

U.S., Japan pull out nationals from Wuhan

Coronavirus death toll rises to 133; number of cases in China jumps to 5,974, surpassing that of SARS

REUTERS
BEIJING/GENEVA

The U.S. and Japan flew nationals out of Wuhan, the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak in China, on Wednesday, as the number of deaths rose by 27 to 133.

The World Health Organization said there was “deeply concerning” evidence of person-to-person transmission in other countries. It added that the Emergency Committee would reconvene on Thursday to decide whether the spread of the new virus now constitutes a global emergency.

“In the last few days the progress of the virus especially in some countries, especially human-to-human transmission, worries us,” WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a news conference in Geneva, naming Germany, Vietnam and Japan.

Beijing’s plans to slay what its leader called the “devil” coronavirus may have won the trust of the WHO, but



Staying safe: Children wearing face masks visit a park in Nara, western Japan, on Wednesday. ■ AP

confirmation of another 1,459 cases – taking the total to 5,974 in China – only fuelled global public alarm.

Almost all the deaths have been in the central province of Hubei, the capital of which is Wuhan, where the virus emerged last month in a live wild animal market.

The situation remained “grim and complex”, Chinese President Xi Jinping acknowledged. U.S. President Donald Trump said he had spoken to Mr. Xi and his administration was working closely with China on containing the outbreak.

The WHO’s panel of 16 in-

dependent experts twice last week declined to declare an international emergency, but will re-evaluate the situation on Thursday. “We are at an important juncture in this event. We believe these chains of transmission can still be interrupted,” said Mike Ryan, Executive Direc-

tor of the WHO’s Health Emergencies Programme.

Meanwhile, there was relief among evacuees from Hubei province, home to about 60 million people and under virtual lockdown. “I was extremely worried that I was stuck there,” said Takeo Aoyama, who arrived in Tokyo on a chartered plane carrying 206 Japanese out of Wuhan.

The U.S. flew about 210 citizens out of Wuhan, to be screened several times on arrival in California. Britain said it would put 200 citizens on a charter plane on Thursday.

The number of cases of the new virus in China now exceeds the 5,327 that were infected with the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which also originated in China and killed about 800 people globally in 2002 and 2003.

About 60 cases of the new coronavirus, but no deaths, have been reported in 15 other countries.

Will Trump’s peace plan help resolve Israel-Palestine crisis?

It favours Israel while seeking concessions from Palestine

STANLEY JOHNY

The West Asia peace plan unveiled by U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday seeks to give the Israelis what they have long wanted – an expansive state with Jerusalem as its “undivided capital” and tight security control over a future Palestinian state. With his plan, Mr. Trump is actually pushing to revive the stalled two-state talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians, but on his own terms.

What’s the plan?

The Trump plan seeks to address most of the contentious issues in the conflict such as the border of Israel, status of Palestinian refugees, Jewish settlements on the West Bank, Israel’s security concerns and the status of the city of Jerusalem. However, the solutions Mr. Trump has proposed to almost all of these issues favour the Israeli positions. For example, Israel would be allowed to annex the Jewish settlements on the West Bank as well as the Jordan Valley. The Palestinian refugees, who were forced out from their homes during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war that followed the declaration of the state of Israel in the historic Palestine, would not be allowed to return. They could move to the future Palestinian state, be integrated into the host countries or settled in other regional countries.

Jerusalem, perhaps the most contentious issue, would be “the undivided capital” of Israel, with Palestine gaining its capital in the east of the city. In return, Israel would freeze further settlement activities on the



A map of the proposed Palestine state tweeted by the U.S. President.

West Bank for four years – the time for negotiations. During this period, the Palestinian Authority should dismiss its current complaints at the International Criminal Court against Israel and refrain itself from taking further actions. It should also crack down on “terrorist” groups such as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. Mr. Trump has also proposed \$50 billion in investment over 10

EXPLAINER

years should Palestine accept the proposals.

