

WHO declares virus outbreak a global emergency

Our greatest concern is its potential to spread to countries with weaker health systems, it says; toll increases to 213

REUTERS SHANGHAI

The death toll in China from the new coronavirus reached 213 on Friday, with overall cases worldwide rising rapidly in an outbreak that the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global health emergency.

The death toll in Hubei, the Chinese province at the centre of the epidemic, had risen to 204 and there were more than 9,800 cases of infection nationally, Chinese health authorities said. More than 130 cases have been reported in at least 25 other countries and regions.

Meanwhile Russia, Britain, Sweden and Italy all reported their first cases.

After holding off as the crisis grew, the WHO said on Thursday the epidemic in China – which originated from animals in Wuhan city – did constitute a public health emergency of international concern.

In response, spokeswoman Chunying said China

had taken comprehensive and rigorous prevention and control steps. "We have full confidence and capability to win this fight," she said.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO director-general, said the organization "doesn't recommend – and actually opposes" restrictions on travel or trade with China.

Nonetheless, foreign governments have been flying home their citizens from Hubei and holding them in quarantine, while airlines including Air France, American Airlines and British Airways have stopped flying to mainland China.

Airlines are facing mounting pressure by cabin crew to stop all flights due to unease about exposure to the virus.

Stocks around the world have tumbled on fears of the economic fallout from the outbreak in the world's second-biggest economy.

The roughly 60 million residents of Hubei province, where Wuhan is the capital,



Precautionary measure: Health workers using thermal scanners to check the temperature of students at a school in Manila, the Philippines, on Friday. AP

have had movements curbed to try and slow the spread. But some people were leaving and entering the area by foot on a bridge over the Yangtze river, a Reuters witness said, and infections

have jumped in two cities flanking Wuhan.

Delayed action

Wuhan should have taken measures sooner to contain it, the city's Communist Par-

ty chief said on Friday.

The impact of the virus on the rest of China and on the world "would have been less" if the containment measures had been implemented sooner, Ma Guoqiang said in

a nationally televised interview.

While Mr. Tedros praised China's response in a news conference in Geneva on Thursday evening, he said the WHO was declaring a global health emergency because it was concerned about the virus spreading to countries that did not have the resources to deal with it.

"The main reason for this declaration is not because of what is happening in China but because of what is happening in other countries. Our greatest concern is the potential for the virus to spread to countries with weaker health systems," he said.

The WHO move will trigger tighter containment and information-sharing guidelines to all countries, but may disappoint Beijing, which had expressed confidence it can beat the "devil" virus.

China's U.N. Ambassador, Zhang Jun, said Beijing was assessing the declaration.

Do not travel to China, U.S., Japan tell citizens

REUTERS SHANGHAI/BEIJING

The U.S., Japan and others tightened travel curbs to virus-hit China on Friday while businesses struggled with supply problems from an epidemic that has infected nearly 10,000 people.

"Do not travel to China due to novel coronavirus first identified in Wuhan," the U.S. State Department said, raising the warning for China to the same level as Afghanistan and Iraq.

Japan also advised citizens to put off non-urgent travel to China, while Bah-

rain recommended no travel to any country hit by the virus, and Iran urged a ban on all travellers from China.

Singapore stopped entry of passengers with a recent history of travel to China and also suspended visas for Chinese passport holders.

Mongolia said it will close all ports of entry from and into China until March 2. It will give its citizens currently in China until February 6 to return home, however, though non-Chinese foreign nationals travelling to Mongolia will not be able to do so via China.

U.K., Russia report cases, Italy declares emergency

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE BRIZE NORTON

Two patients from the same family in England have tested positive for coronavirus, the first such cases in Britain, health chiefs said on Friday as an evacuation flight brought Britons home from the centre of the outbreak in China.

"The patients are receiving specialist National Health Service (NHS) care and we are using tried and tested infection-control procedures to prevent further spread of the virus," said England's chief medical officer,

Chris Whitty.

Russia said on Friday that two Chinese citizens had tested positive for the new coronavirus in the country's first cases since the deadly outbreak emerged in China, and announced new travel restrictions.

The Italian government declared a state of emergency on Friday to fast-track efforts to prevent the spread of the virus strain after two cases were confirmed in Rome.

A Chinese couple visiting Italy from Wuhan had tested positive for the virus.

75,000 in Wuhan got infected, says study

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE PARIS

More than 75,000 people – 10 times the official tally of confirmed cases – have been infected with the coronavirus in Wuhan, according to research published on Friday.

"We estimate that 75,815 individuals have been infected in Wuhan as of January 25, 2020," a team led by Gabriel Leung from the University of Hong Kong reported in *The Lancet*.

