

Virus spreads across globe; toll crosses 5,000

Governments take emergency steps to contain the spread of COVID-19

REUTERS
SINGAPORE/WASHINGTON
Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's wife, Australia's Minister for Home Affairs and a Chelsea football player are among new cases of the coronavirus that has infected at least 140,000 people and killed more than 5,000 worldwide.

Governments and central banks readied more emergency measures to tackle the economic impact of the coronavirus on Friday, while more major events were cancelled or postponed.

U.S. lawmakers and the White House neared agreement on a coronavirus economic aid package, with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi saying she hoped to announce a deal on Friday.

Experts warn that due to a lack of testing and unreported cases, many more people may be affected by the outbreak that emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan late last year. Health authorities around the world face the prospect of services being overwhelmed.

"We're anticipating 20% of the population in the first wave to be affected," Kerry Chant, the chief medical officer for the New South Wales (NSW) government.

Home to more than 7 million people, NSW is Australia's most populous State, and Mr. Chant said models suggested 5% of the State's population – some 3,50,000 people – would need hospital treatment as a result of the outbreak.

Australia has recorded nearly 160 infections and three deaths from the flu-like disease. Among the infected is one of its highest-profile government Ministers, Peter Dutton, who is in charge of Home Affairs. He said he was feeling fine.

Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau said he would be in isolation for two weeks after his wife, Sophie Gregoire Trudeau, tested positive for coronavirus. She said she was "experiencing uncomfortable symptoms" adding that she would "be back on my feet soon".

Canada has reported 145 cases of the virus, a three-fold gain from a week ago. There has been one death.

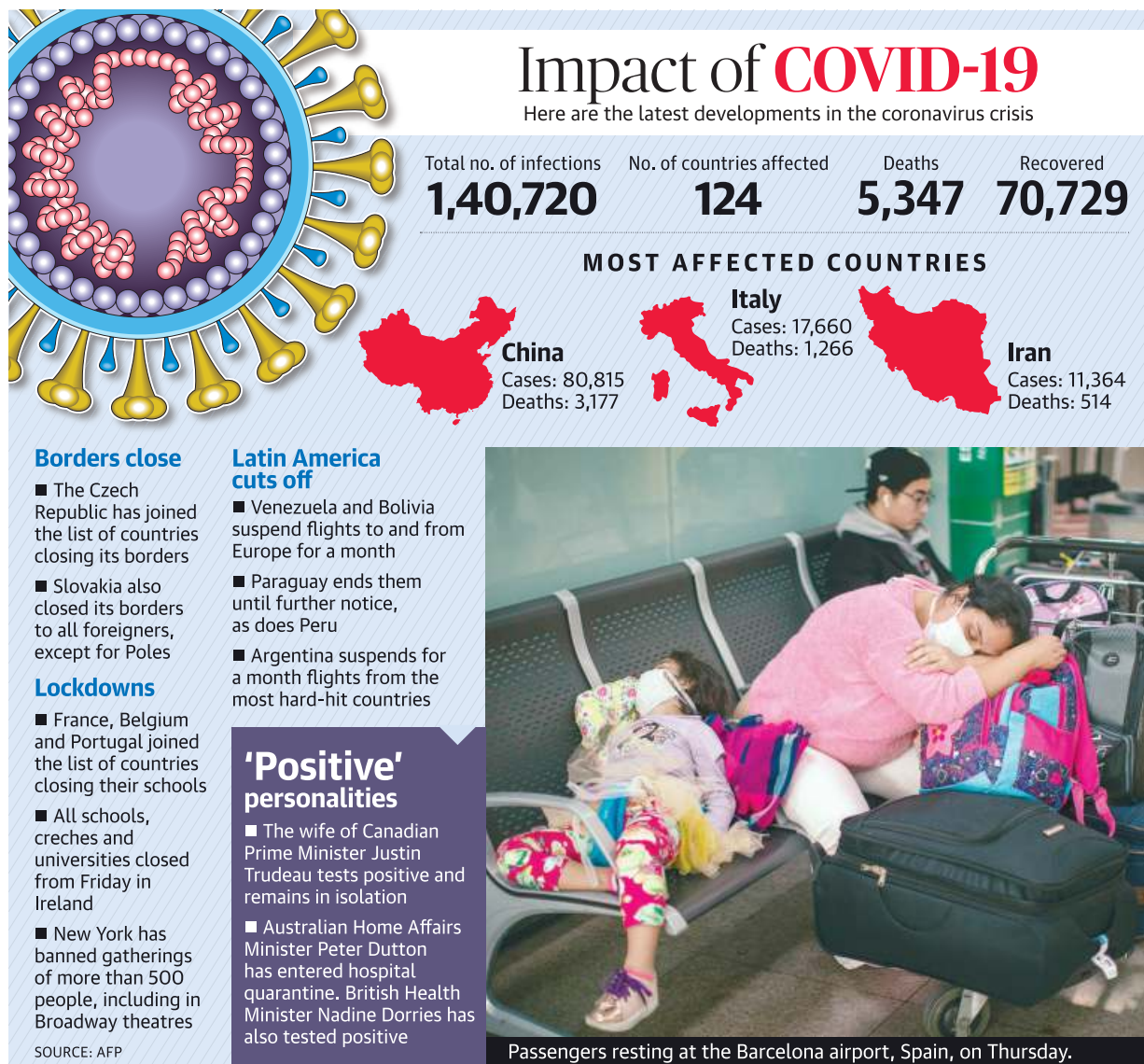
In Italy, the death toll has jumped by 250 to 1,266 in the past 24 hours, the Civil Protection Agency said. The total number of cases also rose to 17,660 from a previous 15,113.

