



KENYA
POACHERS KILL 2 RARE WHITE GIRAFFES

A white female giraffe and her 7-month-old calf, whose rare pigmentation mesmerised wildlife enthusiasts around the world, have been killed by poachers in Kenya, officials said. The deaths of the giraffes left just one of the unusually coloured animals in the country's wild, a bull, out of a family of three, conservancy officials said.

TOP OF THE WORLD



RUSSIA

Parliament backs changes allowing Putin to run again for president

Moscow: Constitutional changes allowing Vladimir Putin to run for president again in 2024 sailed through Russia's lower house of parliament on Wednesday, opening the way for him to potentially stay in power until 2036. Putin, 67, who has dominated the Russian political landscape for two decades as either president or prime minister, made a dramatic appearance in the chamber a day earlier to argue that term limits were less important in times of crisis. Putin, a former KGB officer, is currently required by the constitution to step down in 2024 when his second sequential and fourth presidential term ends. But the amendment would formally reset his presidential term tally to zero.

PAKISTAN

F-16 jet crashes in Islamabad, pilot killed

Islamabad: A Pakistan Air Force pilot was killed on Wednesday when his F-16 fighter jet crashed in Islamabad while carrying out rehearsals for the country's Republic Day parade to be held on March 23. Wing Commander Nouman Akram died in the crash in a jungle near Shakarparian area of the capital, the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) said in a statement. The US-built F-16 fighter plane was carrying out routine exercises for the Pakistan Day parade when it crashed, it said, adding that the PAF has ordered an inquiry into the cause of the crash.

WEST ASIA

Israeli soldiers kill Palestinian teen at protest

Ramallah: Israeli troops killed a Palestinian teenager in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday during a protest against feared Israeli land confiscation, the Palestinian Health Ministry said. The Israeli military had no immediate comment. A Reuters cameraman at the scene said protesters threw rocks at soldiers, who opened fire and shot tear gas canisters while trying to clear them from a hilltop near the Israeli settlement of Itamar. The Palestinian Health Ministry said one youth, aged 15, was killed by a live bullet, and another 18 protesters were wounded by rubber-coated metal bullets fired by the troops.

BANGLADESH

Thousands left homeless after huge fire in slum

Dhaka: A massive fire ripped through one of Bangladesh's largest slums here on Wednesday, leaving hundreds of shanties gutted and thousands of people homeless, according to media reports. The fire broke out on Wednesday morning at the Shialbari Jhilpar Slum in Mirpur's Rupnagar residential area where some 20,000 people lived in around 2,000 shanties. Fire Service and Civil Defence Director (Operations) Zillur Rahman told reporters that no casualty was reported immediately.

'ALL COUNTRIES CAN STILL CHANGE THE COURSE OF THIS PANDEMIC'

WHO: Coronavirus a pandemic

Normal life increasingly upended; 168 more die in Italy; multiple European countries report 1st cases

NICOLE WINFIELD, COLLEEN BARRY & JOHN LEICESTER
ROME, MARCH 11

EXPRESSING INCREASING alarm about mounting infections, the World Health Organisation declared Wednesday that the global coronavirus crisis is now a pandemic.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who heads the UN agency, said the WHO is "deeply concerned by the alarming levels of spread and severity" of the outbreak. He also expressed concern about "the alarming levels of inaction".

"We have, therefore, made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterised as a pandemic," he said at a briefing in Geneva.

"All countries can still change the course of this pandemic. If countries detect, test, treat, isolate, trace and mobilise their people in the response," Tedros said.

In Italy, Premier Giuseppe Conte said he would consider requests from Lombardy, Italy's hardest-hit region, to toughen the already extraordinary anti-virus lockdown that was extended nationwide Tuesday. Lombardy wants to shut down nonessential businesses and reduce public transportation.

China's new worry is that the coronavirus could re-enter from abroad. Beijing's city government announced that all overseas visitors will be quarantined for 14 days.

In France, the government's weekly Cabinet meeting was moved to a bigger room so President Emmanuel Macron and his ministers could sit at least 1 meter (more than 3 feet) apart.

Normal life was increasingly being upended.

Deaths soared among Italy's aging population. Authorities said Italy has suffered 631 deaths, with an increase of 168 fatalities recorded Tuesday. In Spain, the number of cases surged past the 2,000-mark on Wednesday. Belgium, Bulgaria, Sweden and Albania announced their first virus-related deaths.

"If you want to be blunt, Europe is the new China," said Robert Redfield, the head of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Dozens of cases have been tied to a conference in Boston, and leaders in multiple states were announcing curbs on large events. Colleges emptied their classrooms as they moved to on-line instruction and uncertainty surrounded the upcoming opening of the major league baseball season and college basketball's championships. AP



People wearing masks as a precaution against the COVID-19 illness in Hong Kong Wednesday. AP

UK, Iran ministers test positive

AGENCIES
TEHRAN, LONDON, MARCH 11

IRAN'S SENIOR vice president and two other Cabinet members have contracted the new coronavirus, a semi-official news agency reported on Wednesday.