As of January 31, the Chinese government said the number of confirmed cases

had risen above 9,700 for all of China, including 213 deaths.

A time lag between infection and symptom onset, delays in infected persons getting medical treatment, and the time needed to confirm cases with lab tests "could all affect overall recording and reporting," he said.

The study found that each person infected with the virus, which emerged in December, could have infected two to three individuals on average, and that the epidemic had doubled in size every 6.4 days.

Trump likely to be acquitted

Republicans move to block additional witnesses in President's trial in the Senate

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN WASHINGTON

With a key Senator declaring that he would vote against new witnesses in the impeachment trial of U.S. President Donald Trump, the President is likely to be acquitted before the close of Friday's Senate session. GOP Senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee said Mr. Trump's relationship with Ukraine were inappropriate but not grounds for his removal.

"It was inappropriate for the President to ask a foreign leader to investigate his political opponent and to withhold U.S. aid to encourage that investigation," Mr. Alexander, who is retiring this year, said via a statement. "But the Constitution does

not give the Senate the power to remove the President from office and ban him from this year's ballot simply for actions that are inappropriate."

Mr. Trump was impeached by the House of Representatives in December for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. A House Democrat-led inquiry had concluded that Mr. Trump withheld aid for Ukraine to put pressure on the government to launch investigations into former Vice President Joseph Biden, and his son, Hunter.

"The question then is not whether the President did it, but whether the U.S. Senate or the American people should decide what to do



Lamar Alexander

about what he did. I believe that the Constitution provides that the people should make that decision in the presidential election that begins in Iowa on Monday," Mr. Alexander said.

Democrats would like to hear testimony from former National Security Adviser John Bolton, who had said,

as per reports of a leaked book manuscript, that Mr. Trump had asked him to withhold aid pending Ukraine's announcement of investigations.

A minimum of four Republican senators would need to vote with their 47 Democratic colleagues to get the 51 votes required to summon new evidence and witnesses. In addition to Mr. Alexander, Democrats were hopeful that three others would vote with them – Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Susan Collins of Maine and Mitch Romney of Utah.

Ms. Collins has said she will vote for new witnesses and Mr. Romney has indicated he is also likely to vote that way.

'Up to 64 U.S. soldiers injured in Iran strike'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE WASHINGTON

The number of U.S. troops injured by an Iranian missile strike in Iraq this month has risen to 64, according to new figures released by the Pentagon.

U.S. President Donald Trump had initially said no Americans were hurt by the missiles fired on a base housing U.S. soldiers on January 8.

The soldiers have been diagnosed with mild traumatic brain injury (TBI).

The Pentagon said on Wednesday that 50 soldiers were injured in the Iranian strike on the Ain al-Asad base. The latest total is an increase of 14 on those numbers.

Erdogan hits out at Arab 'treason' over Trump plan

He questions their silence on the issue

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE ANKARA

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday blasted several Arab countries for backing a West Asia peace plan unveiled by the United States, condemning it as "treason."

"Some Arab countries that support such a plan commit treason against Jerusalem, as well as against their own people, and more importantly against all humanity," Mr. Erdogan told his party's provincial heads in Ankara.

Mr. Erdogan, a strong advocate of Palestinian rights, singled out Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Oman.

"Saudi Arabia in particular, you are silent. When will you break your silence? You look at Oman, Bahrain, and Abu Dhabi is the same," he said.

"Shame on you! Shame on you! How will those hands that applaud (the plan) give an account of this treacherous step?"

U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday unveiled the details of the long-awaited plan aimed at resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Ambassadors of Oman, the UAE and Bahrain were at the White House event in Washington. The three countries do not recognise Israel as a legitimate state.

ELSEWHERE



U.S. support to Ukraine is unwavering: Pompeo

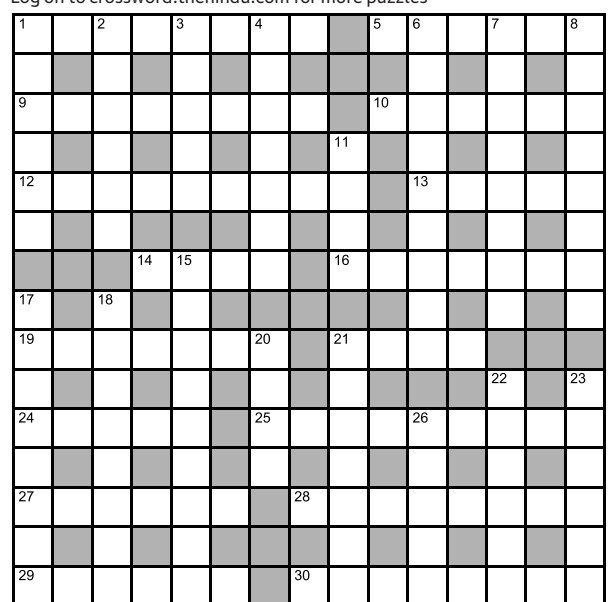
KIEV U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Washington's support for Ukraine was unwavering during a visit on Friday to the country, which is at the heart of the impeachment trial against President Donald Trump. AFP