State of alert
Spain's government is to declare a state of alert over the rapid spread of the virus, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said on Friday after infections soared over 4,200 with 120 dead. "There will be a Cabinet meeting tomorrow to declare a state of alert across the country for a period of 15 days," he said.

Movie star Tom Hanks announced in Australia on Thursday that he and his wife, actress Rita Wilson, have both tested positive, as have Mikel Arteta, manager of English football club Arsenal, and Chelsea forward Callum Hudson-Odoi.

A host of sporting events were affected. Golf's jewel in the crown, The Masters, and England's football league joined the list of sporting events to be cancelled or postponed. Nepal closed Mount Everest to climbers.

But the spread of the virus at its epicentre in China's Hubei province has slowed markedly. Just five new cases were reported on Friday in the provincial capital of Wuhan, where the virus was first detected in December.



Trump set to declare national emergency

He is likely to invoke the Stafford Act

ANNIE KARNI, PETER BAKER, MAGGIE HABERMAN
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump is expected to declare a national emergency at a news conference on Friday afternoon, a move that would give him authority to use \$40 billion of funds allocated by Congress for disaster relief to address the coronavirus crisis.



Mr. Trump, according to a senior administration official, is expected to invoke the Stafford Act, a law that empowers the Federal Emergency Management Agency to assist State and local governments during "natural catastrophes" and coordinate the nation's response.

Mr. Trump has been hinting in recent days that he had been briefed on using the law to address the pandemic, and Democratic law-

makers like Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the minority leader, have been pressing him to invoke it.

"We have very strong emergency powers under the Stafford Act," Mr. Trump told reporters in the Oval Office on Thursday.

"I have it memorized, practically, as to the powers in that act. And if I need to do something, I'll do it. I have the right to do a lot of things that people don't even know about." NY TIMES

Europe now 'epicentre' of pandemic, says WHO

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GENEVA

The World Health Organization said on Friday that Europe was now the "epicentre" for the global coronavirus pandemic – and warned it was impossible to know when the outbreak would peak.

"The continent had now more reported cases and deaths than the rest of the world combined, apart from China", said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "Europe has now become the epicentre of the pandemic."

Mr. Tedros was speaking at news conference held virtually.

"More cases are now being reported every day than were reported in China at the height of its epidemic," he said, referring to the global numbers.

The death toll passing 5,000 was "a tragic milestone", said Mr. Tedros.

Maria Van Kerkhove, who heads the WHO's emerging diseases unit, meanwhile warned it was "impossible for us to say when this will peak globally".

"You can't fight a virus if you don't know where it is," said Mr. Tedros, calling on countries to "find, isolate, test and treat every case, to break the chains of transmission."

