

Wildfires that threatened Australia's capital, Canberra, over the weekend have been brought under control as containment lines held and hot and windy conditions eased, prompting authorities to lift a state of emergency. While fire in the Australian Capital Territory has spread to more than 55,000 hectares, the heat fuelling the danger is subsiding.



TOP OF THE WORLD



Khan is set to go on a 2-day visit to Malaysia

ASIA  
Imran to visit Malaysia after missing Muslim nations summit

Islamabad: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan will embark on a two-day visit to Kuala Lumpur from Monday to placate the Malaysian leadership after he skipped a major summit of Muslim nations reportedly under pressure from Saudi Arabia. According to Pakistan's Foreign Office, Khan will visit Malaysia on February 3-4 on the invitation of Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohamad. Khan's visit is viewed as a "damage control" exercise by local media. He had confirmed his participation in the December summit hosted by Malaysia, but then skipped it due to pressure exerted by Saudi Arabia — a key financial backer of cash-strapped Pakistan.

BRITAIN  
Shaadi.com under fire over 'discrimination'

London: India's leading matrimonial website, Shaadi.com, has come under fire in the UK for allegedly reinforcing caste-based discrimination with an option for Scheduled Castes to be left out of algorithms. The website is the UK's largest marriage site catering to the Indian community. According to a report in *The Sunday Times*, a profile set up for a higher caste person was not offered lower caste matches unless they adjusted their preferences to include all castes. While Shaadi.com denied caste-based bias, a barrister has warned that there might be a potential breach of the UK's Equality Act.

USA  
Two dead in shooting after Florida funeral

Riviera Beach: Gunfire erupted after a funeral Saturday in Florida, killing a teenager and a man and leaving one other person wounded, police said. Riviera Beach police said in a statement that the shooting happened near the Victory City Church shortly after 2.30 pm. They said a 15-year-old boy and 47-year-old Royce Freeman died at the scene. The teen's name wasn't immediately released. Police said listening devices in the area that detect the sound of gunshots counted 13 rounds fired.

DEATH TOLL CROSSES 300

First coronavirus death outside China reported in Philippines

RYAN WOO & ENRICO DELA CRUZ  
BEIJING, MANILA, FEBRUARY 2

THE PHILIPPINES on Sunday reported the growing epidemic of a coronavirus has claimed its first fatality outside of China, where new confirmed infections jumped by a daily record to top 14,000 cases.

The Philippines Department of Health said a 44-year-old man from Wuhan city in central Hubei province, the epicentre of the outbreak, had died in a Manila hospital after developing severe pneumonia.

It was the first death out of more than 130 cases reported in around two dozen countries and regions outside of mainland China.

The man who died was a companion of a 38-year-old Chinese woman, also from Wuhan, who was the first and only other person to test positive for the virus in the Philippines. Both patients arrived in the Philippines via Hong Kong on Jan. 21.

China's death toll from the out-



'PLEASE TAKE MY DAUGHTER': Lu Yuejin, a 50-year-old farmer, pleads with police to allow her daughter to pass a checkpoint for cancer treatment after she arrived from Hubei province at the Jiujiang Yangtze River Bridge in Jiangxi province, China. Her daughter, 26-year-old Hu Ping, has leukaemia and was unable to receive a second round of chemotherapy treatment in the overwhelmed hospitals of provincial capital Wuhan. Reuters

break reached 304 as of the end of Saturday, state broadcaster CCTV said on Sunday, citing the country's National Health Commission.

China is facing mounting isolation as other countries intro-

duce travel curbs, airlines suspend flights and governments evacuate their citizens, risking worsening a slowdown in the world's second-largest economy.

On Sunday, state media re-

ported that construction of one of two hospitals in Wuhan dedicated to treating coronavirus patients has been completed. Huoshenshan, a hospital with 1,000 beds, was built in eight

VIRUS WON'T TURN YOU INTO A ZOMBIE, MALAYSIA SAYS

Kuala Lumpur: The coronavirus will not cause victims to act like zombies, Malaysia's government said, as officials act to correct the spread of misinformation regarding the outbreak. Some social media users in Malaysia had made a connection between the virus and the walking dead. The country's health ministry dismissed the rumour in a tweet, saying: "The claim that individuals infected with this virus will behave like zombies is not true... Patients can recover."

Anti-China sentiment spreads around world

HYUNG-JIN KIM  
SEOUL, FEBRUARY 2

A SCARY new virus from China has spread around the world. So has rising anti-Chinese sentiment, calls for a full travel ban on Chinese visitors and indignities for Chinese and other Asians.