'Afghan violence rises amid U.S.-Taliban talks'

KABUL Violence in Afghanistan's war jumped to record levels in the last quarter of 2019, a U.S. government watchdog said on Friday, underscoring the conflict's continued toll despite a relative calm in Kabul. AFP

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12847

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- (set by KrisKross)
- 12 Settle near a place to make a fresh beginning (6,3)
 - 13 Dismiss old soccer player with foot broken (5)
 - 14 It is used to raise a fruit (4)
 - 16 Soldier crashed lorry carrying case of dynamite (7)
 - 19 "Saw" for "see" perhaps (7)
 - 21 Terrible bumpy ride (4)
 - 24 Nigerian capital of a Rani perhaps (5)
 - 25 Fruit bite Ernie prepared (9)
 - 27 Wear a false beard (6)
 - 28 US State made law a reality, essentially (8)
 - 29 It's ultimately arid, with withered trees (6)
 - 30 Say, thousand and one regents at war around India (8)
 - 3 Many leave to complain, say (5)
 - 4 Resort owner with extremely thick circle of friends (7)
 - 6 Nurse, forced to hug doctor, finally turned scarlet and quit (9)
 - 7 Plan special prices on... (8)
 - 8 ...coats, also very defective (8)
 - 11 Philosopher from unknown US city, needing no introduction (4)
 - 15 Great king once entered a country to meet queen (9)
 - 17 Man in Madrid watering hole's empty counter... (8)
 - 18 ...stabs Paris don when fighting (8)
 - 20 Flyers go in reverse (4)
 - 21 Brown's gone away to prison (7)
 - 22 "Constant speed – copy?" (6)
 - 23 Soldiers wearing best possible caps (6)
 - 26 Delight from uplifting English story (5)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12846

P	E	D	I	C	A	R	S	P	A	R	R	O	T
O	I	R	U	A	L	L	O	O					
D	E	S	P	A	I	R	G	O	O	D	M	A	N
J	I	T	C	N	A	O	A	E					
U	M	I	A	K	S	T	I	F	F	E	N	E	D
M	L	D	O	N	T	O							
P	O	I	N	T	S	O	F	V	I	E	W		
E	S	W	E	T	A	R	C	I	N				
P	U	T	O	N	E	S	O	A	R	I	N		
I	L	A	B	E	L	G	S	A	B				
S	T	R	A	W	P	O	L	L	H	E	A	V	E
O	T	H	A	O	T	L	A						
D	O	L	E	O	U	T	O						
J	E	L	S	O	U	M	I						
C	A	S	H	E	S	P	S	A	L	M	I	S	T

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Impermanence of life

Tamil literature speaks of the impermanence of life in beautiful verses, said Malayaman in a discourse. To think worldly possessions will last is nothing but foolishness, and this is highlighted by Thiruvalluvar. Early in the morning, we notice dewdrops on blades of grass. But as the day advances and gets hotter, the dewdrops evaporate. Our body is like the dewdrop. It will perish one day, says *Naaladiyaar*.

If you shoot an arrow from a bow, the arrow goes flying, and with it its shadow goes away too. Just as the arrow goes away without leaving a trace behind, so will the pleasures we enjoy in our youth vanish, says *Nattrinai*. A person may possess a strong, healthy body. He may have an imposing appearance. That does not mean his youthful joys will last forever, says *Kalithogai*. There is no soul that is permanently attached to the body, says *Nalvazhi*. *Kuntalakesi* also speaks of the temporary nature of life, and wonders why we do not ponder over the nature of life. It points out that when a child is conceived, it spends time in the mother's womb. Thus, are ten months of its life lost. Then it spends some years in childhood. Then the person experiences the pleasures of adulthood. Then old age comes upon him. Thus, every day, we move a step closer to the grave.

Why do we not shed tears over all this, asks *Kuntalakesi*. We marvel at imposing buildings. But in course of time, they may become dilapidated, says *Narunthokai*. Does this not mirror our lives on this earth? Kumaraguruparar says youth is akin to bubbles of water, which disappear after some time. Wealth is like the ocean waves, which recede after touching shore. This body is like letters written on water. Why do we not learn from these examples in nature, and turn our thoughts to God, he asks.

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