

Thousands on cruise ship disembark after tests

3,600 were quarantined onboard in Hong Kong for five days over fears that some staff could have contracted the virus

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE HONG KONG

Thousands of people stranded aboard a cruise ship in Hong Kong for five days were allowed to disembark on Sunday after its 1,800 crew tested negative for the deadly new coronavirus.

Health authorities in the financial hub said the crew and a similar number of passengers had been released from a quarantine imposed because of fears some staff could have contracted the deadly virus on a previous voyage and passed it on.

The World Dream carried three Chinese passengers to Vietnam between January 19 and 24. They were later found to be infected with the SARS-like coronavirus, which has killed more than 800 people in China since it emerged in December.

The government grounded the ship on its arrival in Hong Kong on Wednesday while tests were carried out on the crew, but said the passengers need not undergo examination as they had no contact with the three sick holidaymakers on the January trip.

First found in the city of Wuhan in central China last



Safe exit: Passengers disembarking from the World Dream at Kai Tak Terminal, Hong Kong, on Sunday. (GETTY IMAGES)

December, the virus has infected more than 37,200 people on the Chinese mainland and at least 36 in Hong Kong.

The passengers and crew isolated on the vessel had been expecting to stay aboard until Tuesday after Hong Kong authorities said testing would take at least four days.

No self-quarantine But chief port health officer Leung Yiu-hong said on Sunday “all tests have results this afternoon and are all negative”.

He added that passenger testing was deemed unnecessary because they were at relatively low risk. All 3,600 onboard will not be required to self-quarantine after leaving.

As he left the ship, passenger Rocky Chan said quarantine conditions had been “okay”, though his time on board had caused him a few problems.

Vice-president of marketing at Dream Cruises, Phoebe Yip Ching-man said the company arranged for dozens of coaches to take passengers into the city, while free hotel rooms were booked for the more than 100 foreign passport holders who needed them.

Officials finally began to seal the borders on January 23. But it was too late. Speaking to reporters a few days after the city was put under quarantine, the Mayor estimated that 5 million people had already left.

The travel patterns broadly track with the early spread of the virus. The majority of confirmed cases and deaths have occurred in China, within Hubei province, followed by high numbers of cases in central China, with pockets of infections in Chongqing, Shanghai and Beijing as well.

“It’s definitely too late,” said Jin Dong-Yan, a molecular virologist at Hong Kong University’s School of Biomedical Sciences. “Five million out. That’s a big challenge. Many of them may not come back to Wuhan but hang around somewhere else. To control this outbreak, we have to deal with this. On one hand, we need to identify them. On the other hand, we need to address the issue of stigma and discrimination.”

Public health officials and academics have been using this kind of mapping data for years to track the potential spread of disease. The last trains left Wuhan the morning of January 23, cutting off a surge of outbound travel that had begun three days earlier, Baidu data shows. Nearby cities rushed to impose travel restrictions of their own.

Researchers note that travel patterns after restrictions started rolling out on January 23 will not match historical norms and that the cities they identified are initial ports of landing; travelers could have subsequently moved elsewhere.

Where did 5 million people go?

ASSOCIATED PRESS SHANGHAI

For weeks after the first reports of a mysterious new virus in Wuhan, millions of people poured out of the central Chinese city, cramming onto buses, trains and planes as the first wave of China’s great Lunar New Year migration broke across the nation. Some carried with them the new virus that has since claimed over 800 lives and sickened more than 37,000 people.

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Travel patterns An Associated Press analysis of domestic travel patterns using map location data from Chinese tech giant Baidu shows that in the two weeks before Wuhan’s lockdown, nearly 70% of trips out of the central Chinese city were within Hubei province.

Baidu has a map app that is similar to Google Maps, which is blocked in China. Another 14% of the trips went to the neighboring provinces of Henan, Hunan, Anhui and Jiangxi. Nearly 2% slipped down to Guangdong province, the coastal manufacturing powerhouse across from Hong Kong, and the rest fanned out across China. The cities outside Hubei province that were top destinations for trips from Wuhan between January 10 and January 24 were Chongqing, a municipality next to Hubei province, Beijing and Shanghai.