ELSEWHERE



Judge orders Chelsea Manning freed from jail

WASHINGTON
A judge on Thursday ordered former U.S. military intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning released from jail, a day after a support group said she tried to kill herself. She had been imprisoned since May 16 last year for refusing to appear before a grand jury targeting WikiLeaks. Because the jury was discharged, "the court finds that Ms. Manning's appearance before the grand jury is no longer needed, in light of which her detention no longer serves any coercive purpose," U.S. District Judge Anthony Trenga wrote in his decision. AFP

Hundreds take part in pro-democracy march

Thais mourn current state of country

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BANGKOK

Hundreds of pro-democracy protesters marched in Bangkok on Friday, wearing black T-shirts to mourn the state of Thailand under an Army-aligned government, in the first street protest for several years.

Discontent with the administration of ex-Army chief Prayut Chan-O-cha is seething, with a progressive Opposition party disbanded and the country's economy faltering as the COVID-19 crisis batters the key tourism industry.

Thailand voted Mr. Prayut's conservative government into power a year ago. It was the first election since



Protesters taking part in a march in Bangkok. • REUTERS

a 2014 coup and held under an Army-scripted Constitution that critics say gave Mr. Prayut an unfair advantage.

The boisterous but peaceful "Black Friday" rally called for the government to quit. "Our families are grassroots people and we're directly affected by government policy and the failing economy," said a protester.

Civilian among 6 dead in U.S. strikes on Iraq

Pentagon says it has retaliated for the rocket attack that killed three soldiers

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BAGHDAD

U.S. air strikes targeting pro-Iranian military factions in Iraq killed one civilian and five security personnel early on Friday, the Iraqi military said, warning that the raids risked a bloody escalation in the war-battered country.

The Pentagon said the strikes were in retaliation for rocket fire against an Iraqi base on Wednesday night that killed one British and two U.S. military personnel, the deadliest such attack in years.

The U.S. strikes hit bases hosting personnel from the state-sponsored Hashed al-Shaabi military network, U.S. military officials said. The same bases also host Iraqi government forces.



Taking stock: Iraqi soldiers inspecting the destruction at an airport complex under construction in Karbala on Friday. • AP

Among those hit were areas controlled by Kataeb Hezbollah, a hardline Hashed faction that the U.S. has blamed for several attacks on foreign troops in Iraq.

The Iraqi military said its preliminary death toll from the air strikes was three Iraqi

soldiers, two policemen and one civilian working at an unfinished airport south of Baghdad.

There were no Hashed members among the dead but the toll could rise as some bodies were still stuck under the rubble, the state-meat said.

Hashed fighters were among 11 Iraqi fighters wounded in the bombardment. One civilian was also wounded.

The military warned the air strikes risked "escalation and deterioration of the security situation in the country, and exposes everyone to more risks and threats".

President Barham Saleh condemned them as a violation of the country's sovereignty that could "slide Iraq into anarchy and chaos".

In its statement, the Pentagon said the strikes were "defensive, proportional and in direct response to the threat posed by Iranian-backed Shia militia groups who continue to attack bases" hosting foreign troops in Iraq.

Pakistan media mogul remanded

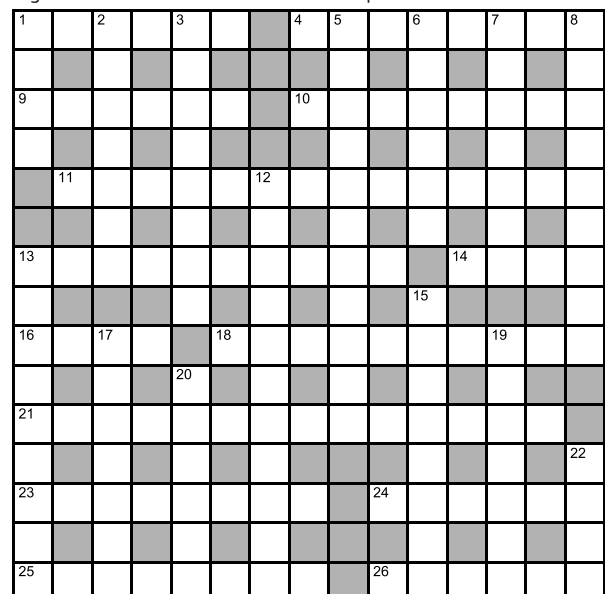
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LAHORE

Pakistani media mogul and the owner of Jang/Geo group, Mir Shakilur Rehman, was on Friday remanded in custody of the country's anti-graft body till March 25 in a 34-year-old land allotment case.

