

China battling spread as virus gets stronger

As death toll hits 56, country tightens curbs on movements and imposes temporary ban on wildlife sale

REUTERS
BEIJING/SHANGHAI

The ability of the new coronavirus to spread is strengthening and infections could continue to rise, China's National Health Commission said on Sunday, with more than 2,000 people in China infected and 56 killed by the disease.

Health officials around the world are racing to prevent a pandemic after a handful of cases of infection were reported outside China, including in Thailand, Australia, the U.S. and France.

The Mayor of Wuhan, the epicentre of the outbreak, said he expected 1,000 new patients in the city, which was stepping up construction of special hospitals.

The newly identified coronavirus has created alarm because much about it is still unknown, such as how dangerous it is and how easily it spreads between people. It can cause pneumonia, which has been deadly in some cases.

China's National Health Commission Minister Ma



On guard: A Chinese health worker checking the temperature of a passenger at a subway station in Beijing. ■AP

Xiaowei said the incubation period for the virus can range from one to 14 days, during which infection can occur, which was not the case with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

"According to recent clinical information, the virus' ability to spread seems to be getting somewhat stronger," Mr. Ma told reporters.

The Lunar New Year holiday, traditionally celebrated by hundreds of millions of Chinese travelling around the country and abroad to

see family, began on Friday but has been severely disrupted by the outbreak.

Mr. Ma said China would intensify its containment efforts, which have so far included transportation and travel curbs and the cancellation of big events.

The country may extend the week-long Lunar New Year holiday, state broadcaster CCTV reported, citing a meeting hosted by Chinese premier Li Keqiang.

The virus, believed to have originated late last year

in a seafood market in Wuhan that was illegally selling wildlife, has spread to cities including Beijing and Shanghai. Hong Kong has six confirmed cases.

China confirmed 2,051 cases of infection as of 7 p.m. (1100 GMT) on January 26, while the death toll from the virus remained at 56.

Health officials in Orange County, California, reported that a third case had been registered in the United States in a traveller from Wuhan, who was in isolation and in good condition.

Canada confirms a case
On Saturday, Canada declared a first confirmed case. Australia confirmed its first four cases.

No fatalities have been reported outside China.

On Sunday, China temporarily banned nationwide the sale of wildlife in markets, restaurants, and e-commerce platforms. Wild and often poached animals packed together in Chinese markets are blamed as incubators for viruses to evolve

and jump the species barrier to humans.

The New York-based Wildlife Conservation Society called on China to make the ban permanent.

U.S. plans evacuation

The U.S. State Department said it will relocate personnel at its Wuhan consulate to the United States, while Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said his government was working with China to arrange a charter flight for Japanese nationals to return from Wuhan.

The outbreak has prompted widening curbs on movements within China, with Wuhan, a city of 11 million, on virtual lockdown and transport links all-but severed except for emergency vehicles.

Health authorities in Beijing urged people not to shake hands but instead salute using a traditional cupped-hand gesture.

Beijing also postponed the reopening of the city's schools and universities after the Lunar New Year holiday.

UN says 'blatant' violations of Libya arms embargo continue

Last week, world leaders pledged to end foreign meddling

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CAIRO

The United Nations decried "continued blatant violations" by several countries of an arms embargo on war-torn Libya, flying in the face of pledges of peace made last week at an international conference in Berlin.

The UN support mission in Libya didn't name any specific nations, but said they included "several who participated in the Berlin Conference." Saturday's statement said these countries were supplying advanced weapons, armoured vehicles and foreign fighters.

Libya sits on Africa's Mediterranean coast, and is divided between rival governments, each supported by various armed militias and foreign backers. It has the ninth largest known oil reserves in the world and the biggest oil reserves in Africa.

The weak but UN-recognised government in the capital Tripoli is backed by



Peace derailed: Libyans take part in a demonstration against eastern strongman Khalifa Haftar in Tripoli. ■AFP

Turkey, and to a lesser degree Qatar and Italy. Rival forces loyal to military commander Khalifa Haftar receive support from the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, as well as France and Russia.

"Over the last ten days, numerous cargo and other flights have been observed landing at Libyan airports in the western and eastern parts of the country providing the parties with advanced weapons, armoured vehicles, advisers and fighters," the UN statement said.

The UN warned that continuing to funnel arms into the conflict threatens the "fragile truce" in Tripoli.