Restaurants in South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and Vietnam have refused to accept Chinese customers. Indonesians marched near a hotel and called on Chinese guests there to leave. French and Australian newspapers face criticism for racist headlines. Chinese and other Asians in Europe and the US complain of racism.

Two dozen countries outside of China have reported cases of the new coronavirus, which has killed more than 300 people and sickened thousands of others in China.



South Korean protesters call for ban on Chinese visitors. AP

Many countries have sent planes to the Chinese city of Wuhan to evacuate their nationals.

The anti-China sentiments come as a powerful Beijing bolsters its global influence, and China's rise has caused trade, political and diplomatic disputes with many countries.

But with rising fear of the mysterious disease has come a more acute anti-Chinese and, in some cases, anti-Asian backlash. AP

China silenced doctors, focused on secrecy as virus first spread

CHRIS BUCKLEY & STEVEN LEE MYERS  
WUHAN, FEBRUARY 2

A MYSTERIOUS illness had stricken seven patients at a hospital, and a doctor tried to warn his medical school classmates. "Quarantined in the emergency department," the doctor, Li Wenliang, wrote in a chat group on Dec. 30, referring to patients. "So frightening," one recipient replied, before asking about the epidemic that began in China in 2002 and ultimately killed nearly 800 people. "Is SARS coming again?"

In the middle of the night, officials from the health authority in the central city of Wuhan summoned Li, demanding to know why he had shared the information. Three days later, po-

lice compelled him to sign a statement that his warning constituted "illegal behaviour".

The illness was not SARS, but something similar: a coronavirus that is now on a relentless march outward from Wuhan.

The government's initial handling of the epidemic allowed the virus to gain a tenacious hold. At critical moments, officials chose to put secrecy and order ahead of openly confronting the growing crisis to avoid public alarm and political embarrassment.

A reconstruction of the crucial seven weeks between the appearance of the first symptoms in early December and the government's decision to lock down the city, based on two dozen interviews with Wuhan residents, doctors and officials, on government statements and on Chinese media reports, points

to decisions that delayed a concerted public health offensive.

In those weeks, authorities silenced doctors and others for raising red flags. They played down the dangers to the public, leaving the city's 11 million residents unaware they should protect themselves. They closed a food market where the virus was believed to have started, but told the public it was for renovations.

Their reluctance to go public, in part, played to political motivations as local officials prepared for their annual congresses in January. Even as cases climbed, officials declared repeatedly that there had likely been no more infections.

By not moving aggressively to warn the public and medical professionals, experts say, the Chinese government lost one of its best chances to keep the disease from becoming an epidemic. NYT

Tanzania church stampede kills 20

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
DARES SALAAM, FEBRUARY 2

AT LEAST 20 people in Tanzania were trampled to death at an open-air evangelical Christian church service in the north of the country, officials said on Sunday.

Government official Kippi Warioba, District Commissioner in the town of Moshi, said he death toll could go up.

The tragedy happened when a crowd of worshippers was attending a prayer ceremony on Saturday led by popular preacher Boniface Mwamposa, who heads the Arise and Shine Ministry Tanzania. The stampede occurred when Mwamposa poured what he said was holy oil on the ground and the crowd surged toward to touch it in the hope of being cured of sickness, witnesses said.

Man stabs 2, shot dead in London 'terror' incident

ELIZABETH PIPER  
LONDON, FEBRUARY 2

POLICE SHOT dead a man in south London on Sunday after two people were stabbed in what police described as a terrorist-related incident.

Armed officers shot the man in Streatham, a busy residential district south of the River Thames.

"The circumstances are being assessed; the incident has been declared as terrorist-related," the



The site where police shot the attacker, in London. Reuters

police said on Twitter. Police said later the man they had shot had been pro-

nounced dead, and two people had been wounded.

"We await updates on their condition," police said, adding the scene of the incident was now fully contained.

Karker Tahir, a man who was working nearby, told Sky News that the man was shot three times. Police had told people in the area to leave because the man had a bomb in his bag, Tahir said.

A Western security source said the incident was related to Islamist militancy.

