

Four men accused of murder over the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 in 2014 went on trial in the Netherlands on Monday, with families of the 298 victims calling for justice. The suspects — three Russians and a Ukrainian — were not present in the dock, but judges were expected to rule that the hearing could continue in their absence.

TOP OF THE WORLD



Abdalla Hamdok

AFRICA

Sudan's Prime Minister survives assassination bid

Khartoum: Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok survived an assassination attempt targeting his convoy as he headed to work on Monday morning in the capital Khartoum, officials said. Hamdok said he was in "good shape" and that what had happened would be "an additional push to the wheel of change in Sudan", where he heads a transitional government following the overthrow last year of long-time President Omar al-Bashir. Hamdok's government is struggling to manage a severe economic crisis that triggered months of protests against Bashir and continued after his downfall in April. The convoy appeared to have been targeted from above, Reuters witnesses said.

BRITAIN

Police shoot knife-wielding man in London

London: British police shot dead a man brandishing two knives near Parliament in central London, officers said on Monday, adding that the incident was not terror-related. The Metropolitan Police said of officers on patrol at about 11.25 pm Sunday noticed a man they believed was behaving suspiciously. "Officers challenged the man who produced two knives. Armed officers responded. Taser and a police firearm were discharged during the incident," it said in a statement. "London Ambulance Service attended and the man was pronounced dead at the scene... The incident is not being treated as terrorism."

PAKISTAN

23 killed in road accident

Islamabad: At least 23 people were killed when a passenger bus veered off a mountain road and plunged into a deep ravine in northern Pakistan on Monday, authorities said. The bus was on its way from Rawalpindi to Skardu when it fell into the ravine at Roundu near Gilgit, according to Faizullah Firaq, the spokesperson of the Gilgit Baltistan government. Firaq said 25 passengers were onboard the vehicle when the accident occurred, adding that the cause of the mishap was not known. At least 23 passengers died in the accident, Ghulam Murtaza, Assistant Commissioner of Roundu tehsil, said.

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK: CASES SURGE IN EUROPE

Threat of virus pandemic is now very real, warns WHO

Italy, neighbours attempt to limit spread; Germany reports first two deaths

AGENCIES
GENEVA, ROME, MARCH 9

THE WORLD Health Organisation warned on Monday there was now a "very real" threat that the global outbreak of the new deadly coronavirus will become a pandemic, but stressed the virus could still be controlled.

"The threat of a pandemic has become very real," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters, while stressing that "it would be the first pandemic in history that can be controlled... we are not at the mercy of the virus".

EU leaders will seek a coordinated response to the coronavirus after global markets plunged on Monday and Italy sealed off much of its industrial north, where six prisoners were killed in a riot over curbs on visits.

European Union leaders will hold a teleconference to discuss their next moves, European Council president Charles Michel said. "We need to cooperate in order to protect the health of our citizens," Michel, who chairs EU summits, tweeted.

In little more than two weeks, the number of recorded coronavirus cases in Italy has surged to 7,375, with 366 deaths, the second-highest death toll after China's, putting its health system under huge strain.

More than 110,000 people have been infected in 105 countries and territories, and 3,800 have died, the vast majority in mainland China.

6 die in prison riot
Italy's prison administration



At St. Mark's Square in Venice on Monday following a lockdown order in Italy's north. AP

MORE CRUISE SHIPS AFFECTED

USA: Officials in California were preparing Monday to receive thousands of people from the *Grand Princess*, which has been idling off the coast of San Francisco with at least 21 people aboard infected with the virus.

SINGAPORE: Singapore said it would allow cruise ship *Costa Fortuna* to dock in the city-state Tuesday, after it was turned away from ports in Malaysia and Thailand over coronavirus fears, despite no reported case on board.

EGYPT: Scores of foreign tourists and Egyptian crew remained quarantined aboard a Nile River cruise ship, A-Sara, from which 45 suspected coronavirus cases have been evacuated, people on board said.

said six inmates had died in a prison riot in the northern town of Modena over new restrictions on visits. "There have been a series of rebellions across the country," said Francesco Basentini, head of the authority. Video aired on Italian television showed police and fire trucks outside the prison as black smoke swirled into the sky.

