

In the grip of fear

China is scrambling to contain a new virus that has killed more than two dozen people since January 11

December 31: China alerts the World Health Organization (WHO) about several cases of pneumonia in Wuhan. The virus is unknown

January 5: Chinese officials rule out the SARS virus, which killed more than 770 people worldwide during 2002-03

January 7: The virus is identified. It is from the coronavirus family, which includes SARS and the common cold,



On guard: Women with face masks walk in a shop decorated for the Chinese Lunar New Year in Bangkok, Thailand, on Friday.

and is named 2019-nCoV

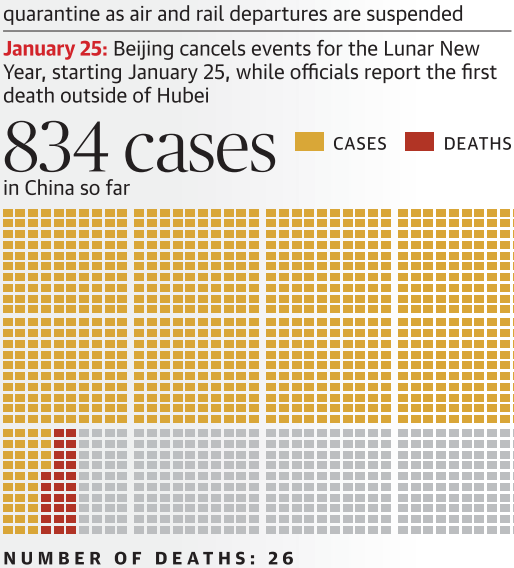
First death

January 11: China announces first death, that of a 61-year-old man who had purchased goods from the Wuhan market

January 20: China reports a third death and more than 200 infections, with cases also reported outside Hubei province, including in Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen

January 22: The death toll jumps to 17 with more than 550 infections

January 23: Wuhan is placed under effective



41 mn people in 13 cities locked down as virus spreads in China

WHO: China faces a national emergency; Medical workers being sent to Wuhan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE WUHAN

Chinese authorities rapidly expanded a mammoth quarantine effort aimed at containing a deadly contagion on Friday to 13 cities and a staggering 41 million people, as nervous residents were checked for fevers and the death toll climbed to 26.

While the World Health Organization (WHO) held off on declaring a global emergency despite confirmed cases in half a dozen other countries, China expanded its lockdown to cover an area with a total population greater than Canada's.

A range of Lunar New Year festivities have been cancelled, while temporary closures of Beijing's Forbidden City, Shanghai's Disneyland and a section of the Great Wall were announced to prevent the disease from spreading further.

The previously unknown virus has caused alarm because of its similarity to SARS (Severe Acute Respira-

tory Syndrome), which killed hundreds across mainland China and Hong Kong in 2002-03.

The WHO said China faced a national emergency but stopped short of making a declaration that would have prompted greater global cooperation.

The outbreak emerged in late December in Wuhan, an industrial and transport hub of 11 million people in China's centre, spreading to several other countries, including the U.S.

China is in the midst of its Lunar New Year holiday, a typically joyous time of family gatherings and public festivities.

But on Friday, Wuhan was a ghost town, its streets deserted and stores shuttered.

Worried patients

Hospitals visited by AFP journalists bustled with worried patients being screened by staff wearing full-body protective suits.

At a temperature-check



Dealing with the outbreak: Staff transporting medical supplies at the Wuhan Red Cross Hospital on Friday.

station, a medical staffer in bodysuit, face mask and goggles took a thermometer from a middle-aged woman, pausing to examine the reading before quickly turning back to the patient.

One 35-year-old man named Li voiced the fears of many. "I have a fever and cough, so I'm worried that I'm infected," he said. "I don't know the results yet."

With hundreds of millions of people on the move across China for the holiday, the government has halted all travel out of Wuhan, shut down its public transport and told residents to stay home. De-

pening the isolation, there were few flights available to the city.