Several videos of the scene were posted on Twitter, but not verified by Reuters. In one, filmed from inside a shop across the road, a man can be seen lying on the street while at least two armed police officers point their guns from behind an unmarked car with its blue lights flashing.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Twitter: "Thank you to all emergency services responding to the incident in Streatham, which the police have now declared as terrorism-related". REUTERS

Britain lays out tough stance for trade talks with EU

ELIZABETH PIPER  
LONDON, FEBRUARY 2

BRITAIN LAID out a tough opening stance for future talks with the European Union on Sunday, say-

ing it would set its own agenda rather than meeting the bloc's rules to ensure frictionless trade.

After officially leaving the EU on Friday, Britain now must negotiate future trade relations with the bloc, to take effect when

a standstill transition period expires at the end of the year.

PM Boris Johnson's government has been quick to send Brussels a message before trade talks begin in March: Brexit means sovereignty trumps the economy.

Despite appeals by many businesses for the government to ensure goods can trade across borders freely, ministers briefed companies that they should adjust to a new future when Britain will not adhere to EU rules. REUTERS



Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders at a rally in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on Saturday. Polls show Sanders holding a narrow lead in the state. Reuters

US Democrats make final pitches ahead of Iowa showdown

1st vote in nomination process today

AGENCIES  
IOWA CITY, FEBRUARY 2

DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES bolted across Iowa Sunday, where no handshake or pit stop is too insignificant one day ahead of the state's presidential nominating process, which is the first in the nation.

Iowa has traditionally served as a vital launching point — or burial ground — for presidential campaigns.

However, Monday's crunch vote has created an air of suspense, with no clear frontrunner.

Leftist senator Bernie Sanders holds only a narrow lead over former vice president Joe Biden, among the field of several candidates feverishly crisscrossing the rural state.

Three of the leading candidates seized on a brief break from their duties as jurors in the Senate impeachment trial of President Donald Trump in Washington to rush to Iowa for a flurry of last-minute events.

The senators — the self-styled democratic socialist Sanders, progressive Elizabeth Warren and moderate Amy Klobuchar — each held a handful of events Saturday.

The impeachment trial — only the third in US history — created an unprecedented situation by limiting the senators' ability to campaign in Iowa in the closing days before the state's presidential caucuses.

Sanders, Warren and Klobuchar have to return to Washington on Monday, along with Senator Michael Bennet who trails badly in the polls, for the trial's resumption.

EXPLAINED  
Iowa caucus kicks off long road to party nomination

THE IOWA caucus is the beginning of the voting process to choose the Democratic party's nominee to take on Trump in the presidential election. It will see registered Democrats gathering in neighbourhood precincts, and other select locations, where they will discuss and debate their choice before publicly declaring their vote.

CAUCUS vs PRIMARY Only four US states, including Iowa, hold caucuses. The rest hold primaries. Primaries involve voters going to polling booths and casting secret ballots for their choice of nominee. Unlike caucuses, primaries don't involve party meetings or discussions.

DELEGATES In both caucuses and primaries, candidates compete for delegates. The number of delegates each candidate gets from a state depends on the percentage of votes they receive. After all caucuses and primaries are held, the delegates gather to finally choose who the party's presidential nominee will be.

NEW PM APPOINTED

Powerful Iraqi cleric tells followers to clear sit-ins

REUTERS  
BAGHDAD, FEBRUARY 2

POPULIST IRAQI cleric Moqtada al-Sadr urged his followers on Sunday to help security forces clear roads blocked during months of sit-in protests, calling for "day-to-day life" to resume following the appointment of a new Prime Minister.

Sadr, who has alternately sided with the anti-government protesters and the Iran-backed political groups they reject, urged his unarmed supporters known as "blue hats" to work with authorities to ensure schools and businesses can operate normally again.

"I advise the security forces

to stop anyone from cutting off roads and the ministry of education should punish those who obstruct regular working hours, be they students, teachers or others," Sadr said in a statement published on Twitter.

Some of his followers appeared to have helped already to clear out protest areas in Baghdad's Tahrir Square overnight, a Reuters reporter said.

Anti-government protests continued nearby, with demonstrators directing their ire towards new Prime Minister Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi, who was named on Saturday as part of a deal between Sadr and rival Iran-backed political groups.

PLANES SPRAYING PESTICIDE IS THE ONLY EFFECTIVE CONTROL, EXPERTS SAY

Billions of locusts descend on East Africa in worst outbreak in decades

JOE MWIHIKA, JOSPHAT KASIRE & BENCURTIS  
NASUULU CONSERVANCY (KENYA), FEBRUARY 2

AS LOCUSTS by the billions — yes, billions — descend on parts of Kenya in the worst outbreak in 70 years, small planes are flying low over affected areas to spray pesticides in what experts call the only effective control.