1,000 cases in Germany
Two people have died of the coronavirus in the western

German city of Essen and virus hotspot Heinsberg, officials said Monday, the country's first casualties of the outbreak.

The number of people testing positive for the coronavirus on Monday passed 1,000 in Europe's top economy Germany.

In the United Kingdom, the number of confirmed cases of coronavirus rose by 30% to 273, the government said on Sunday, and a third person who tested positive for the virus has died.

Spain shuts schools

In Spain, schools were closed in the town of Labastida near Vitoria in the Basque country after nearly 150 cases of coronavirus were identified in the region.

Spain has reported 999 cases in all, most of them in two areas around Madrid and around Vitoria in the north. Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said it had prepared an emergency plan to deal with the economic consequences of the virus.

Hundreds told to self-isolate in DC

Washington: Several hundred people are being asked to self-quarantine after potential exposure to the first confirmed case of the new coronavirus in the nation's capital, identified as the rector of prominent Episcopal church. District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser said Monday that anyone who entered Christ Church Georgetown on Feb 24 or between Feb 28 and March 3 is requested to self-quarantine for two weeks from the date of their entrance to the church. Officials on Saturday had announced the district's first positive test, but identified the victim only as a man in his 50s. AP



US Senator Cruz to isolate himself

Washington: Two US Republican lawmakers, Senator Ted Cruz and Rep. Paul Gosar, said Sunday they would quarantine themselves after contact at a late February gathering of conservatives with someone who has since tested positive for coronavirus. Cruz and Gosar were among those who gathered just outside Washington Feb 26-29 for the annual Conservative Political Action Conference, which met this year under the theme "America vs Socialism". REUTERS

Ghani sworn in as Afghan president, rival holds parallel inauguration

Rockets strike Kabul during ceremony

ABDUL QADIR SEDIQI & OROOJ HAKIMI
KABUL, MARCH 9



Both Ghani (left) and former chief executive Abdullah Abdullah say they are the rightful leader following a disputed election.

AFGHAN PRESIDENT Ashraf Ghani was sworn in for a second term on Monday but his main rival refused to recognise the inauguration and held his own swearing-in ceremony as a rival president.

Both Ghani and former chief executive Abdullah Abdullah say they are Afghanistan's rightful leader following a disputed election last September, a stand-off that threatens political chaos days after the US and the Taliban signed a deal on the withdrawal of US-led international forces.

Ghani's ceremony was disrupted by the sound of two rockets hitting the edge of the compound of the presidential palace in the capital Kabul, Reuters witnesses said, but there was no word of any casualties and he continued his speech.

Planned morning ceremonies were postponed, and guests kept waiting, while US Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad tried to broker a last-minute deal between the longtime political foes, but there was no immediate word of a breakthrough.

Television footage showed Ghani taking an oath at the presidential palace in a ceremony attended by foreign diplomats including Khalilzad and NATO forces commander Scott Miller.

Ghani said in a speech that the government he was forming would not include only members of his political camp though he would continue with the previous cabinet for two weeks. He plans to finalise a negotiat-

EXPLAINED
Intra-Afghan talks could be delayed

THE DUAL inaugurations are likely to delay the talks between Afghan political leaders and the Taliban, which was set to begin on Tuesday after the US agreed to pull NATO troops out of Afghanistan. Taliban consider both Ghani and his rival Abdullah as puppets of the West and has been reluctant to talk to them until the group made a deal with the US which involved the future removal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. In this context, the crisis regarding who Afghanistan's president will be has come at the worst possible time, analysts say.

ing team for talks with the Taliban on Tuesday and to make a further announcement on demands by the Islamist militant group for the release of prisoners. REUTERS

Iran temporarily releases 70,000 from jails over virus

REUTERS
DUBAI, MARCH 9

IRAN HAS temporarily freed about 70,000 prisoners to combat the spread of the coronavirus in jails, the head of the judiciary said on Monday as officials reported hundreds of new infections and dozens more deaths across the country.

