

# Virus cases spread outside China

South Korea, Iran and Italy see a jump in infections; WHO says turning point reached in Wuhan

**REUTERS**  
BEIJING/SEOUL

Italy, South Korea and Iran reported sharp rises in COVID-19 cases on Monday, but China eased curbs as the rate of infection there slowed and a visiting World Health Organization team said a turning point had been reached in the epicentre, Wuhan.

The virus has put Chinese cities into lockdown in recent weeks, disrupted air traffic to the workshop of the world and blocked global supply chains for everything from cars and car parts to smartphones.

But China's actions, especially in Wuhan, have probably prevented hundreds of thousands of cases, said the head of the WHO delegation in China, Bruce Aylward, urging the rest of the world to learn the lesson of acting fast.

"The world is in your debt," Mr. Aylward, speaking in Beijing, told the people of Wuhan. "The people of that city have gone through an extraordinary period and they're still going through it."

Mr. Aylward said multiple data sources suggested that the rate of infection in Wuhan was falling. "They're at a point now where the number of cured people coming out of hospitals each day is much more than the sick going in." But he added: "One of the challenges obviously is the strain on the system ... they still have tens of thousands of sick people."

Liang Wannian of the National Health Commission said only that the rapid rise had been halted and the situation was still grim. He said more than 3,000 medical staff had become infected, most of them in Hubei province surrounding Wuhan, probably due to the lack of protective gear and to fatigue. Excluding Hubei,

mainland China reported 11 new cases, the lowest since the national health authority started publishing nationwide daily figures on January 20.

The coronavirus has infected nearly 77,000 people and killed more than 2,500 in China, most of them in Hubei. Overall, China reported 409 new cases on the mainland, down from 648 a day earlier, taking the total number of infections to 77,150 cases as of February 23. The death toll rose by 150 to 2,592.

**29 countries affected**

Outside mainland China, the outbreak has spread to about 29 countries and territories, with a death toll of about two dozen, according to a Reuters tally.

South Korea reported 231 new cases, taking its total to 833. Many are in its fourth-largest city, Daegu, which became more isolated with Asiana Airlines and Korean Air suspending flights there until next month.

Iran, which announced its first two cases last Wednesday, said it now had 61 cases and 12 deaths. Most of the infections were in the Shia Muslim holy city of Qom.

Elsewhere in West Asia, Bahrain and Iraq reported their first cases, and Kuwait and Oman reported a combined total of five cases involving people who had been in Iran.

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan imposed restrictions on travel and immigration from Iran. Afghanistan also reported its first case, officials said.

Europe's biggest outbreak is in Italy, with some 150 infections - compared with just three before Friday - and a sixth death.

Justice delivered: Harvey Weinstein, right, entering New York City Criminal Court on Monday in New York City. \*AFP



Global score: Women wearing masks in downtown Tehran on Sunday. \*AP

## Tehran rejects claim of 50 deaths in Qom

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
DUBAI

A staggering 50 people have died in the Iranian city of Qom from COVID-19 this month, a lawmaker said on Monday, even as the Health Ministry insisted only 12 deaths have been recorded nationwide.

The new toll reported by

the Qom representative, Ahmad Amirabadi Farahani, is significantly higher than the 47 total cases of infections that state TV had reported just hours earlier.

However, the Health Ministry said total infections rose to 61, but deaths remained at 12.

## Pakistan quarantines 200 near Iran border

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
QUETTA

Pakistan began quarantining at least 200 people near the Iranian border, officials said on Monday, as fears spiralled over the growing toll from COVID-19 in the region, amid allegations of a

coverup in Iran.

In Balochistan province, authorities quarantined more than 200 people after Shiite Muslim pilgrims returning from Iran briefly interacted with other residents. Earlier, Pakistan sealed off its land border with Iran.

## China bans wildlife trade, consumption

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
BEIJING

China on Monday declared an immediate and "comprehensive" ban on the trade and consumption of wild animals, a practice believed responsible for the deadly coronavirus outbreak.