Officials said fighting erupted on Sunday as Mr. Haftar's Libya National Army advanced towards the western city of Misrata, which is Libya's second largest city and home to militias opposed to Mr. Haftar.

The clashes came just hours after the UN decried "continued blatant violations" of an arms embargo on Libya.

ELSEWHERE



Turkey earthquake death toll rises to 31

ELAZIG
The death toll from a powerful earthquake which struck eastern Turkey rose to 31, officials said, as rescue efforts continued. The magnitude 6.8 quake hit on Friday, with its epicentre in the small lakeside town of Sivrice in Elazig province but also affected neighbouring cities. Nearly 80 buildings collapsed while 645 were heavily damaged in Elazig and Malatya. ■AFP

Taal volcano calms down, evacuation orders lifted

MANILA
An explosive eruption of restive Taal volcano no longer appears imminent, Philippine authorities said on Sunday. They lifted most of a mass evacuation order but warned residents to remain ready to flee. The seismicological agency said steadily shrinking ash and gas emissions were signs of "decreased tendency towards hazardous explosive eruption". ■AFP

19 killed in attack on Mali army base

BAMAKO
Armed men attacked an Army camp in Mali near the border with Mauritania, killing 19 soldiers on Sunday. The camp in Sokolo in the Segou region remains under control by Malian Armed Forces, the armed forces said. The attack wasn't claimed but bears the hallmarks of jihadi groups linked to al-Qaeda based in the Wagadu forest. ■AP

'Get rid' of Ukraine envoy, Trump says on tape

Marie Yovanovitch was an 'impediment' to his alleged campaign to pressure Ukraine to dig up dirt on Biden

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Donald Trump demanded the dismissal of Marie Yovanovitch, the Ambassador to Ukraine and a key figure in the President's impeachment trial, according to a video recording released to U.S. media on Saturday.

The footage was reportedly taken during an April 2018 donor dinner at a hotel and released to news outlets by an attorney for Lev Parnas, an indicted associate of Mr. Trump's personal attorney Rudy Giuliani.

Mr. Parnas and his business partner Igor Fruman are key players in Mr. Trump's alleged campaign to

pressure the government of Ukraine to dig up dirt on Joe Biden, a potential election opponent for the President.

The issue is central to Mr. Trump's ongoing impeachment trial in the U.S. Senate.

His order to fire the Ambassador came after Mr. Parnas told him that Ms. Yovanovitch was an impediment, and claiming that she had privately disparaged the President. "Get rid of her!"

Mr. Trump says on the tape, reportedly addressing a White House aide at the dining table.

"Get her out tomorrow. I don't care. Get her out tomorrow. Take her out. OK? Do it."



Marie Yovanovitch

Images taken at an awkward angle appear at the start of the one hour, 23-minute long video.

The rest of the recording shows a tan background, as if the camera was covered, but

Mr. Trump's distinctive voice is clear.

In an interview with MSNBC News last week, Mr. Parnas said Mr. Trump "knew exactly what was going on" with his and Mr. Fruman's efforts to pressure Ukrainian authorities to investigate Mr. Biden.

His appearance came after Democrats released documents that showed Mr. Giuliani worked with Mr. Parnas to pressure Kiev to investigate Mr. Biden.

Both Mr. Parnas and Mr. Fruman were charged with violating U.S. campaign finance laws in October.

The documents also showed the pair, working

with Ukrainian officials, trying to force out Ms. Yovanovitch, who Mr. Trump eventually removed in May 2019. Saturday's recording corroborates much of what Mr. Parnas said in his TV interview, including that he knew Mr. Trump - something the President has denied.

Increased pressure

The release of the tape increases pressure on U.S. Senators to subpoena witnesses for the impeachment trial, a move several polls show has strong support among the U.S. public.

White House lawyers began Mr. Trump's defence in the trial on Saturday.

Rockets land near U.S. Embassy in Iraq capital

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BAGHDAD

A volley of rockets landed near the U.S. Embassy in the Iraqi capital Baghdad on Sunday, two security sources told AFP, in the latest unclaimed attack on American installations in the country.

One security source said three Katyusha rockets hit near the high-security compound while another said as many as five struck the area.

Later, Iraq's security forces said in a statement that five rockets hit the high-security Green Zone with no casualties. It did not men-

tion the U.S. Embassy.

The rocket fire comes two days after thousands massed in Baghdad in response to a call by populist cleric Moqtada Sadr for a rally to demand the ouster of U.S. troops from Iraq.