Iran has reported 595 new infections and 43 new deaths within the past 24 hours. This takes total cases of coronavirus to 7,161, with 237 deaths, the health ministry spokesman said. Judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi

Fine of \$133,000 for hiding health details on entry: Saudi

REUTERS
DUBAI, MARCH 9

SAUDI ARABIA said on Monday it will impose a fine of up to 500,000 riyals (\$133,000) on people who do not disclose their health-related information and travel details at entry points, as the Gulf state works to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

The kingdom on Sunday imposed a temporary lockdown on its eastern oil-producing

announced the temporary release of prisoners as Iranian authorities seek to counter one of the worst national outbreaks outside China, where the new virus originated, and one of the highest death rates from the illness.

Raisi said the release of prisoners would continue "to the point where it doesn't create insecurity in society", according to the Mizan news site of the judiciary.

He did not give further details or specify when those released would have to return to jail.

The health ministry has told Iranians to stay home and imposed restrictions on travel between provinces.

province of Qatif, where the majority of the 15 individuals diagnosed with the disease reside. Some have failed to disclose travelling to Iran to the authorities upon returning to Saudi Arabia via other Gulf Arab states.

Saudi Arabia suspended travel with nine countries including neighbouring Arab states on Monday and said legal action would be taken against any citizen travelling to Iran.

The kingdom said most of the individuals with coronavirus had returned from Iran or Iraq.

China reports no new locally transmitted case outside Hubei

Phase of stability in South Korea soon, says President Moon

REUTERS
BEIJING, MARCH 9

MAINLAND CHINA reported no new locally transmitted coronavirus cases outside the epicentre of Hubei province for the second day running on Monday, but a top Communist Party official warned against people dropping their guard.

China had 40 new confirmed cases of coronavirus infections as of Sunday, the National Health Commission said, down from 44 cases a day earlier, and the lowest number since the health authority started publishing nationwide data on January 20.

Of the new cases, 36 were in Wuhan, the provincial capital of Hubei, and four in Gansu province in people arriving from Iran.

Chen Yixin, secretary general of the Communist Party's Politics and Law Commission, said no one should drop their guard.

"We must stay cautious, and not be blindly optimistic and must not have war-weariness," Chen said. "We should not reduce the vigilance against the epidemic and the requirements of prevention and control."

The coronavirus emerged in the central province of Hubei late last year. The new cases on Sunday brought the total accu-



Soldiers spray disinfectant at an apartment building in Daegu, South Korea, on Monday. AP

SLOWING DOWN	
IN CHINA 40 NEW CASES the lowest daily increase since January	IN SOUTH KOREA 96 NEW CASES the lowest in 11 days, taking the total to 7,478
22 MORE DEATHS , total death toll in China goes up to 3,119.	1 MORE DEATH , taking total death toll in South Korea to 51

mulated number of cases in mainland China to 80,735.

South Korea reported 165 new coronavirus cases, bringing the national tally to 7,478, while the death toll rose by one to 51.

The rate of increase in new infections fell to its lowest level in 11 days, prompting President Moon Jae-in to say South Korea can enter the "phase of stability" soon.

In a first, Twitter labels video clip shared by Trump as 'manipulated'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, MARCH 9

TWITTER HAS used a new policy to identify misleading content for the first time on a post retweeted by US President Donald Trump that appeared to show Democratic Party rival Joe Biden endorsing his reelection.

The social media platform has struggled with removing deceptive and abusive content in the past, but has also faced accusations its curbs have suppressed some political views.

Last week it announced moderators would begin flagging media that had been "deceptively altered or manipulated," the same day it announced an expansion of a ban on hate speech.

A clip posted by White House social media director Dan Scavino appeared to show Biden telling a crowd: "We can only re-elect Donald Trump." The footage was later retweeted by Trump and had been viewed nearly six million times by Monday.