In Britain, a minister in the health ministry said she had tested positive for the virus.

A report by Iran's Fars news agency, believed to be close to the Revolutionary Guard, comes as President Hassan Rouhani took control of the country's much-criticised response to the virus and the COVID-19 illness it causes.



UK minister Nadine Dorries

Authorities announced that there were some 9,000 confirmed cases of the virus across Iran. The Fars story also comes amid days of speculation about the health of Vice President Eshaq

Jahangiri. Jahangiri has not been seen in pictures of recent meetings, raising concerns. Fars said the others sick are Ali Asghar Mounesan, minister of cultural heritage, handicrafts and tourism, and Reza Rahmani, minister of industry, mines and business.

The death toll from the outbreak in Iran rose by 62 to 354.

In Britain, MP Nadine Dorries minister in the health department, has tested positive for coronavirus, she said in a statement on Tuesday. "I can confirm I have tested positive for coronavirus...and have been self-isolating at home," said the Conservative MP.

Merkel: Likely 70% of Germans will be infected with coronavirus

REUTERS
BERLIN, MARCH 11

UP TO 70% of the population is likely to be infected with the coronavirus that is currently spreading around the world, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said, adding that since there was currently no cure the focus had to be on slowing its spread.

"When the virus is out there, the population has no immunity and no therapy exists, then 60 to 70% of the population will be in-



German Chancellor says current focus is on slowing down virus

fect," she told a news conference in Berlin. "The process has to be focused on not overburdening the health system by slowing the virus's spread... It's about winning time."

Merkel spoke after mass-selling daily *Bild* lambasted her for her handling of what it called the corona chaos: "No appearances, no speech, no leadership in the crisis," it wrote.

Germany has reported 1,296 cases of the virus, and two deaths, the Robert Koch Institute said late on Tuesday.

EXPLAINED

By declaring it as a pandemic, WHO seeks greater action

WHAT IS A PANDEMIC?
According to the WHO, a pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease. An epidemic is defined as a regional outbreak of an illness that spreads unexpectedly, and a pandemic is an epidemic that spreads over several countries and continents.

W.H.O.'S RELUCTANCE
The WHO has been reluctant to call the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic, fearing that it would give an impression that it was unstoppable. The organisation had said it no longer officially declared when an epidemic became a pandemic.

WHY NOW?
The head of the WHO has expressed his worry about "alarming inaction" by many countries to contain the spread of the virus. This, combined with the extend of the spread, likely forced the WHO to declare it a pandemic.



Joe Biden with his wife Jill in Philadelphia on Tuesday. Reuters

Biden inches towards nomination, winning three more states

DELEGATE COUNT			
JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR.	BERNIE SANDERS		
1,848,376	Votes	: 1,235,464	
177	Delegates won Tue	: 111	
857	Total delegates	: 709	

ALEXANDER BURNS & JONATHAN MARTIN
MARCH 11

JOE BIDEN took command of the Democratic presidential race in decisive fashion on Tuesday, marshaling a powerful multiracial coalition in the South and Midwest that swept aside Sen. Bernie Sanders and completed Biden's rapid transformation from a sometimes-fumbling underdog into his party's likely presidential nominee.

Replicating the combination of voters that delivered him broad victories a week ago on Super Tuesday, Biden won Michigan, Missouri and Mississippi with overwhelming support from African Americans and with large margins among suburban and rural white voters.

Sanders was more evenly matched with Biden in the West, where Idaho and Washington were too close to call. But there was

PRIMARIES: THE DEMOCRATS

little doubt by the end of the night that Sanders had lost his recent status as the progressive front-runner in a race defined for months by factionalism in the moderate wing of the Democratic Party.

Addressing supporters in Philadelphia, in a tone that was more sober than celebratory, Biden said voters had put them "a step closer to restoring decency, dignity and honor to the White House" and moved to unify the party with an appeal to supporters of Sanders. "We share a common goal," Biden said, "and together we'll defeat Donald Trump." NYT

Taliban reject Afghan President's conditional prisoner release plan

JIBRAN AHMAD
KABUL, PESHAWAR, MARCH 11

THE TALIBAN said on Wednesday a plan from the Afghan president to stagger the release of Taliban prisoners violated an accord they struck with the United States and they would not talk with the Afghan government until all 5,000 prisoners were freed.

A Feb. 29 pact between the Taliban and the United States has cleared with way for the withdrawal of US-led international forces after more than 18 years of war, but peace has to be negotiated between the militants and the US-backed government.

The Taliban have promised to open talks with the government as part of the accord but say the release of their 5,000 comrades held by the government was also part of the deal, and they won't talk until all are freed.

President Ashraf Ghani has declined to release all 5,000 in one go. Instead, he has ordered the release of an initial 1,500, with the other 3,500 to be set free in parallel with progress in the peace talks.