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ELSEWHERE



Israel preparing map for West Bank annexations

Israel has begun to draw up maps of land in the occupied West Bank that will be annexed in accordance with U.S. President Donald Trump’s proposed peace plan, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said. “We are already at the height of the process of mapping the area that... will become part of the state of Israel,” Mr. Netanyahu said. REUTERS

Thai soldier shot dead after he killed 29

Angry over a house deal gone wrong, he carried out the massacre, says PM

REUTERS NAKHON RATCHASIMA

A soldier angry over a property deal gone sour killed at least 29 people and wounded 57 in a rampage that spanned four locations in and around the northeastern Thai city of Nakhon Ratchasima before he was shot dead early on Sunday.

Most of the victims were at the city’s Terminal 21 shopping centre, where the shooter held out against an over-

night siege with an assault rifle and ammunition stolen from his army base.

Police named him as 32-year-old soldier Jakrapanth Thomma. He initially posted written messages on Facebook during the attack before his account was shut down by the company.

“It was a personal conflict... over a house deal,” Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha told reporters on Sunday from Nakhon Ratch-

asima after travelling there to meet wounded survivors. Mr. Prayuth added that the conflict was with a relative of the soldier’s commanding officer, who was one of the people reported killed.

Hundreds of shoppers fled the mall in groups crouching low, and the police and Army launched several rescues during the more than 12-hour standoff, with armed forces at one point emerging at a run carrying small children.

A survivor said that the shooter was “aiming for the heads” and said his col-

league died on the scene. “He was shooting everywhere and his shots were very precise,” said the man, identified as “Diaw”.

According to local media, Jakrapanth worked at an Army base. He was a sharp shooter and took many special courses on carrying out attacks, including planning ambushes, army sources said. Thai media reported he often posted photos of weapons on social media.

Hours before he began shooting on Saturday, Jakrapanth had posted on his Facebook account denouncing

greedy people. “Rich from cheating. Taking advantage of other people. Do they think they can spend the money in hell?” read one post in Thai.

He later posted written updates during the attack. “Death is inevitable for everyone,” he wrote. Later, he complained about his fingers cramping and asked “Should I give up?” before the account was no longer available.

Hours after the mall siege began, Facebook said it had removed the suspect’s account.

Switzerland votes for law against homophobia

Switzerland on Sunday voted in favour of a new law against homophobia in a referendum. Final results showed 63% voted in favour of widening existing laws against discrimination on ethnic or religious grounds to include sexual orientation. AFP

Iran launches satellite but it fails to reach orbit

Iran “successfully” launched a satellite into space on Sunday but it fell short of reaching orbit. Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi admitted in a tweet that the launch “failed”, adding: “But We’re UNSTOPPABLE! We have more Upcoming Great Iranian Satellites!” AFP

Political gridlock looms for Ireland

Exit poll suggests three-way tie, with Sinn Fein making gains

REUTERS DUBLIN

Ireland began counting votes on Sunday in a national election that an exit poll indicated would show a historic breakthrough for left-wing nationalists Sinn Fein but leave a fractured political landscape with no clear path to a governing coalition.

In a major realignment, Sinn Fein support surged 50% to bring it into joint first place on 22% with Fine Gael and Fianna Fail, the two centre-right parties that have dominated Irish politics for a century, according to the poll released on Satur-



Counting of votes underway at Nemo Rangers GAA club in Cork, southern Ireland. (AFP)

day evening after voting ended.

But Sinn Fein, the former political wing of the Irish Republican Army, which has reinvented itself as the country’s main left-wing party, is

likely to fall behind the other two because it fielded fewer candidates for Parliament.

Early counting appeared to back up the exit poll findings.

“I think it’s the most extraordinary exit poll in the history of state and the most extraordinary election in the history of the State... because of the rise of Sinn Fein,” said Gary Murphy, Professor of Politics at Dublin City University.

Fine Gael vs. Fianna Fail Prime Minister Leo Varadkar’s Fine Gael and rival Fianna Fail are likely to be

left slugging it out for first place in terms of seats – before starting what is set to be a tortuous process of forming a government in the 160-seat Parliament.