In the final settlement, Palestine would get control over more land than what it currently controls. The plan also proposes to enlarge Gaza and connect the strip with the West Bank through a tunnel. The Arab towns in the southeast of Israel, which are close to Gaza, could become part of a future Palestinian state.

Will it work?

The Palestine position is that an independent, sovereign Palestinian state should be

formed based on the 1967 border (meaning the whole of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) with East Jerusalem as its capital (including the Old City that houses Haram esh-Sharif, also known as Temple Mount, a holy site for both Muslims and Jews). Issues like the right of return of the Palestinian refugees are to be settled in final negotiations. But Mr. Trump has effectively rejected the Palestinian claims and asked them to make more compromises. He seeks to give Jerusalem and about 30% of the West Bank to the Israelis and has denied the right of return of the Palestinian refugees – all for truncated sovereignty for the Palestinians in a state that would practically be surrounded by Israel. And for this, the Palestinians should take action against militant groups, stop supporting Palestinian families of those jailed or killed by Israel and refrain itself from questioning the occupation in international fora.

The Fatah party of President Mahmoud Abbas runs the Palestinian Authority on the West Bank, while Hamas is running Gaza. While there’s a bitter feud between these two, both sides, as well as the Islamic Jihad, have come together in rejecting the Trump plan. It would be difficult for any Palestinian leader to sell Mr. Trump’s proposals to a people who are living under occupation for decades. The Palestinians say the Trump administration, which recognised the disputed Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and supported the settlements on the West Bank, cannot be an impartial mediator for peace. The Trump plan seems to be underscoring this argument.

More airlines halt China flights

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
REUTERS
WUHAN/WASHINGTON

Airlines began suspending flights to and from China on Wednesday as global fears mounted over a coronavirus epidemic.

A growing number of governments – including the U.S., Britain and Germany – have advised citizens to avoid non-essential travel to China. China has urged its own citizens to delay trips abroad.

British Airways was the first major airline to announce a suspension of flights citing the travel advice of the foreign office.

It was followed by German flag carrier Lufthansa, one of Europe’s largest airlines, which said all flights to mainland China would be suspended until February 9.

The announcement included subsidiaries Swiss and Austrian Airlines.

Indonesia’s Lion Air Group, Southeast Asia’s biggest carrier by fleet size, said it would halt services to and from China from Saturday, and airlines from Myanmar and Nepal followed suit.

Hong Kong-based Cathay Pacific has reduced flights, citing low demand and the city government’s response plan to the virus.

American Airlines Group Inc., the largest carrier in the United States, said it would suspend flights from Los Angeles to Beijing and Shanghai, as demand had sagged amid the coronavirus outbreak in China.

Meanwhile, Kazakhstan, an important China trade partner, stopped issuing visas to Chinese citizens and said it would halt cross-border passenger train traffic and suspend flights.

In one of the most dramatic measures, the tiny Pacific nation of Papua New Guinea announced that no travellers from Asia would be allowed in.

UAE reports first case of virus in West Asia

REUTERS
DUBAI

Four members of a Chinese family who arrived in the United Arab Emirates from Wuhan have been diagnosed with the new coronavirus, the first known cases in West Asia, the UAE Health Ministry said on Wednesday.

The UAE is a major international air transport hub and its airport in Dubai is one of the world’s busiest.

The four were visitors and arrived in the country on January 16, Health Ministry official Hussein al-Rand

said. One family member, feeling unwell, attended a clinic on January 23 where they were diagnosed with the coronavirus.

In stable condition

The other three members were subsequently tested and also diagnosed with the virus. The family comprises a man and his wife, both 36, a child aged nine, and a grandmother aged 63, the official said.

All four are in a stable condition and under medical observation, the Ministry said in a statement.

