

QUOTE UNQUOTE

"It looks as though we are now approaching the fast growth part of the upward curve and without drastic action cases could double every 5 or 6 days"

— BORIS JOHNSON, on the need to avoid non-essential social contact and unnecessary travel

TOP OF THE WORLD



Donald Trump

USA

Stop hoarding food, supplies, says Trump

THE WHITE House on Sunday urged Americans against "hoarding" as many flocked to supermarkets to stock up on essentials. President Donald Trump held a phone call with more than two dozen grocery store and supply chain executives, White House spokesman Judd Deere said in a statement. "The President reminded participants that this is an all-of-America approach and each of their stores and the stores they support can help Americans feel calm and safe..." Deere said. "Supply chains in the US are strong and it is unnecessary for the American public to hoard daily essentials," he said.

ISRAEL

Indian-origin Jew beaten up in virus linked hatecrime

Jerusalem: An Indian-origin Jew was badly beaten by two persons who called him a "Chinese" and yelled "Corona! Corona!" in Israel's Tiberias city, in an apparent racist assault linked to the outbreak. Am-Shalem Singson, 28, hailing from Manipur and Mizoram, was admitted to Poriya hospital with severe chest injuries, Channel 13 reported. The police continues to search for the two suspects. Singson told police he tried very hard to explain to the attackers that he was not Chinese and was not infected by the coronavirus, but it did not help.

BANGLADESH

Travel bans in place, education institutions shut

Dhaka: Bangladesh on Monday closed all education institutions from March 18 to March 31, and imposed a ban on the entry of Europeans and travellers from several countries, including India, as part of measures to combat the coronavirus. "All educational institutions across the country will remain closed from March 18 to March 31," said Deputy Minister for Education Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury. The cabinet asked parents to keep their children indoors, said a spokesperson.

SWITZERLAND

Geneva limits gatherings to five people

Geneva: The Swiss region of Geneva declared a "state of necessity" on Monday due to the coronavirus global pandemic, shutting bars and restaurants and limiting gatherings to just five people. Geneva city, home to many international institutions including the United Nations' headquarters in Europe and the World Health Organisation, banned non-work gatherings of more than five people both indoors or outdoors. "The council took strong restrictive measures this morning to make haste. Geneva will be in semi-containment," canton council president Antonio Hodgers said, as per a report.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Test, test, test: WHO on fighting outbreak



FROM LEFT: A traffic officer checks temperatures of motorcycle riders at a checkpoint in Manila, Philippines, on Monday; an employee disinfects a subway train in Moscow, Russia; an empty Catalonia Square in Barcelona.

349 more deaths in Italy, taking total toll to 2,158; France says situation deteriorating rapidly

AGENCIES MARCH 16

THERE HAVE now been more COVID-19 cases and deaths in the rest of the world than in China, the World Health Organisation said Monday. "More cases and deaths have now been reported in the rest of the world than in China," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters in Geneva, without providing the latest numbers. According to an AFP tally based on official sources, more than 169,710 cases have been recorded in 142 countries and territories.

"You cannot fight a fire blindfolded," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters in Geneva, saying the WHO recommended that countries "Test, test, test. Test every suspected case."

Italy on Monday reported 349 new deaths from the novel coronavirus, taking its total since last month to 2,158, the most after China. The number of official COVID-19 fatalities has more than doubled since Thursday, when Italy's toll topped 1,000 for the first time. Italy now has 27,980 infections, compared to 15,113 four days ago.

Madrid's streets were eerily quiet on Monday as Spaniards spent their first working day under a state of emergency which a minister said will need to be extended beyond the two weeks initially envisaged.

"Obviously we will have to extend this situation...in 15 days I do not think that we will be in a position to win this battle," Transport Minister Jose Luis Abalos told RNE radio.

Meanwhile, many streets in French cities were desolate on Monday as schools, cafes and a range of businesses were shuttered on government orders, as President Emmanuel Macron weighed additional measures to contain the outbreak. In France, the virus had infected more than 5,000 by Sunday and killed 127 — a jump of 900 cases and 36 deaths in 24 hours.

Germany on Monday introduced border controls with Austria, Denmark, France, Luxembourg and Switzerland

EXPLAINED

E. Coordination a growing need

BE IT within individual countries like the US or among global bodies such as the European Union, a recurring plea has been for coordination in tackling the outbreak. In the US, states have been calling on the Trump administration to coordinate a national response, as opposed to patchwork initiatives, to better allocate supplies, equipment and personnel. The same situation is seen in the EU, where the body has repeatedly called on members not to stockpile necessities or impose unilateral travel bans.

