

PANDEMIC WATCH



Queen Elizabeth

UNITED KINGDOM  
Queen shifted to Windsor Castle

London: Queen Elizabeth II has been shifted out of Buckingham Palace in London to Windsor Castle as the UK plans for isolation measures for people over 70 amid the country's death toll from COVID-19 hitting 21, nearly doubling from 11 within a day. The 93-year-old monarch and her 98-year-old husband, Prince Philip, are likely to be placed in quarantine at the royal Sandringham Estate in Norfolk. The situation will be kept under constant review before she is brought back to London, as per reports. "She is in good health but it was thought best to move her," a royal source was quoted by *The Sun* as saying.

PAKISTAN  
Number of COVID-19 cases at 53

Islamabad: Twenty new case of the novel coronavirus surfaced in Pakistan on Sunday, bringing the total number of infections to 53. The number of coronavirus cases have doubled in Sindh province, with 18 new positive cases detected on Sunday. The Punjab province also reported its first two cases in Lahore and Islamabad. Murtaza Wahab, a spokesperson of the Sindh Government, said 13 of the cases surfaced when a group of pilgrims were tested for the virus after they reached Sukkur city from the Taftan border. Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday said that he was personally monitoring measures to deal with the coronavirus in the country.

VATICAN CITY  
No congregation to be at Easter celebration

Rome: The Vatican said Sunday that its traditional Easter week celebrations would be held this year without worshippers due to the coronavirus. "Because of the current global public health emergency, all the liturgical celebrations of Holy Week will take place without the physical presence of the faithful," the Prefecture of the Pontifical Household said in a statement. The Vatican also said: "Until April 12, the general audiences and the Angelus broadcasted over by the Holy Father will be available only in live streaming on the official Vatican News website."

368 deaths in one day, Italy's health workers struggle to keep pace

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
ROME, MARCH 15

A WORN-OUT nurse slumps over her keyboard in a widely shared image symbolic of the extreme fatigue that Italian health-care workers are facing as they battle Europe's worst outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

The picture is of Elena Pagliarini, a nurse in the northern region of Lombardy which has been worst hit by the disease.

Italy on Sunday recorded 368 new deaths from the coronavirus, its highest one-day increase to date, taking the total to 1,809, the most outside China, official data showed.

The number of infections has reached 24,747, a count released to the media by Italy's civil protection service said.

In normal times Lombardy is the economic heart of Italy, equipped with one of the world's best health systems. But those who staff it — like Pagliarini — have been put under enormous strain.

"On one hand I was annoyed to see my photo everywhere, I was ashamed of showing my weakness," Pagliarini told the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper.

"But then I was happy because I got beautiful messages from people who empathised with my story," she said.

She's just one of many healthcare workers who have expressed their concern at the toll that the outbreak is taking.

"It's almost two weeks since I've seen my son or my family because I'm worried about infecting them," Daniele Macchini, a hospital doctor in



An empty water bus in Venice on Sunday. Reuters

the northern city of Bergamo, (also in Lombardy) wrote in a Facebook post. "I settle for some photos of my son which I look at through my tears, and a few video calls," he says.

A nurse in the Tuscan town of Grosseto, Alessia Bonari, posted an image of her face bearing marks from a long day of wearing a surgical mask. "I'm worried because the mask might not be fitting right on my face, I might touch myself accidentally with dirty gloves, the glasses might not totally cover my eyes," she wrote in the caption.

She said that the protective gear staff had to wear meant that she couldn't drink or go to the toilet for six hours at a time. To add to the physical fatigue she said she and all her colleagues had been "psychologically tired" for weeks from the workload.

The San Giovanni Bosco hospital in Turin this week put a mental health team in place to help its staff counter the stress of the current situation. "All those who need it can come forward, we're there for everyone," Monica Agnesone, one of 20 psychologists in the team, said.



A photo of a nurse, resting during the night shift at a hospital in Italy on March 8, has since gone viral on social media. Reuters

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Global toll 6,000, systems stretched thin

Virus could overwhelm facilities: Iran

AGENCIES  
MARCH 15

IRAN ON Sunday urged its citizens to stick to guidelines and stay at home to stop the new coronavirus spreading, as it announced another 113 deaths from the outbreak.