It is challenging work, especially in remote areas where mobile phone signals are absent and ground crews cannot quickly communicate coordinates to

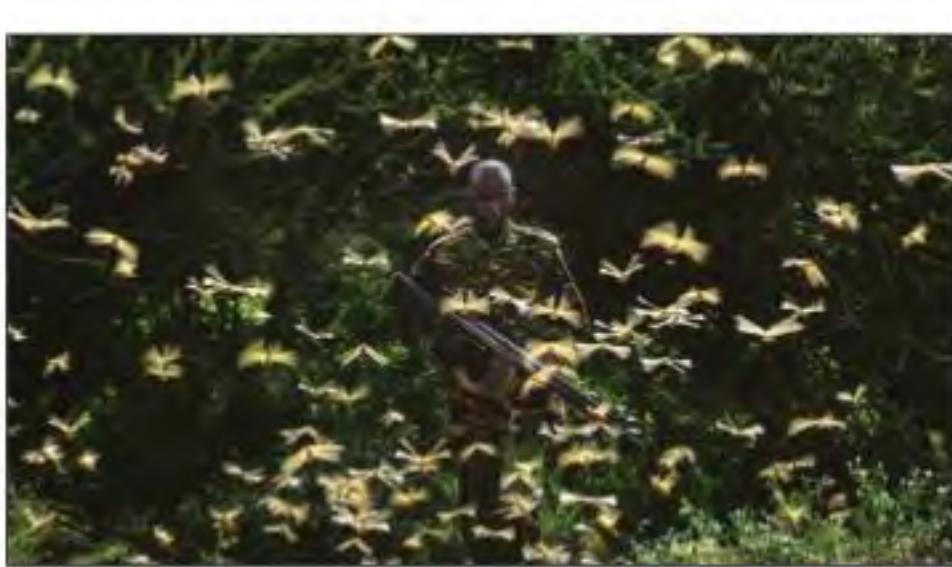
flight teams. The ground crews are in "the most woeful terrains," Marcus Dunn, a pilot and the director at Farmland Aviation, said Saturday. "If there is no network, then the fellow on a boda boda (motorcycle), he has to rush off now and go and get a network."

Just five planes are currently spraying as Kenyan and other authorities try to stop the locusts from spreading to neighboring Uganda and South Sudan. The UN has said \$76 million is needed immediately to widen such efforts across East Africa. A fast response is crucial.

Experts warn that if left unchecked, the number of locusts could grow by 500 times by June, when drier weather will help bring the outbreak under control.

The finger-length locusts swept into Kenya from Somalia and Ethiopia after unusually heavy rains in recent months, decimating crops in some areas and threatening millions of vulnerable people with a hunger crisis.

Somalia's agriculture ministry on Sunday called the outbreak a national emergency and major threat to the country's fragile food security, saying the "uncommonly large" locust



A swarm of locusts in Nasuulu Conservancy, northern Kenya. If left unchecked, the number of locusts could grow by 500 times by June, experts say. AP

swarms are consuming huge amounts of crops.

In swarms the size of major cities, the locusts also have affected parts of Sudan, Djibouti and Eritrea, whose agriculture ministry says both the military and general public have been deployed to combat them.

Kenya's agriculture minister has acknowledged that authorities weren't prepared for the scope of the infestation this year. That's not surprising, considering it's been decades since the country's last comparable outbreak, UN officials say. The locusts also are heading

toward the breadbasket of Ethiopia, Africa's second-most populous country, in that nation's worst outbreak in 25 years. On Thursday, startled residents of Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, started reported sightings of the insects. "I was surprised to find the locusts inside my living room," said one resident, Mathewos Girma, showing a photo on his mobile phone. "It appears it is knocking on each and every one of our doors."

Zebdewos Selato, an agriculture ministry official, told The Associated Press the relatively few locusts reaching Ethiopia's capital

are "leftovers" from the "massive invasion" in the eastern and southern parts of the country. Spraying is being conducted around the city to stop the outbreak from spreading elsewhere, he said.

Until the drier weather in June, more rain across the region will bring fresh vegetation to fuel further waves of locust breeding. One field in Kenya on Saturday appeared to be full of mating bright yellow locusts. "They are trying to mate and reproduce, so we need more help and because we are racing against time," said Salat Tutana, the chief agriculture officer in Isiolo county. AP