US BEGINS HUMAN TESTING OF VACCINE

THE FIRST human trial to evaluate a candidate vaccine against COVID-19 has begun in Seattle, US health officials said Monday. "The open-label trial will enroll 45 healthy adult volunteers ages 18 to 55 years over approximately 6 weeks," the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) said in a statement.

in a bid to stem the coronavirus outbreak. Only those with a valid reason for travel, like cross-border commuters and delivery drivers, are allowed through, officials said.

The number of cases in the United Kingdom has risen to 1,543 the health ministry said.

Russia on Monday stepped up efforts to curb the spread of coronavirus by banning major sporting events across the country and by shutting state schools and limiting gatherings of people.

COVID-19 OUTBREAK: FIVE KEY FIGURES

€28 bn The funds allocated by Sweden, via a series of measures, to protect companies and workers from the fallout of the virus

\$4 bn The amount approved by the Russian govt to help its economy and encourage businesses to follow precautions

10,000 The visas South Africa will revoke, which were issued to people from China and Iran. Visitors from at-risk countries like the US will now need to procure visas

350 The number of coronavirus cases in Australia, which has declared an emergency and set up penalties for breaking its guidelines

129 new deaths in Iran; China urges US to lift sanctions

AP & REUTERS TEHRAN, MARCH 16

IRAN REPORTED another 129 fatalities from the new coronavirus on Monday, the largest one-day rise in deaths since it began battling the Middle East's worst outbreak, which has claimed more than 850 lives and infected a number of senior officials in the country.

China on Monday urged the United States to lift sanctions on Iran immediately.

"Continued sanction on Iran was against humanitarianism and hampers Iran's epidemic response & delivery of humanitarian aid by the UN and other organisations," China's ministry of foreign affairs said in a tweet.

Businesses in Iran's capital remained open, however, even as other countries in the region moved toward full lockdowns, with Lebanon largely shutting down and Iraqis racing to prepare for a curfew set to begin later this week. The divergent approaches adopted by local authorities reflect continued uncertainty over how to slow the spread of a virus that has infected around 170,000



Workers assemble boxes of disinfectant to be donated to Iran, in Beijing. China has been donating supplies to Italy, Iran, South Korea and other affected places. AP

people worldwide and caused more than 6,500 deaths.

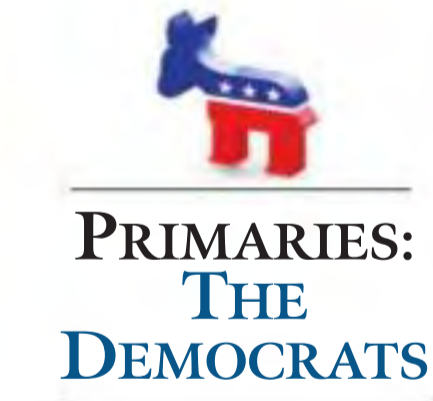
Some have opted for an even more aggressive response.

Israel, where the number of confirmed cases has more than doubled to around 250 in recent days, has authorised the use of phone-snooping technology long used against Palestinian militants to track coronavirus patients. Such practices will spark renewed debate over privacy issues as countries around the world confront the pandemic. Most people experience only

mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, and recover within weeks. But the virus is highly contagious and can be spread by people with no visible symptoms.

Iraq announced a weeklong curfew late Sunday. People raced to supermarkets while others stocked up on cooking fuel. The curfew, set to begin late Tuesday, includes suspension of all flights from Baghdad's international airport. Iraq's Health Ministry has reported 124 cases of coronavirus and nine deaths.

With pandemic backdrop, Biden, Sanders go head-to-head over policy, track records



PRIMARIES: THE DEMOCRATS

ALEXANDER BURNS & JONATHAN MARTIN NEW YORK, MARCH 16

JOSEPH R Biden Jr and Senator Bernie Sanders called for vastly more aggressive government action to battle the coronavirus but split over some of the details along familiar ideological lines on Sunday night, as the two



Joe Biden (left) and Bernie Sanders do an elbow bump in place of a handshake before the start of the debate. Reuters

Democrats tangled over the right to lead their party into a campaign overshadowed by the pandemic.

In their first one-on-one debate of the primary race, Sanders

demanding sweeping economic reform and the creation of a single-payer health care system to address crises like the virus. Biden said he would call up the

military to help and enact a "multi-multi-billion dollar program" of disease containment and economic rescue, and said that there were more issues at hand that could not wait on reinventing the health care system.