“I think it will be very tight, the parties (Fine Gael and Fianna Fail) are very close,” Fine Gael Minister Richard Bruton told Reuters, adding that he saw “no flinching at all” in Fine Gael’s position of refusing to govern with Sinn Fein.

Counting under Ireland’s complex single transferable vote system began on Sunday with some results expected from early afternoon.

Russian plane lands on its belly

It was on the tarmac when landing gear malfunctioned

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE MOSCOW

A Russian plane carrying 100 people crash-landed on its belly in the north of the country after experiencing problems with landing gear on Sunday, the company and officials said, adding no one was seriously hurt.

The Utair Boeing was buffeted by a sudden change in wind direction as it was landing at Usinsk airport, the airline said, and it was already on the tarmac when it suffered a malfunction.

None of the 94 passengers or six crew members were badly injured, the airline said, adding, however, that



Hard landing: The passenger plane that was involved in the hard landing at Usinsk airport on Sunday. (REUTERS)

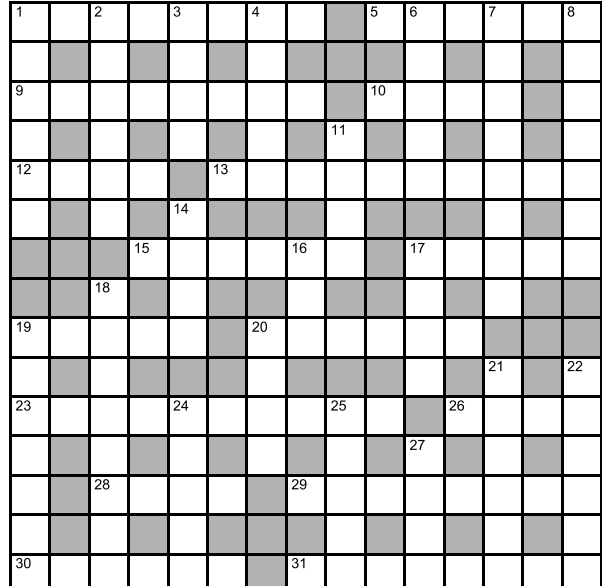
one passenger sought medical assistance.

“Thanks to the crew’s quick and highly-professional actions it was possible to

keep the plane on the landing strip until it came to a full stop,” Utair said. The passengers and crew evacuated via emergency slides

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12854

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



ACROSS
1 Get on with winner, setter and dandy (3,2,3)
5 Stick with island politician’s drink (6)
9 Model makes standard jibe in the morning (8)
10 Almost obstruct alliance (4)
12 Issue that US newsmagazine recalled (4)

DOWN
1 Mark takes part in face-off (6)
2 Trade Union’s rule to alternate guild is extended (6)
3 With time, it waits for no man (4)
4 Musical composition is limited enjoyment to way-out visitor (5)

(set by Gridman)
13 Where different cultures blend, there emerges top (7,3)
15 Long-suffering sort, gentleman is creative at heart (6)
17 Three points awarded to May without a contender (5)
19 Dangerous sub starts uttering bloody objectionable, atrocious threats (1-4)
20 More rubicund international misses the steering aid (6)
23 Nothing unusually push in journeys made in these vessels (10)
26 Reportedly unhurried in finding berry (4)
28 Goa’s roving guide at start is excited (4)
29 Unfair arrangement in the tailor’s (6-2)
30 Hate revolutionary journalist’s examination (6)
31 Bold strip drawn over Indian press employee (8)

6 Male edges to single cut fruit (5)
7 Welcomed a duplicate record by Edward (8)
8 Understanding eastern master’s course to basic yoga (7)
11 Celebrity hurls back expletive (4)
14 Scurry by American lawyer extremely redundant (4)
16 Fifty per cent of us heard a letter (3)
17 Hardly bumpy match is pared down (4)
18 Boy has nil complaint against strength-increasing drug (8)
19 Said bishop left milk product for hungry Enid (7)
20 Russian company personnel in German industrial region (4)
21 Had lot to be thrown as outdated... (3-3)
22Chief gathers tops of plastic empties in a pile.. (6)
24 Saintly one in terrible soup (5)
25 Built in whichever direction (3,2)
27 Show sign of life – just fair by half (4)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12853

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

Solution to yesterday’s Sudoku

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