The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), the country's top legislative panel, approved a proposal "prohibiting the illegal wildlife trade, abolishing the bad habit of overconsumption of wildlife, and effectively protecting the lives and health of the people," state television reported.

That prohibition after SARS virus killed hundreds in 2002-03 was short-lived.

# Turmoil in Malaysia as PM Mahathir Mohamad resigns

Move comes after allies sought to block Anwar from taking over

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
KUALA LUMPUR

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad resigned on Monday in a shock move after his political allies sought to bring down the government and block the succession of leader-in-waiting Anwar Ibrahim.

It came after months of rising tensions in the "Pact of Hope" coalition, which stormed to a shock victory in 2018 against a corruption-plagued government that had ruled Malaysia for six decades.

But there were calls for Mr. Mahathir, the world's oldest leader at 94, to stay in office from allies, who insisted he had not backed the formation of a new government and had quit in disgust at the plot.

The political drama began on Sunday when Mr. Anwar's rivals from the ruling coalition and opposition politicians held a series of meetings, stoking speculation a new alliance was taking shape.

That coalition would reportedly have excluded Mr. Anwar, Mr. Mahathir's presumptive successor and a former opposition icon who



Mahathir Mohamad

was jailed for years on questionable sodomy charges, blocking his ascent to the premiership.

**Interim leader**

With the fate of the government still uncertain on Monday, Mr. Mahathir submitted his resignation to the king. The monarch accepted it, but appointed him interim leader until a new premier is found, according to an official statement.

Mr. Anwar - who has a famously stormy relationship with Mr. Mahathir - said the premier assured him "he played no part" in attempts to form a new government.

The proposed new coalition was reportedly set to include the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) - the party of disgraced ex-

leader Najib Razak, which was ejected from office two years ago.

Mr. Anwar and Mr. Mahathir put their differences aside and joined forces to take on a corruption-plagued government in the 2018 polls. Mr. Mahathir, who previously served as premier from 1981 to 2003, had made a pre-election pledge to hand power to Mr. Anwar but has repeatedly refused to fix a date.

Shortly before his resignation, Mr. Mahathir's Bersatu party quit the ruling coalition and several lawmakers resigned from Mr. Anwar's party, leaving the Pact of Hope in tatters and fuelling suggestions efforts could be underway to form a new alliance. Mr. Mahathir also quit as Bersatu chairman.

Ibrahim Suffian, who heads independent polling firm Merdeka Centre, said Mr. Mahathir could come back as premier and the crisis may work in his favour. "It gives him an opportunity to reshape the ruling coalition," he said.

The final outcome of the drama was far from clear, however, and analysts said a snap poll could be called.

## Assange put lives in danger: U.S.

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
LONDON

The U.S. government began outlining its extradition case against Julian Assange in a London court on Monday, arguing that the WikiLeaks founder is not a free-speech champion but an "ordinary" criminal who put many lives at risk with his secret-spilling.

U.S. authorities want to try Mr. Assange on espionage charges that carry a maximum sentence of 175 years in prison over the 2010 publication of hundreds of thousands of secret military documents and diplomatic cables. Mr. Assange argues he was acting as a journalist entitled to First Amendment protection.

Lawyer James Lewis, representing the U.S. government, called WikiLeaks' 2010 document deluge "one of the largest compromises of classified information in the history of the U.S."

"Reporting or journalism is not an excuse for criminal activities or a license to break ordinary criminal laws," he said.

## Democrats will stop Sanders, says Trump

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
AGRA

U.S. President Donald Trump predicted on Monday that the Democratic Party leadership would prevent front-runner Bernie Sanders from becoming his candidate.

Mr. Sanders' leftist politics alarm many moderate Democrats, who fear that if he heads the ticket in the election, the party could face sweeping losses.

Mr. Trump has nicknamed Mr. Sanders as "Crazy Bernie" for his socialist policies. "They [Democrats] are going to take it away from 'Crazy Bernie,' they are not going to let him win," he said during a visit to India.