ELSEWHERE



EU lawmakers give final nod to Brexit

BRUSSELS

Britain’s departure from the European Union was set in law on Wednesday as the bloc’s Parliament voted to ratify the divorce papers. The U.K. will leave the EU at midnight Brussels time on Friday. MEPs voted by 621 votes to 49 to pass the withdrawal agreement, which sees Britain leave the EU institutions but remain under most EU rules during a transition until the end of the year. The transition will see Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s government try to negotiate an ambitious free trade agreement with his 27 former partners remaining in the bloc. AFP

Trump attacks Bolton as Senate trial heats up

White House bars release of his book

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
REUTERS
WASHINGTON

Donald Trump on Wednesday blasted his former national security adviser John Bolton as he emerged as a potential 11th hour witness in the President’s impeachment trial.

Democrats are pressing for the Senate to subpoena Mr. Bolton after reports that his coming White House tell-all book corroborates the abuse-of-power impeachment charge against Mr. Trump. Mr. Bolton reportedly writes that the President personally told him in August that a freeze in military aid to Ukraine was directly linked to Mr. Trump’s

demand that Kiev announce investigations into Joe Biden, the current frontrunner for the Democratic presidential nomination.

In an early-morning tweet, Mr. Trump said Bolton, whom he fired in September, had shown poor judgement in a job he had begged for. “(He) goes out and IMMEDIATELY writes a nasty & untrue book. All Classified National Security. Who would do this?”

The White House has informed Mr. Bolton that his book manuscript appeared to contain “significant amounts of classified information” and could not be published in its current form.

U.S. House warns China not to meddle in Dalai Lama succession

Passes Bill on sanctions against Chinese officials

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

The U.S. House of Representatives on Tuesday voted to authorise sanctions against Chinese officials who interfere in the process of determining the Dalai Lama’s successor, raising pressure as the Tibetan spiritual leader approaches 85.

Under the legislation, Washington would freeze any U.S. assets and ban travel to the United States of Chinese officials found to be involved in “identifying or installing” a government-approved Dalai Lama.



The law would also prohibit China from opening any further consulates in the U.S. until Washington can open a mission in Lhasa, the Himalayan territory’s tightly restricted capital.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a longtime advocate for Tibet, said that the Bill aims to encourage Beijing to resume dialogue with envoys of the Dalai Lama that broke off a decade ago.

Beijing slammed the U.S. on Wednesday over the Bill, saying it “grossly interferes in China’s internal affairs”.

The Foreign Ministry urged the U.S. to “do more to benefit mutual trust and cooperation between China and the U.S. rather than the contrary”.

India urges direct talks between Israel, Palestine

‘Find an acceptable two-state solution’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India on Tuesday urged Israel and Palestine to engage directly and explore possibilities of finding an “acceptable” solution to the regional conflict. The comment from the official spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs came after U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday announced a new plan for resolving the crisis, which has been rejected by the Palestinian side.

“We urge the parties to engage with each other, including on the recent proposals put forward by the U.S., and find an acceptable two-state solution for peace-

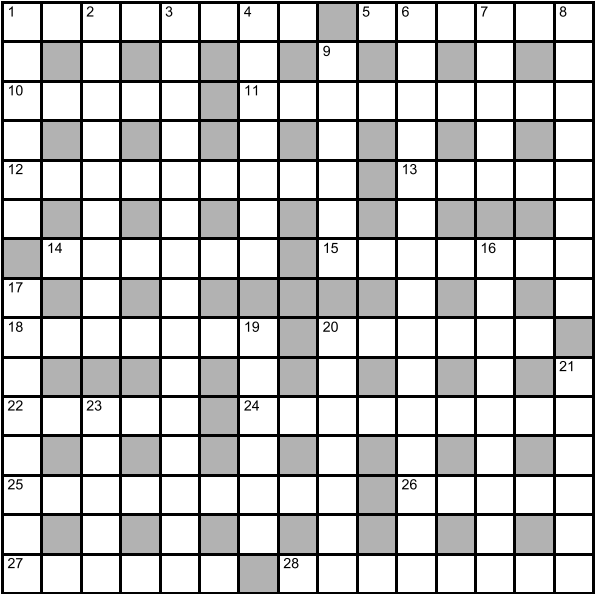
ful coexistence,” said MEA spokesperson Raveesh Kumar.