Besides Wuhan, 12 other smaller cities nearby have battened down the hatches, with most of them going public on Friday with various measures ranging from closing public venues and restricting large gatherings to halting public transportation and asking citizens not to leave their cities.

Several of the cities have populations numbering several million, led by Huanggang, which has 7.5 million.

The pathogen – 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) – has caused many outlets in Shanghai, Beijing and other cities to sell out their stocks of face masks.

State broadcaster CCTV reported that 40 medical doctors from the military were being brought in to help with intensive care.

In addition, 405 medical workers were being sent to Wuhan from Shanghai, said state news agency Xinhua, with the first set of 135 flying in Friday night.

On Friday, staff in full body protective suits were seen checking the temperatures of people entering a subway station in Beijing.

Thermal cameras scanned passengers arriving at Beijing's West Railway Station.

'Work as one'

Chinese authorities said the number of cases leapt overnight to more than 800, with 177 in serious condition. There were another 1,072 suspected cases.

Officials also said that a virus patient died in Heilongjiang province in China's far northeast, the second death outside the Wuhan epicentre.

Hospital in Wuhan to be built within 10 days

1,000-bed facility is to treat the infected

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE BEIJING

China is rushing to build a new hospital in a staggering 10 days to treat patients at the epicentre of a deadly virus outbreak that has stricken hundreds of people, state media reported on Friday.

The facility in the central city of Wuhan is expected to be in use by February 3 to serve a rising number of patients infected by a coronavirus.

Dozens of excavators and trucks were filmed working on the site by State broadcaster CCTV.

The hospital will have a capacity of 1,000 beds spread over 25,000 square metres (270,000 square feet), the official Xinhua news agency said.

Construction began as reports surfaced of bed shortages in hospitals designated to deal with the



Construction underway at the site for a field hospital in Wuhan.

outbreak, which has now infected 830 people across China.

Xinhua said the new facility is aimed at "alleviating the shortage of medical treatment resources and improving the ability to care for patients".

"We've mobilised all the workers left in Wuhan to work in shifts to ensure round-the-clock construction," said Zhang Chongxi, manager of building group Wuhan Construction.

Section of Great Wall to be closed

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE BEIJING

China announced on Friday it will close a section of the Great Wall and other famous Beijing landmarks to control the spread of a deadly virus that has infected hundreds of people across the country.

A range of Lunar New Year festivities have been cancelled to try to contain the virus, and Beijing's Forbidden City and Shanghai's Disneyland have also been closed temporarily.

The Ming Tombs and Yanshan Pagoda will also be closed from Saturday, the authority that oversees the sites said, while the Bird's Nest stadium – the site of the 2008 Olympic Games – was shuttered from Friday till January 30.

The Juyongguan section will close. The Great Wall temple fair was cancelled at the Simatai section.

ELSEWHERE



Two dead in machine shop blast in Houston

HOUSTON

A massive explosion at a machine shop ripped through a Houston neighborhood on Friday. At least two people were killed and several injured while homes were damaged by the blast.

Johnson signs agreement for Britain to leave EU

LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson signed Britain's EU divorce deal on Friday after EU's top officials earlier did likewise. "Today I have signed the Withdrawal Agreement for the U.K. to leave the EU on January 31st," Mr. Johnson said in a tweet.

President Gotabaya's remarks on missing persons spark concern

Death certificates only after proper probe, his office clarifies

MEERA SRINIVASAN COLOMBO

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's recent remarks that those reported missing from the time of the civil war were "actually dead" have sparked concern among families of disappeared persons.

Relatives, mostly women, of thousands reported missing have been protesting in Sri Lanka's Tamil-majority north and east for nearly three years now, demanding that authorities share the whereabouts of their children/husband, forcibly disappeared during the years of the brutal war between the State armed forces and the

rebel LTTE. "We cannot accept the new President's remarks," said Leelathevi Anathanatarajah, secretary of the Association for the Relatives of the Enforced Disappearances in the North and East.