# Weinstein guilty of sexual assault, rape

Disgraced producer was handcuffed and sent to jail, in landmark #MeToo verdict

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
NEW YORK

Harvey Weinstein was convicted on Monday of rape and sexual assault against two women and was immediately handcuffed and led off to jail, sealing his dizzying fall from powerful Hollywood studio boss to arch-villain of the #MeToo movement.

Weinstein, 67, had a look of resignation on his face as he heard the verdict that could send him to prison for up to 29 years. "This is the new landscape for survivors of sexual assault in America, I believe, and it is a new day. It is a new day because Harvey Weinstein has finally been held accountable for crimes he committed," Dis-



Justice delivered: Harvey Weinstein, right, entering New York City Criminal Court on Monday in New York City. \*AFP

trict Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. said. "Weinstein is a vicious, serial sexual predator who used his power to threaten, rape, assault and trick, humiliate and silence his victims," he added.

Weinstein was convicted

on charges stemming from a 2006 sexual assault and a 2013 rape. The jury found him not guilty on the most serious charges, two counts of predatory sexual assault, each carrying a sentence of up to life in prison.

The jury of seven men and five women took five days to convict him. The most damaging conviction, for the sexual assault of a production assistant, carries up to 25 years behind bars. The rape charge is punishable by up to four years. Sentencing was set for March 11.

Judge James Burke ordered Weinstein taken to jail immediately. Court officers surrounded Weinstein, handcuffed him and led him out of the courtroom without the use of the walker he relied on for much of the trial. The judge said he will request that Weinstein be held in the infirmary after his lawyers said he needs medical care following an unsuccessful back surgery.

## 10 injured as car rams into crowd at German carnival

Driver drove into them 'at full throttle'

**REUTERS**  
BERLIN

Ten people were injured on Monday after a car ploughed into a carnival parade in the western German town of Volkmarshausen, police said, adding that the driver had been arrested.

Police declined to say if it was an accident or if the driver had deliberately rammed the car into the crowd.

German news website HNA cited witnesses as saying the driver appeared to have deliberately targeted children and had driven into the crowd "at full throttle".

The incident comes less than a week after a man gunned down 11 people, in-

cluding himself, in one of the worst racist attacks in Germany since the Second World War.

Dirk Richter, police spokesman in the nearby city of Kassel, told Welt TV: "Everything we have available from the Kassel area is there."

Carnival is hugely popular in western Germany, especially in Rhineland cities such as Cologne and Dusseldorf, where festivities peak on "Rose Monday" with thousands attending street parades featuring comical or satirical floats.

German media said the driver deliberately broke through plastic barriers around the parade area.

## ELSEWHERE



**Human rights under assault globally: UN chief**

**GENEVA**

UN chief Antonio Guterres launched a "call to action" on Monday against rising attacks on human rights, highlighting political polarisation, the persecution of minorities in many countries and "alarming levels of femicide". AFP

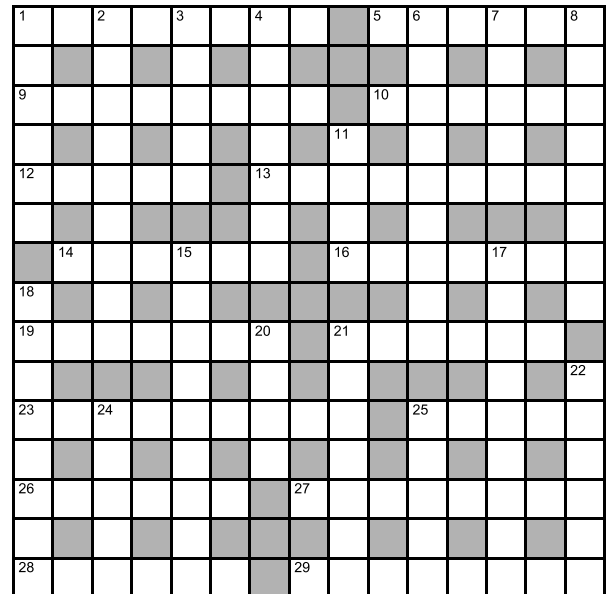
**Voting begins to find Corbyn replacement**