Mr. Rehman was arrested by the National Accountability Bureau on Thursday on charges that he illegally acquired 54 plots on a prime location in Lahore at a throwaway price in 1986 during the tenure of then-chief minister of Punjab Nawaz Sharif. An accountability court in Lahore accepted the plea of the NAB and remanded him in custody for 12 days.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12883

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



(set by Avtaar)

- 11 Antonio Shylock Morgan Stanley, say (8,6)
- 13 100% synthetic leather belts imported from the east (10)
- 14 A book by Indian rebel (4)
- 16 Kid is hiding black beer mug (4)
- 18 Amazing start to Asiad reverberating outside Taiwan's capital (10)
- 21 March fifteen's final entry is missing from worn-out Parliament diary (8,6)
- 23 Floods ravaged storefront – old female is killed (8)
- 24 "Unlimited Puns" – Eves' film is open to public (6)
- 25 This hairstyle bends behind (5,3)
- 26 Loony infamously leaking info about Magdalen (6)
- 5 Go round and round puddle rising over treacherous pothole (4,3,4)
- 6 Address shock with injection of drug (6)
- 7 Patch is in operation after introduction of software with bug (5-2)
- 8 Ragging red make-up is concerning (9)
- 12 Cloud changed start-ups a lot after launch of platforms took off (11)
- 13 Tried a charm pocketed by Edward (9)
- 15 Corrupted net with diatribes, for starters (8)
- 17 Zodiac's simple representation involving constellations, primarily (7)
- 19 Winds cutting both sides? Fine to remain at home (7)
- 20 Shows ways to come back, avoiding traffic at the peak (6)
- 22 Top part of plant from which basic elements are formed (4)

- ACROSS**
- 1 Slogan of human traffickers (6)
 - 4 You finally give up on this and solve "Wife dropped soap, say" (8)
 - 9 Did losers hoard rejected stock that is put in the market again? (6)
 - 10 Union is advising President to replace heads of National Spot Exchange Limited (8)
- DOWN**
- 1 A mealtime tip is added (4)
 - 2 Garnishing on a thick crust of sweet piece of cake (2,5)
 - 3 Spooner says temper fuel first – it provides protection in case of a crash (4,4)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12882

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Adamant Dhritarashtra

Vidura's advice to Dhritarashtra takes up eight chapters in the Mahabharata. Each chapter deals with a different subject. Vidura's niti is relevant at all times, said Kidambi Narayanan in a discourse. The first chapter talks about how to spot an uneducated person and lists the qualities of an educated person. The second chapter deals with traits essential in a king. The third chapter is about the good qualities a man should possess, and how we should behave. The fourth chapter deals with the important quality of tolerance. We tend to criticise people who do not hold our opinions, or we dislike people for various reasons. But we must cultivate tolerance for others. We should speak sweet words and never hurt others through our words or deeds. The fifth chapter tells us what we should do, and what we should not do. Vidura gives a list of seventeen people who do wrong things. The sixth chapter is about treating everyone with respect.

After having listened to all this advice from Vidura, Dhritarashtra says that whatever is destined to happen will happen. In other words, he is not prepared to give the Pandavas even an inch of land, and if war breaks out because of this, then Dhritarashtra will just take it that this war was destined to happen. Vidura's advice, thus, has been wasted on him.

And yet, Vidura does not give up hope. He continues to address Dhritarashtra with wise words. And this occurs in the eighth chapter. Vidura says that if everyone starts to think like Dhritarashtra, then none will adhere to dharma. Vidura elaborates on how families and individuals are ruined. Finally, before leaving, Vidura says, "You asked for advice. Whether you follow my advice or not, whether there is a war or not, all of these will be Krishna's decisions. I have done my duty."