Meanwhile, Iraqi security forces shot live rounds to clear protests in Baghdad and the south for a second day on Sunday, but thousands of determined students flooded the streets to keep up their movement, demanding removal of what they consider a corrupt ruling elite and snap elections.

'U.S. won't lift curbs on Iran for dialogue'

Tehran had sought the withdrawal of sanctions as a precondition for talks

REUTERS
DUBAI

The United States will not lift sanctions on Iran in order to negotiate, U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted late on Saturday, seemingly in response to a *Der Spiegel* interview with Iran's Foreign Minister.

"Iranian Foreign Minister says Iran wants to negotiate with The United States, but wants sanctions removed. @FoxNews @OANN No Thanks!" Mr. Trump tweeted in English on Saturday and later in Parsi.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif responded on Sunday by tweeting an excerpt from the interview with German magazine *Der Spiegel* published on Friday, where he said Iran is still open to negotiations with U.S. if sanctions are lifted.

Raised tensions

"@realDonaldTrump is better advised to base his foreign policy comments & decisions on facts, rather than @FoxNews headlines or his Farsi translators," Mr. Zarif



Donald Trump

said in the tweet with the interview excerpt.

Tensions between Iran and the U.S. have reached

the highest levels in decades after the U.S. killed Iranian General Qassem Soleimani in a drone strike in Baghdad on January 3, prompting Iran to fire missiles days later at bases in Iraq where U.S. troops are stationed.

Tensions between the two have been increasing steadily since Mr. Trump pulled the United States out of Iran's nuclear pact with world powers in 2018 and reimposed sanctions that have driven down Iran's oil exports and hammered its economy.

Got threatened by Trump on Twitter: Schiff

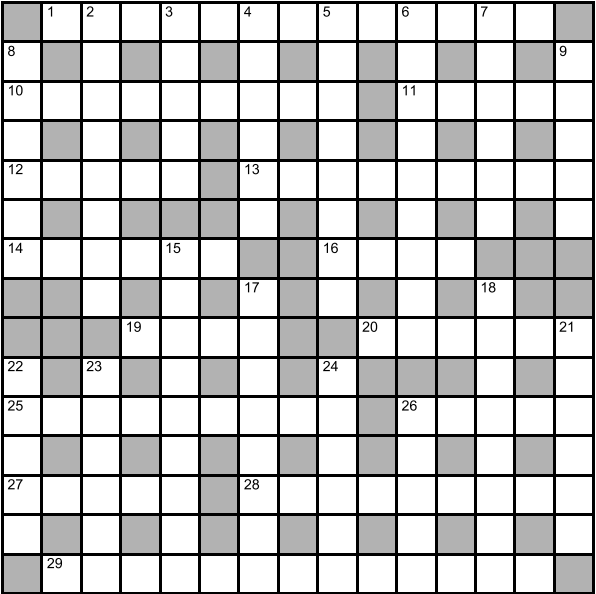
REUTERS
WASHINGTON

Democratic U.S. House impeachment manager Adam Schiff said on Sunday he believes Republican President Donald Trump's comment that he has not yet "paid the price" was intended as a threat.

Mr. Trump launched attack on Democrats, including Mr. Schiff, over the Senate impeachment trial earlier on Sunday, saying on Twitter "he has not paid the price, yet, for what he has done to our Country!"

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12842

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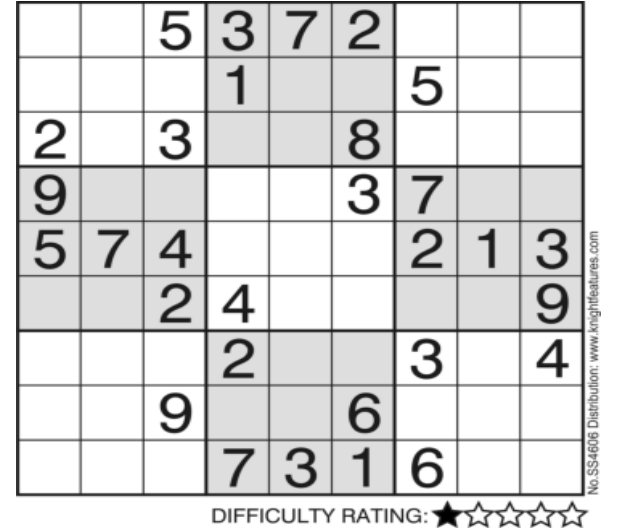