A spike in deaths from the coronavirus in Spain has pushed the global toll past 6,000, according to an AFP tally compiled from official sources. The worldwide death toll rose to 6,036, with 159,844 infections. While China remains the country with the most deaths with 3,199, the pandemic is now spreading more rapidly in Europe, with 1,907

EXPLAINED  
US sanctions another source of worry

AT a time when closed borders and travel bans will likely hit the economy hard, Iranian leaders have said the US sanctions are likely to significantly add to this damage. Most non-oil exports are likely to take a hit, said experts. On top of this, the sanctions, some of which are intended to curb oil and gas exports as well, may deliver a further blow to Iran's revenue. However, the US has claimed to have offered "humanitarian aid", which Tehran is said to have refused.

deaths in Italy. Meanwhile, the official leading Iran's response to the outbreak on Sunday acknowledged that the pandemic could overwhelm health facilities in the country, which is under severe US sanctions. "If the trend continues, there will not be enough capacity," Ali Reza Zali, who is

leading the campaign against the outbreak, was quoted as saying by state-run IRNA news agency.

The latest death toll announced by the health ministry took to 724 the official number of people to have been killed by the disease since last month.

People "should cancel all travel and stay at home so that we may see the situation improving in the coming days," ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said.

Zali also acknowledged that "many" of those who have died from the COVID-19 illness caused by the virus were otherwise healthy, a rare admission by local authorities that the virus does not only prey on the sick and elderly.

Trump tests negative for coronavirus, says White House doctor

NEW YORK TIMES  
MARCH 15

PRESIDENT TRUMP tested negative for the coronavirus, his doctor said in a memo released Saturday evening. The president's health had been a concern since he spent time at his Florida resort last weekend with a Brazilian official who was later found to have the illness.

"One week after having dinner with the Brazilian delegation at Mar-a-Lago, the president remains symptom-free," said Dr Sean P Conley, Trump's doctor, in the memo. At a news conference earlier Saturday, Trump said that he had been tested for the coronavirus on Friday night and was awaiting the results.

Whether the president would be tested had been a matter of speculation since it emerged that a member of a Brazilian delegation that visited Mar-a-Lago had tested positive. Two others who were with the president at Mar-a-Lago have tested positive, and members of Congress have been self-isolating after interacting with some of those people.

Trump said he had decided to be tested after his news conference on Friday, during which he declared a national emergency.

GERMANY TRIES TO STOP U.S. FROM LURING FIRM SEEKING VACCINE

Berlin: Berlin is trying to stop the US from persuading a German company seeking a coronavirus vaccine to move its research to the US, prompting German politicians to say no country should have a monopoly on any vaccine.

German government sources told *Reuters* on Sunday that the US was looking into how it could gain access to a potential vaccine being developed by a German firm, CureVac.

Earlier, the *Welt am Sonntag* German newspaper reported that US President Donald Trump had offered funds to lure CureVac to the US, and the German government was making counter-offers. CureVac issued a statement saying: "The company rejects current rumours of an acquisition". **REUTERS**

Deserted streets as Spain lockdown starts: Death toll doubles, PM's wife tests positive

REUTERS & PTI  
MADRID, MARCH 15

SPANIARDS HUNKERED down in silent cities on Sunday with children's playgrounds blocked off with police tape, after the government imposed sudden, severe restrictions on public life and the coronavirus death toll more than doubled overnight.

Meanwhile, The wife of Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has tested positive for the novel coronavirus, his office said.

Spain, the second-worst affected European country after Italy, on Saturday ordered its 47 million citizens to stay indoors except for necessary outings such



THANKING HEALTHCARE WORKERS: People look out of their windows during an event in Madrid on Sunday. Reuters

as buying food and medicine. Social gatherings are banned.

The government's official coronavirus death toll rose by 152 overnight to 288. The number infected rose by 2,000 new cases to 7,753.

Public places from city streets to beaches across Spain were deserted, with a strengthened presence of police, many wearing latex gloves and facemasks, and some using drones to ensure people complied with the emergency measures.

People formed orderly queues outside supermarkets in Madrid on Sunday, keeping at a distance from each other. A security guard with a face mask let shoppers in two by two.

Israel postpones Netanyahu's graft trial

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
JERUSALEM, MARCH 15

AN ISRAELI court on Sunday postponed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's graft trial over coronavirus, as the premier relaunched his appeal for an emergency unity government to tackle the crisis.

Netanyahu, the first Israeli prime minister ever indicted in office, had been scheduled to stand trial from Tuesday over

alleged bribery, fraud and breach of trust — charges which he denies.

Jerusalem's District Court said in a statement that, given the coronavirus pandemic, it had been instructed to hear "only urgent matters". In Netanyahu's trial, "we have decided to postpone the first hearing until May 24," the court said. Israel has 200 confirmed cases of the virus, and tens of thousands of people in home quarantine.