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"We never agreed to any conditional release of prisoners," Suhail Shaheen, spokesman for the Taliban based in Doha, told Reuters by phone.

"If someone claims this, it will be against the peace accord that we signed on February 29." The main element of the US withdrawal agreement is a Taliban promise that they will not let Afghanistan be used by terrorists to attack the United States and its allies.

The pact will let US President Donald Trump fulfil his promise to end the war and bring all of the troops home within 14 months. REUTERS

Harvey Weinstein sentenced to 23 years in prison

BRENDAN PIERSON & KAREN FREIFELD
NEW YORK, MARCH 11

FORMER MOVIE producer Harvey Weinstein was sentenced on Wednesday to 23 years in prison for sexual assault and rape after giving a rambling court statement sympathising with men accused of sexual misconduct during the #MeToo era.

The sentence was handed down in Manhattan criminal court by Justice James Burke — a prison term that Weinstein's lawyer Donna Rotunno denounced as

"obscene" and "cowardly" and promised to appeal. A jury on Feb 24 found Weinstein — once one of Hollywood's most powerful men — guilty of sexually assaulting former production assistant Mimi Halesy and raping former aspiring actress Jessica Mann.

Weinstein did not testify during his trial, but spoke during a sentencing hearing in which his accusers described the emotional trauma they have endured thanks to his actions.

"I feel remorse for all of the men who are going through this fight," Weinstein, 67, told the court before he was sentenced,



sounding unrepentant.

More than 100 women, including famous actresses, have accused Weinstein of sexual misconduct stretching back decades, fuelling the #MeToo

movement against sexual abuse and harassment.

"I'm totally confused," said Weinstein, addressing the court from a wheelchair behind the defence table. Weinstein said he was worried about the "thousands of men who are losing due process" during the #MeToo movement just as people in the past had their careers destroyed when they were accused of being communists. "I think that's what's happening now all over this country," he said.

Defence lawyer Rotunno called the 23-year sentence "obnoxious" and said there are mur-

derers who will go free sooner than Weinstein will. "I am overcome with anger at that number. I think that number is a cowardly number to give. I think the judge caved, just as I believe the jury caved," Rotunno said.

Weinstein had faced the possibility of a maximum sentence of 29 years in prison.

"I'm not going to say these are not great people. I had great times with these people," Weinstein said, referring to the women he was convicted of attacking. He said he had put too much pressure on himself, adding, "I'm really trying to be a better person." REUTERS

ONE OF SEVERAL TACTICS GREECE IS USING TO PREVENT REPEAT OF 2015 CRISIS

'We are like animals': Inside Greece's secret site for migrants

MATINASTEVIS-GRIDNEFF, PATRICK KINGSLEY, HALEY WILLIS & SARAH ALMUKHTAR
POROS, MARCH 11

THE GREEK government is detaining migrants incommunicado at a secret extrajudicial location before expelling them to Turkey without due process, one of several hard-line measures taken to seal the borders to Europe that experts say violate international law. Several migrants said in inter-

views that they had been captured, stripped of their belongings, beaten and expelled from Greece without being given a chance to claim asylum or speak to a lawyer, in an illegal process known as refoulement. Meanwhile, Turkish officials said that at least three migrants had been shot and killed while trying to enter Greece in the past two weeks.

The Greek approach is the starkest example of European efforts to prevent a reprise of the 2015 migration crisis in which more than 850,000 undocu-



A group of Syrians walk barefoot on a highway in northwestern Turkey, after being sent back by Greek border guards. NYT

mented people passed relatively easily through Greece to other parts of Europe, roiling the Continent's politics and fuelling

the rise of the far right.

A spokesman for the Greek government, Stelios Petsas, did not comment on the existence of

the site, but said that Greece detained and expelled migrants in accordance with local law.

But through a combination of on-the-ground reporting and forensic analysis of satellite imagery, *The Times* has confirmed the existence of the secret center in northeastern Greece.

When Turkish officials began to bus migrants to the Greek border on Feb. 28, a Syrian Kurd named Somar al-Hussein had a seat on one of the first coaches.

A trainee software engineer, he spent that night in the rain on

the bank of the Evros River, which divides western Turkey from eastern Greece. Early the next morning, he reached the Greek side in a rubber dinghy packed with other migrants.

But his journey ended an hour later, he said in a recent interview. Captured by Greek border guards, he said, he and his group were taken to a detention site.

The site consisted principally of three red-roofed warehouses set back from a farm road and arranged in a U-shape. Hundreds of other captured migrants

waited outside. Al-Hussein was taken indoors and crammed into a room with dozens of others.

His phone was confiscated, he said, and his requests to claim asylum and contact UN officials were ignored. "To them, we are like animals," al-Hussein said of the Greek guards.

After a night without food or drink, on March 1 al-Hussein and dozens of others were driven back to the Evros River, where Greek police officers ferried them back to the Turkish side in a small speedboat. NYT