Biden, the former vice president, said managing the coronavirus was "like a war," while Sanders said it had exposed "the dysfunctionality" of the country's patchwork health care system.

Biden repeatedly sought to play down criticism from Sanders and to play a unifying role. He offered lengthy praise for a proposal by Senator Elizabeth Warren to reform the bankruptcy code, and in a striking commitment he made an iron-clad pledge to name a woman as his running mate. NYT

'Virus almost ending': China to call back medical staff from Wuhan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA BEIJING, MARCH 16

CHINA ON Monday announced plans for an orderly withdrawal of thousands of medical staff deployed in the worst-hit Hubei province as a top medical expert said the coronavirus outbreak has "almost seen its end" in the country but a final judgement would be made after a month.

A leading Chinese official group, headed by Premier Li Keqiang, suggested orderly withdrawal of the medical staff supporting virus-hit Hubei province for which Wuhan is the capital, where the virus first emerged in December last year.

China deployed over 30,000 medical personnel, including staff from the military, and built 14 makeshift hospitals at the height of the coronavirus outbreak in January. The makeshift hospitals have been dismantled.

Meanwhile, Cao Wei, Deputy Director and Associate Chief Physician of the Department of infectious diseases of Peking Union Medical College Hospital, said the deadly coronavirus which brought China to a grinding halt for about three months has "almost seen its end".

"Currently, after three months of fight, the (virus) outbreak in China, which started in last December has almost seen its end," said Cao.

"We will still wait for another month to see and make the final judgement," Cao added.

Facing outrage for stockpiling sanitisers, man donates them

JACK NICAS NEW YORK, MARCH 16

A Tennessee man who became a subject of national scorn after stockpiling 17,700 bottles of hand sanitiser donated all of the supplies on Sunday just as the Tennessee attorney general's office began investigating him for price gouging.

The donations capped a tumultuous 24 hours for Colvin. On Saturday morning, *The New York Times* published an article about how he and his brother cleaned out stores of sanitiser and wipes in an attempt to profit off the public's panic over the coronavirus pandemic. Colvin sold 300 bottles of hand sanitiser at a markup on Amazon before the company removed his listings and warned sellers they would be suspended for price gouging. The article immediately sparked widespread outrage, with thousands of people posting angry comments across the internet about his actions. Colvin expressed remorse for his actions and said that when he decided to hoard the sanitiser and wipes, he didn't realize the gravity of the coronavirus outbreak. NYT

'THERE MIGHT COME A DAY WHERE WE CAN'T EVEN COLLECT THE DEAD'

In Afghanistan, coronavirus complicates war and peace

NEW YORK TIMES KABUL, MARCH 16

WHEN THE coronavirus began spreading, many Afghans were in denial even after it became an obvious and deadly crisis in neighbouring Iran.

Some touted their piety as a shield — they already washed and prayed five times a day. Others, even some officials, joked that the health system had been so bad, the country already so infested with germs and bacteria, that a new invading virus simply could not make it far.



Activists give information about the virus to drivers in Kabul on Monday. AP

That denial is crumbling now, as the 21st positive case has been announced in the country. Testing remains extremely lim-

ited — only roughly 250 tests have been conducted thus far — so Afghan officials and lawmakers fear that the number of infected is much higher in the absence of capacity to detect and slow the spread of the virus.

Most worrying is that Iran has disregarded the Afghan government's plea to restrict border crossings, with as many as 15,000 people still crossing into Afghanistan daily. The virus is spreading at a time of raging war and a political crisis that has stalled governance in Afghanistan. Impoverished, with its health and nutrient systems gutted by the

conflict, the country has always been extremely vulnerable.

Much of the fear stems from the fact that Afghanistan hasn't even been able to get the situation in the worst-hit province under control, with medical staff lacking some of the most basic equipment.

"We are in a situation where the politicians and even some parts of the government don't feel how grave the danger is," Abdul Qayoum Rahimi, Herat's governor, said on Saturday. "If we don't start acting, I am afraid there might come a day where we can't even collect the dead."

PAKISTAN SHUTS BORDERS, LIMITS FLIGHTS

Islamabad: Pakistan shut all its schools and land borders on Friday and decided to limit international flights and discourage large gatherings to try to halt the spread of the coronavirus.

The measures were announced by ministers after a meeting of the national security council chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan.

"It has been decided that all

borders will remain closed for 15 days," Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi told the local ARY and Dunya TV networks. "International flights will operate only out of Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad airports."

Pakistan had already shot down flight services to and from neighbouring Iran, which has suffered one of the world's deadliest coronavirus outbreaks. REUTERS