"My 34-year-old son surrendered to the Army at the Omanthai checkpoint, just after the war ended in May 2009. We were all there. They said they would question him and release him. I am still waiting," she said.

President Rajapaksa told the UN Resident Coordinator in a recent meeting that the missing persons were dead, adding that most were "taken by the LTTE or forcedly conscripted."

Ms. Anathanatarajah does not agree. "How can it be that those who surrendered to the Army were also killed by the LTTE? That too after they declared that the war had ended?" she asked.

Tamil MP M.A. Sumanthiran said: "President @GotabayaR seems to know that even those who were surrendered to the military AFTER the war ended have died! He should say HOW those 3,000 odd people died..."

The President said that after "necessary investigations", steps would be taken to issue death certificates and provide support for the families, his office said.

Brain injury to 34 troops in Iran strike: U.S.

REUTERS WASHINGTON

The Pentagon said on Friday that 34 service members had been diagnosed with traumatic brain injury following missile strikes by Iran on a base in Iraq earlier this month.

Last week, the U.S. military said 11 U.S. troops had been treated for concussion symptoms after the attack on the Ain al-Asad air base in western Iraq and this week said additional troops had been moved out of Iraq for potential injuries.

On Wednesday, President Donald Trump appeared to play down the injuries, saying he "heard that they had headaches".

Trump must be removed if found guilty, says Schiff

Democrats to make final arguments

REUTERS WASHINGTON

Democrats serving as prosecutors in U.S. President Donald Trump's impeachment trial in the Republican-led Senate will make their case he improperly interfered in Congress' probe of his dealings with Ukraine in their final day of arguments on Friday.

Democratic managers from the House of Representatives will try to convince Senators and the U.S. public that the Republican President is guilty of the charge of obstructing Congress for withholding key witnesses and documents from the investigation.

Democratic Representa-

tive Adam Schiff, the lead House manager, said Mr. Trump had used U.S. foreign policy for his own personal interest, and that failing to oust him from office would open the door to a "lot of damage".

"This is why if you find him guilty, you must find that he should be removed. Because right matters. Because right matters and truth matters. Otherwise we are lost," Mr. Schiff said in his closing argument on Thursday.

Once Democrats conclude their opening arguments, Mr. Trump's legal team will have up to 24 hours over three days to mount a defence.

Iraqis protest, seek ouster of U.S. forces

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE BAGHDAD

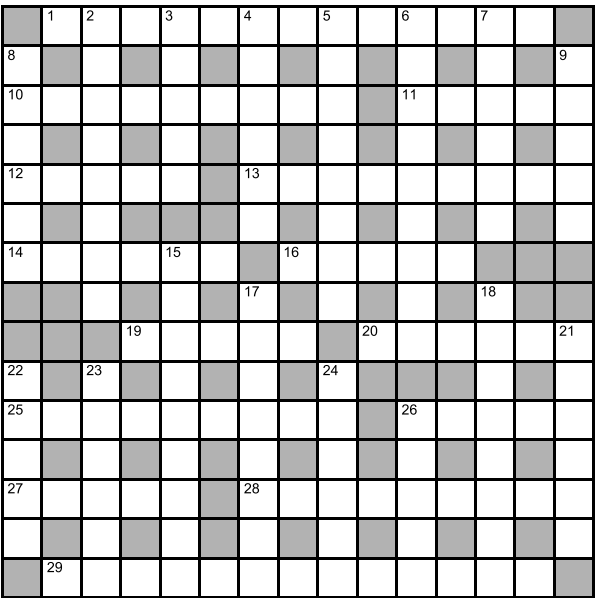
Thousands of supporters of populist Iraqi cleric Moqtada Sadr gathered in Baghdad on Friday for a rally to demand the ouster of U.S. troops, putting the protest-hit capital on edge.