ACROSS

- 1 Surely a fine company to join out of college actively (13)
- 10 In England, it's good to have representative outside for union (9)
- 11 Clean road in South End junction (5)
- 12 Qualification one gets on leaving dolphin school (1,4)

- (set by Afterdark)
- 13 Perhaps, sedatives for large bullies struggling to control headache (9)
 - 14 No, it's not good; knife is a risk (6)
 - 16 Leaders exhorting vile intrantsigents? Likely to be bad (4)
 - 19 Branch of pound's keeping a mongrel at gate (4)
 - 20 Leak on famous Pro getting married (6)
 - 25 Best book when recollected, a line can be heart-warming (9)
 - 26 Popular official comes first once more (5)
 - 27 Seed capital? First get order, company can get acceleration (5)
 - 28 When side changes acting becomes likeable (9)
 - 29 Natives termed troubling in propaganda (13)
- DOWN
- 2 Worker has fine limbs (8)
 - 3 Romantic proposal by novice (5)
 - 4 Somehow use mother-in-law to make breakfast, say (6)
 - 5 At the end, trust held by old, demanding journalist is damaged beyond repair (8)
 - 6 Difference against one leaving middle class in budget (9)
 - 7 Pulse is fast, close to 150 (6)
 - 8 Simple. Two consecutive letters are without one in between (6)
 - 9 Rent large facility... (5)
 - 15 ...within Erode outskirts, one in Tamil Nadu to begin with, demolish and put away (9)
 - 17 A bank worker is rich (8)
 - 18 Spot corps being removed from battle at Indian border, perhaps (8)
 - 21 Control husband's time (6)
 - 22 Train on time to reach right away (5)
 - 23 Pro-conservative English duke is insincere (6)
 - 24 Pitches for topless, topless dancing (6)
 - 26 Leaders of Andhra lack any rationale; maybe a distress signal? (5)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12841

A	P	R	I	L	F	O	L	S	D	A	Y
B	E	E	B	L	L	E	G	B			
A	C	C	E	S	S	O	R	L	I	E	G
R	U	E	A	M	E	O	R				
M	I	L	A	N	T	I	C	A	L	L	
E	I	S	I	T	I	D	L				
N	E	A	R	B	C	A	B	I	N		
R	A	A	D	N	O	I					
P	U	O	C	T	E	T	I	N	A	N	E
A	D	M	I	S	S	I	O	N			
T	L	L	R	S	E	R	E				
T	I	A	R	A	O	P	E	N	F	A	C
Y	U	S	U	L	I	O	O	Y			
A	T	T	H	E	S	A	M	E	T	I	M

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

3	7	6	4	9	2	1	8	5
8	9	4	1	5	3	2	7	6
5	1	2	6	8	7	4	3	9
4	5	3	9	7	6	8	2	1
9	2	1	8	3	4	5	6	7
6	8	7	2	1	5	9	4	3
7	3	8	5	4	9	6	1	2
1	6	9	3	2	8	7	5	4
2	4	5	7	6	1	3	9	8

FAITH

Think big!

'Let a man have high thoughts even if he is not able to live up to his aims. It might be fulfilled at some point of time in his life perhaps.' This is a sample of the rich insights that make the Tirukkural ever relevant to the human race, Sri Tamizh-magan said in a discourse.

Any individual belonging to any culture, faith or century, and speaking any language, is sure to feel the far-reaching influence of the wisdom that the text disseminates. The literary beauties in the pithy couplets complement the profound thoughts they convey as is seen in the way many matter-of-fact statements are illustrated with word pictures drawn from day-to-day life that leave a lasting and unforgettable effect in the mind.

For instance, the essence of valour is captured in the image of one who aims a dart at an elephant and misses it; this is shown to be an act of greater courage than one who aims an arrow at a rabbit in the forest.

It is common sense to understand one's strengths and weaknesses in any undertaking. If one is not honest about this, he is sure to face failures. This idea is illustrated with a visual image. A cartload of peacock feathers may appear to be light; but if it is overloaded beyond its capacity, it is sure to break the wheel. This also shows that anything in excess is harmful and can cause disaster even if it is life-giving medicine.

There is a striking visual image to show how wealth is earned by saving small quantities of money; and how if by ill-luck one falls into misfortune, all this can leave him at one stroke. It is like the way people trek in one by one to attend a theatre performance. But when the show ends, the entire crowd is seen dispersing with great haste.



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