But the video cropped the end of Biden's sentence — made during a recent campaign speech Missouri state — where he was discussing the need for



RACE FOR THE WHITE HOUSE

party unity in the wake of a bruising primary contest.

"We can only re-elect Donald Trump if in fact we get engaged in this circular firing squad here," Biden had said.

Twitter appended a label to the video describing it as "manipulated media," prompting a denial from Scavino in a later tweet on Monday.

The platform last month suspended dozens of accounts for spam-like posts supporting former Democratic presidential hopeful Michael Bloomberg.

MOST NOTABLY, HE HELPED GIVE FLESH TO BERGMAN'S OFTEN BLEAK BUT HOPEFUL, SOMETIMES COMIC VISION OF THE HUMAN CONDITION

Max von Sydow, Swedish star of *The Seventh Seal* and *Exorcist*, dies at 90

ROBERT BERKVIST
MARCH 9

MAX VON SYDOW, the tall, blond Swedish actor who cut a striking figure in American movies but was most identified with the signature work of a fellow Swede, director Ingmar Bergman, has died. He was 90.

His wife, Catherine von Sydow, confirmed the death in an emailed statement. The cause and date of his death were not being released at the request of

the family, Lesley Duff, one of von Sydow's agents, said in a telephone interview.

Max Von Sydow, widely hailed as one of the finest actors of his generation, became an elder pop culture star in his later years, appearing in a *Star Wars* movie in 2015 as well as in the sixth season of the HBO fantasy-adventure series *Game of Thrones*. He even lent his deep, rich voice to *The Simpsons*.

By then he had become a familiarly austere presence in popular movies like William

Friedkin's *The Exorcist*, Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report*, Woody Allen's *Hannah and Her Sisters* and, more recently, Julian Schnabel's *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*.

But to film lovers the world over he was most enduringly associated with Bergman.

If ever an actor was born to inhabit the World According to Bergman, it was von Sydow. Angular and lanky at 6 feet 3 inches, possessing a gaunt face and hooded, icy blue eyes, he not only radiated power but also registered



a deep sense of Nordic angst, helping to give flesh to Bergman's often bleak but hopeful and sometimes comic vision of the human condition in classics like *The*

Seventh Seal and *The Virgin Spring*.

But it was not until his later years that he could range widely in American movies. In *Hannah and Her Sisters* (1986) he was the possessive lover of the youngest sister, played by Barbara Hershey. In the science-fiction thriller *Minority Report* (2002) he was Tom Cruise's coolly efficient boss, director of a police force that benefits from telepathic powers to stop crimes before they are committed.

Von Sydow earned his first Academy Award nomination in

1988 — some 40 years after his movie debut — for his work in *Pelle the Conqueror*. A Danish film directed by Bille August, it told the story of Lasse (von Sydow), a down-at-heels widowed Swedish labourer who brings his young son, Pelle, to Denmark at the turn of the century in search of a better life, only to encounter still more hard times.

There were other late-career high points, including *Hamsun* (1997), in which von Sydow submerged himself in the tangled personality of Nobel Prize-win-

ning Norwegian novelist Knut Hamsun.

By his late 80s, cast in the brief role of village elder Lor San Tekka in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and as the enigmatic Three Eyed Raven in Season Six of *Game of Thrones*, he was having, as critic Terrence Rafferty wrote in *The Atlantic* in December 2015, "the sort of late career that eminent movie actors tend to have, popping up for a scene or two in commercial stuff that needs a touch of gravity, and receiving, as famous old actors do, the honor of

"last billing."

Carl Adolf von Sydow was born April 10, 1929, in Lund, in southern Sweden. His father was a university professor, his mother a schoolteacher. He attended the Cathedral School in Lund, where he learned English at an early age and began his acting career in an amateur theatre group he founded with friends.

He was said to have adopted the name Max from the star performer in a flea circus he saw while serving in the Swedish Quartermaster Corps. NYT