The march rattled the separate, months-old protest movement that has gripped the capital and Shiite-majority south since October, demanding a government overhaul, early elections and more accountability.

Thousands of men, women and children massed under grey skies in the Jadriyah district of east Baghdad, chanting "Get out, get out, occupier!"

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12841

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



- 13 ...usually messes city layout to include parking lots (9)
- 14 Fight in bar to prevent refund of money at close (6)
- 16 Murderer overwhelms boy in room (5)
- 19 Coach tweets often on group of eight (5)
- 20 To eliminate lad in adrenalin rush is more stupid (6)
- 25 Confession through a direct message is, is retracted often heartlessly (9)
- 26 Man drowned in liquor has watery discharge from eyes (5)
- 27 Roshanara iterated about holding crown (5)
- 28 Uncovered ring; leading protest en masse, nationalists/fascists outmanoeuvred (4-5)
- 29 A sober man's morning begins energetically; totally a miracle, lifeless however (2,3,4,4)

- (set by Afterdark)
- 5 Say, Leander Paes is against alimony, with Pillai beginning to fight (8)
- 6 Choice in polls comes after collecting freebies ultimately (9)
- 7 Ancient lodge in ruins at the gateway to Athens (3-3)
- 8 Cocktail experts in pub, at closing are mingling with men from the borders (6)
- 9 Royals often go after billions, primarily extracting mineral (5)
- 15 Support cut symbolically? (9)
- 17 Perhaps, an NRI, on tours starts late, becomes anxious (8)
- 18 It's not crime to mingle and have communication within office, perhaps (8)
- 21 Thin? Getting married could cure (6)
- 22 Cake for father given by middle-eastern tenant at the end of birthday (5)
- 23 Mark served ultimatum to leave MIT (6)
- 24 Italian monk's seminal work lacking substance (6)
- 26 Creep flirts often. Fix (5)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12840												
M	U	G	A	B	E	N	O	V	E	M	B	E
E	U	A	R	J	V	N	E	O				
M	I	N	I	A	T	U	R	E	T	A	N	G
O	S	V	L	R	E	T						
R	O	M	E	O	I	N	T	E	R	P	O	S
I	I	E	A	T	N	D						
E	N	T	R	E	A	T	X	R	A	Y		
S	H	O					T	I	F	R		
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FAITH

The Acharya connection

Guru Parampara assigns a very high status to the acharya owing to his role in moulding the jivatma caught in samsara by guiding, correcting, teaching, and above all by being a living example to inspire him to attain God's feet, said Sri Srinivasa Gopala Maha Desikan in a discourse. The following accounts of what is believed to have happened in the case of devotees close to the Lord during Ramanuja's lifetime reflect the fact that the acharya's recommendation is a key factor in the jivatma's goal of salvation.

One Somayaji Andan, a great devotee of the Lord at Tiru Narayanapuram, was also a gifted musician who used to offer many melodious songs to the deity as his daily prayer. It is held that the Lord too enjoyed the music and in the vein of a true rasika would converse with him. As Somayaji was getting old, one day he put forth his petition to the Lord for a place in Paramapada. He was sure that his request would be granted. For, had He not favoured him especially by this gesture of listening to his music and even talking to him? Not many had been thus blessed. But no! The Lord tells him that granting Paramapada is no longer His jurisdiction. It rests with acharya Ramanuja.

A similar instance is quoted with reference to Tirukkacchi Nambi in Kanchipuram, who was well known for his personal service of to Lord Varadaraja and for his daily interactions with the Lord. Though this Nambi got precise answers for Ramanuja's doubts on esoteric matters directly from the Lord, it did not help him to secure Paramapada for himself from the Lord. He too was directed to seek Ramanuja to attain salvation. The guru-sishya relationship has been fostered around this belief that the acharya's responsibility is to guide the 'prapanna' safely to His abode.