India has traditionally supported statehood for the Palestinian side and maintained that the two-state solution is the best guarantee for solution of the oldest post-World War II crisis in the West Asian region.

“We reiterate our view that the final status issues should be resolved through direct negotiations between the two parties and be acceptable to both,” said Mr. Kumar. Mr. Trump’s plan allows Israel to integrate the settlements built on the West Bank and Jordan Valley and recognises Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12845

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



- (set by Dr. X)
- 12 Drive into compact shopping center in America (5,4)
 - 13 Return container with most spicy tortilla chip (5)
 - 14 Ruses to avoid ultimately arduous fitness exercises (6)
 - 15 Model scoring ecstasy in sorrow shivers (7)
 - 18 Takes boxes filled with cocaine and heroin (7)
 - 20 Escort outside dive going backless to entice (6)
 - 22 Speak briefly with weird revolutionary; he’s pathetic (5)
 - 24 Eager fellow knocking back peg gets a strong desire to travel (5,4)
 - 25 Where spectacles might be exactly (2,3,4)
 - 26 One town torn asunder (2,3)
 - 27 Stressful time for Conservative in tears (6)
 - 28 Trouble with maiden worried eating companion in army (8)

- **ACROSS**
- 1 Extremely popular garden tools (2,6)
 - 5 Institution is close to infirmiry in a ghetto (6)
 - 10 Hospital in Middle Eastern city dismisses old director (5)
 - 11 Consuming cocaine in excess? Grass is better (9)
- **DOWN**
- 1 Cut defective menisci to eliminate source of misery (6)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12844												
D	R	O	P	O	N	E	S	G	U	A	R	D
M	O	W	E	R	C	O	L	D	S	W	E	A
A	A	I	R	E	A	D	H					
S	T	R	I	P	T	E	A	S	E	F	I	R
S	D	H	E	T	D	E	G					
P	A	S	T	E	U	P	E	R	I	T	R	E
R	E	G	A	N	O							
O	S	L	A	M								
U	F	O	S		S	P	A	R	E	P	A	R
C	T	E		T	E	L	G					
E	N	R	O	L	M	E	N	T				
I	U	S										
S	P	I	L	L	T	H	E	B	E	A	N	S

FAITH

No fear of death

Vallalar, because of his jnana, knew that anyone who had sought refuge at Muruga’s feet would be saved from the cycle of births and deaths, said M.A. Manickavelu in a discourse. Vallalar says that he is not afraid of rebirth, because Brahma would not dare give another birth to a devotee of Muruga. Nor does he fear Yama. As for Brahma, he will not trouble Muruga’s devotees, for he will remember how he (Brahma) was once imprisoned by Muruga. Yama will remember how Lord Siva kicked him once and saved Markandeya.

Sage Mrikandu had no children, and prayed to Lord Siva. Siva granted him the boon, but with a condition. He said that Mrikandu had a choice. He could either have a son who would live long, but would be wicked. Or he could have a son with sterling character, but who would live only for sixteen years. The sage and his wife chose the latter option. A son was born to them and he was named Markandeya. As the Lord had promised, the boy was everything that could be desired in a son. The boy worshipped Lord Siva every day. When he was sixteen, his parents told him about the Lord’s words. But upon hearing that his days were numbered, Markandeya consoled his parents and said, he was confident that the Lord would save him from death.

He worshipped the Lord with vilva leaves and Yama was unable to take Markandeya’s life because he was holding on tightly to the linga. Yama threw his rope to pull Markandeya away from the linga, for the linga was protecting him. In the process, the rope went round the linga too. When Yama pulled the rope, Siva emerged from the linga and kicked Yama away. So Vallalar says that Yama would not have forgotten this kick, and will, therefore, not disturb devotees.



To play an interactive version of this crossword online, scan the QR code