, long lines form outside some drug stores, even before they open. Japanese have long worn face masks to prevent spreading colds or alleviate allergies. That practice has grown more widespread since the recent outbreak of the novel coronavirus that causes the disease known as COVID-19. Shoppers have been clearing store shelves of other supplies seemingly directly unrelated to viruses, such as toilet paper and rice. Sharp, based in Osaka, Japan, said in a statement it hoped to contribute to society by making the masks.

Philippine rebels declare ceasefire to heed U.N. chief's call

MANILA, The Philippines — Communist guerrillas in the Philippines said they are observing a ceasefire in compliance with the U.N. chief's call for a global halt in armed clashes during the coronavirus pandemic. New People's Army guerrillas were ordered to stop assaults and shift to a defensive position from March 26 through April 15, the Communist Party of the Philippines said in a statement. The rebels said the ceasefire is a “direct response to the call of U.N. secretary-general Antonio Guterres for a global ceasefire between warring parties for the common purpose of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.” The communist insurgency has raged mostly in the Philippine countryside for more than half a century in one of Asia's longest-running rebellions.



UNCOMPENSATED WORK. Trainees work at Snowtex garment factory in Dhamrai, near Dhaka, Bangladesh, in this April 19, 2018 file photo. A survey of factory owners in Bangladesh has found that major fashion retailers that are closing shops and laying off workers in Europe and the U.S. are also cancelling their sometimes already completed orders, as workers often go unpaid. (AP Photo/A.M. Ahad, File)

Garment workers going unpaid as fashion labels cancel orders

By Julhas Alam and Elaine Kurtenbach
The Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh — A survey of factory owners in Bangladesh found that major fashion retailers that are closing shops and laying off workers in Europe and the U.S. are also cancelling their sometimes already completed orders, as workers often go unpaid.

A report released by Mark Anner, director of Pennsylvania State University's Center for Global Workers' Rights, says the coronavirus crisis has resulted in millions of factory workers, mostly women from rural areas, being sent home without the wages or severance pay they are owed.

About 4.1 million people work in apparel factories in Bangladesh, the world's No. 2 garment exporter after China. The South Asian country is beginning to feel the direct impact of the pandemic. But the shocks to its export markets have been cascading into its economy for weeks.

The disruptions from the virus outbreak are straining a fragile supply chain in which big buyers have been squeezing their suppliers for years. The government, having offered huge tax incentives to entice manufacturers and buyers to move to Bangladesh, has scant resources to help protect workers.

More than 1 million garment workers in Bangladesh already have lost their jobs or have been furloughed because of order cancellations and the failure of buyers to pay for cancelled shipments. Nearly 60% of the 316 factories that responded to the survey by the Center for Global Workers' Rights and the Worker Rights Consortium, a Washington, D.C.-based labor rights organization, said they

had already closed down most of their production.

About 6% of factories have had all orders cancelled due to the outbreak, while nearly 46% said they have lost a big share of their orders.

The survey, conducted March 21-25, included nearly 200 large suppliers with more than 750 workers that mainly make garments for European markets.

It found nearly all buyers refused to contribute to wages for those workers, and more than 70% of those furloughed were sent home without pay. Of the workers who were fired, less than 20% were given severance pay, the survey found.

Anner and other labor experts say the big fashion retailers are resorting to *force majeure* clauses in their contracts — usually used in case of natural disasters or war — to justify not paying manufacturers that have already paid for fabric and other materials and labor to make the orders. Earlier, suppliers were being penalized for late deliveries resulting from difficulties obtaining fabric or other materials due to factory shutdowns and other disruptions caused by the virus outbreak that originated in the central Chinese city of Wuhan.

Factory owners are unlikely to fight back out of fear they might lose future business once the crisis passes.

The virus outbreak “is showing us just how extreme that power imbalance is,” Anner said. “It's just an absolute disaster.”

The damage is not limited to the garments sector. The International Labor Organization has estimated that 25 million jobs may be lost

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Units per U.S. dollar as of 4/03

Bangladesh Taka	84.67
Cambodian Riel	4065.2
China Renminbi	7.0908
Fijian Dollar	2.2568
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7526
Indian Rupee	76.236
Indonesian Rupiah	16724
Iranian Rial	42025
Japanese Yen	108.52
Laos New Kip	8950.9
Malaysian Ringgit	4.356
Nepal Rupee	122.85
Pakistani Rupee	166.5
Papua N.G. Kina	3.42
Philippine Peso	50.89
Russian Ruble	77.12
Saudi Riyal	3.761
Singapore Dollar	1.4408
South Korean Won	1238.7
Sri Lankan Rupee	189.32
Taiwan Dollar	30.249
Thai Baht	33.03
Vietnam Dong	23607