**LONDON**

Members of Labour party began voting on Monday for a new leader to replace leftist Jeremy Corbyn. Brexit spokesman Keir Starmer is the front-runner. Rebecca Long-Bailey and Lisa Nandy are also in the fray. AFP

## THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12867

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



- (set by Lightning)
- 12 One that is proper, at first painful and insensitive (5)
  - 13 Long story about second gemstone belonging to bishops (9)
  - 14 Not enough to mark chapter on electromotive force (6)
  - 16 Fit sailor, wearing headgear, left with energy (7)
  - 19 France correct to confiscate electronic goods (7)
  - 21 Everyone entering autonomous program for a ticket (6)
  - 23 Can't meet at sea without new law (9)
  - 25 Mysterious saint returns with quickness (5)
  - 26 Theme of article about royal flier (6)
  - 27 Are vents designed for old people? (8)
  - 28 Mislead American man around oriental lake (6)
  - 29 Initial element of problem incomplete with old information (8)
  - 2 Vehicle primarily bought by relative, perhaps it is precious (9)
  - 3 Soothe segment of dorsal vertebrae (5)
  - 4 Old boy at a part of movie becomes offensive (7)
  - 6 First son of king nearly joins one mate (9)
  - 7 Poor boy protecting European (5)
  - 8 Pears lie scattered by trellis (8)
  - 11 Short dance - it may be compact (4)
  - 15 This man could be indispensable (5,4)
  - 17 Loud sound with energy reverberated, it may come back (9)
  - 18 Assumed a fellow resolved defect (8)
  - 20 Join at right grade (4)
  - 21 Physical contact - it could help start a car (7)
  - 22 Greed is only withholding inventor (6)
  - 24 Unusual sensation before attack at a mountain range (5)
  - 25 Fleece quiet listener (5)

- ACROSS**
- 1 Pots providing extra support (8)
  - 5 A treaty curtailed by governor of tribe (6)
  - 9 Negligent, left engineer amidst stroke (8)
  - 10 Multi-car collision at eastern rim (6)
- DOWN**
- 1 Black spice ground with muscles (6)

## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

**Solution to puzzle 12866**

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

**Solution to yesterday's Sudoku**

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

## FAITH

### Dangers of gambling

The Mahabharata has many messages for us. One of them is that we should never gamble, said V.S. Karunakarachariar in a discourse. The Mahabharata story had its origin in the unwise act of Yudhishtira, who gambled everything away, including his family. He not only gambled, but his bet was with a trickster. Yudhishtira staked his family in the gamble, and this was what led to a whole chain of unfortunate events in the lives of the Pandavas, ultimately culminating in the Kurukshetra war.

For every story there is some precursor. At the core of the Mahabharata story lies a warning about the dangers of betting. This is seen in another story, in the Adi Parva of Vyasa's Mahabharata. Here the story of Kadru and Vinata is told. The two were sisters, married to sage Kashyapa. Kadru was the cunning one, while Vinata was naive. One day, the two sisters saw Uchaisravas, the divine horse. Vinata remarked on how white the horse was. Kadru saw in this remark an opportunity to torment her sister. So, she said, "It is white all over, but has a black tail." She also challenged Vinata and said that if Vinata were proved wrong, then she would have to be Kadru's slave. The clever Kadru asked her sons, who were all snakes, to drape themselves around the tail of the horse, to make it appear black. When the sons did this, the tail appeared black, and Vinata had to admit that her sister was right. Vinata then became Kadru's slave. She was ill-treated by Kadru, and until her powerful son Garuda rescued her, she remained a slave.

In agreeing to Kadru's bet, Vinata made a grave mistake. We should not think of ourselves as slaves to anyone. We are the servants of Lord Narayana alone. That is perfectly natural. Enslavement to anyone else is wrong.