Gantz picked to form govt

Jerusalem: Israel's president on Sunday said he has decided to give opposition leader Benny Gantz the first opportunity to form a new government following an inconclusive national election this month.

President Reuven Rivlin's office announced his decision late Sunday after consulting with leaders of all the parties elected to parliament.

The decision raises questions about Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's political future.

Gantz's Blue and White received the support of parties representing 61 seats, a slim majority. However, those parties are also divided, and it is not clear whether Gantz will succeed in putting together a coalition. Rivlin said he would formally designate Gantz with the task on Monday. **AP**

MEASURES TAKEN

**AUSTRALIA**  
Australia on Sunday announced anyone arriving into the country will face mandatory 14-day self-isolation. It also said all cruise ships will be banned entirely

**BRITAIN**  
Britain will isolate older people "within weeks", for up to four months, and force into quarantine anyone diagnosed with the virus



EMPTY SHELVES IN BRITISH SUPERMARKET. Reuters

**THE BALTICS**  
Estonia and Lithuania said Saturday they will shut their borders to most foreign visitors while Latvia imposed some security measures of its own

**SOUTH KOREA**  
The country has declared areas hardest hit by the virus as special disaster zones, allowing for economic subsidies and tax exemptions



SOLDIERS DISINFECT BUILDINGS IN DAEGU. Reuters

Stay away from Europe: ISIS travel advisory warns terrorists

ADITI KHANNA  
LONDON, MARCH 15

THE ISLAMIC State (ISIS) terrorist group has issued a travel advisory for its operatives to steer clear of coronavirus-hit Europe, described as "the land of the epidemic".

According to *The Sunday Times*, the latest issue of the ISIS 'Al-Naba' newsletter refers to a new set of "sharia directives" warning against travel to Europe.

The Middle East-based terror outfit, which has in the past encouraged operatives to plot attacks in Europe, also instructed those of its followers who may have become ill with coronavirus not to leave the region, in order to prevent the disease spreading.

The newsletter says that the "healthy should not enter the land of the epidemic and the afflicted should not exit from it". It also instructs followers to "cover their mouths when yawning and sneezing" and to wash their hands regularly.

The newsletter refers to a "plague" described as a "torment sent by God on whosoever He wills", adding: "Illnesses do not strike by themselves but by the command and decree of God." **PTI**

Lanka dispatches Army to trace quarantine evaders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
COLOMBO, MARCH 15

FACED BY the increasing threat of COVID-19 spread, the Army is to track down a group of Sri Lankans who had arrived from Italy and evaded quarantine, a top official said on Sunday.

They had arrived between March 1-9 and allegedly escaped the quarantine process where they ought to have travelled from the Colombo international airport to the quarantine centre in the eastern district of Batticaloa.

Sri Lanka Army has taken over the quarantine process of the returnees.

"One of the ways in which the Army ensures national security is guaranteeing the safety of citizens. Our work in the quarantine process in such action," Army chief Gen Shavendra Silva told reporters.

He said the military intelligence will be deployed to track down the escapees.

There are over 1,700 people in quarantine right now with 10 confirmed cases of COVID-19.

UNDER SHADOW OF CORONAVIRUS, A NATIONAL MEMORIAL WAS CANCELLED

Prayers, Maori haka: Christchurch marks shootings

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
CHRISTCHURCH, MARCH 15

PEOPLE IN the New Zealand city of Christchurch honoured the 51 worshippers who were killed in a mass shooting a year ago in small but poignant ways Sunday, after a planned national memorial event was cancelled due to fears it might spread the virus.

Outside the Al Noor mosque, dozens of leather-clad bikers



At the Al Noor mosque in Christchurch on Sunday. AP

from the Tu Tangata club performed a traditional Maori haka. They were welcomed by mosque imam Gamal Fouda, who said people of all beliefs and cultures were stopping to pay their respects, and they were all united as New Zealanders.

One of those who survived the shooting at the Linwood mosque was Mazharuddin Syed Ahmed, who said that marking anniversaries was not typically a Muslim tradition but they

were doing it so the wider community could grieve and remember. He said the shootings had provoked an outpouring of love and compassion.

"Of course, we lost our loved friends, family, people and community," he said.

"But we are also seeing so much good has come out of it. So looking at the positive part of that. Today, it is such a privilege to be in this country," Temel Atacogucu, who sur-

vived after being shot nine times at the Al Noor mosque, said the anniversary had provoked strong feelings.

"We are sad more than we are angry," he said. "It's very emotional. When I woke up this morning, I'm speechless. I can't explain what I feel." Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said Saturday the decision to cancel the memorial event planned for Homestead Arena was pragmatic and precautionary.