

# 20 THE OUTBREAK THE WORLD

## PANDEMIC WATCH



Kim Jong-un

### NORTH KOREA

#### Two missiles fired, S Korea condemns

Seoul: North Korea fired what appeared to be two short-range ballistic missiles off its east coast on Saturday, the latest in a series of such launches by Pyongyang as the world struggles with the coronavirus pandemic. The South Korean military condemned the launches as "extremely inappropriate given the difficult situation the world is experiencing due to COVID-19... We urge them to stop immediately." North Korea has not reported any cases of the coronavirus, which has turned into a major crisis with more than 11,000 deaths and over 250,000 infections worldwide.

### SINGAPORE

#### First deaths reported, more measures taken

Singapore: Singapore on Saturday reported its first coronavirus deaths, including a 75-year-old Singaporean woman, the health ministry said, as the country announced a slew of measures to prevent the spread of the deadly disease that has infected 385 people in the island nation. Singapore on Friday confirmed 40 new COVID-19 cases, including 30 imported infections, taking the total number to 385 in the country. The two fatalities included the woman and a 64-year-old Indonesian man who died on Saturday, the health ministry said.

### COLOMBIA

#### Country to start mandatory isolation

Bogota: Colombia will go into compulsory general confinement from Tuesday until April 13 to stop the spread of the new coronavirus, President Ivan Duque announced Friday. "As part of the state of emergency, we will apply compulsory preventive isolation for all Colombians from next Tuesday," he said in an address to the nation. Nearly half of the population are already taking part in a full-scale isolation exercise from Friday to Monday midnight to test the effectiveness of such measures.

### UAE

#### First two virus deaths flagged

Dubai: The United Arab Emirates on Friday reported the first two deaths from coronavirus in the country. Abu Dhabi has reported 140 infections so far, of whom 31 have recovered, but no deaths. "The Ministry of Health and Prevention has announced the first two deaths caused by the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, in the country," the Emirates News Agency reported. The UAE has introduced restrictions on passenger arrivals, but has not so far imposed confinement measures, and public spaces, such as shopping centres and restaurants — remain open.

# Billion confined to homes, toll 12,000

## Over half of global fatalities in Europe; WHO warns young people: You are not invincible

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW YORK, MARCH 21

CLOSE TO one billion people worldwide were confined to their homes on Saturday as the global coronavirus death toll crossed 12,000.

The pandemic has completely upended lives across the planet, restricting movement, shutting schools and forcing millions to work from home.

The virus death toll crossed 12,000 worldwide, with over 4,000 alone in worst-hit Italy where the daily number of fatalities has shot up relentlessly over the past week.

Europe now accounts for more than half of the world's fatalities linked to COVID-19.

Over 900 million people, at an estimate, are now confined to their homes in 35 countries around the world — including 600 million hemmed in by obligatory government lockdown orders — according to an AFP tally.

While the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions are the hardest hit by the virus, the World Health Organisation warned that young people were also vulnerable.

"Today I have a message for young people: you are not invincible. This virus could put you in hospital for weeks — or even kill you," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said. "Even if you don't get sick, the choices you make about where you go could be the difference between life and death for some-

## Pak suspends international flights as cases jump to 666

SAJJAD HUSSAIN  
ISLAMABAD, MARCH 21

PAKISTAN ON Saturday suspended all international flights for two weeks and curtailed train services as the coronavirus cases surged to 666 in the country after more pilgrims who returned from Iran tested positive for the deadly virus, which has turned into a major global crisis.

The government in a statement said all international flights are being suspended for two weeks to curb the spread of the virus. From 8 pm tonight, "all incoming international flights are being suspended for two weeks," a statement issued read.

National flag-carrier PIA however will be allowed to bring back its planes. Cargo flights will also be allowed. Earlier, the PIA had said all international departures were being suspended till March 28. Railway Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad ordered to reduce the number of trains running in the country from March 25 until the middle of the holy month of Ramadan, which would start around April 25.

"We have decided to suspend 34 trains out of total 142 running in the country while another eight trains will be suspended from April 1," he said.

The number of confirmed cases in the country jumped to 666 by late Saturday. PTI



PREVENTIVE MEASURES: A traveller in protective clothing and a full-face mask in Beijing Railway Station, China. Reuters

one else." China on Saturday reported no new local infections for a third straight day, and the WHO said the central Chinese city of Wuhan, where the virus emerged late last year, offered a glimmer of "hope for the rest of the world".

But there are growing concerns of a new wave of "imported" infections in the region, with Hong Kong reporting 48 suspected cases on Friday — its biggest daily jump since the crisis began. Many of them have a recent history of travel to or

from Europe.

Britain, falling in line with its EU neighbours, also announced tougher restrictions, telling pubs, restaurants and theatres to close and promising to help cover the wages of affected workers.

The Democratic Republic of Congo reported its first death Saturday, while Burkina Faso reported two new deaths, bringing the total number of fatalities in sub-Saharan Africa to five.

Cases stand at over 1,000 across Africa, where health care systems are fragile.

## With 123 new fatalities, Iran's death toll over 1,500; Jordan goes into lockdown

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
AMMAN, MARCH 21

AIR RAID sirens echoed across Jordan's capital on Saturday to mark the start of a three-day curfew, the latest mass lockdown in the Middle East aimed at containing the coronavirus, which has claimed another 123 lives in Iran, home to the region's worst outbreak.

The latest deaths bring Iran's overall toll to 1,556 amid 20,610 confirmed cases, according to figures released by the Health Ministry. Iran has faced widespread criticism for its lagging response to the outbreak, which has even infected and killed some senior officials.

In one of the strictest measures yet, Jordan has ordered all shops to close and all people to stay off the streets until at least Tuesday, when it plans to announce times for shopping.

## Virus scare triggers riot in Lanka jail, one dead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
COLOMBO, MARCH 21

The coronavirus scare triggered a riot in a Sri Lankan jail on Saturday, leading to a gunfight which left one inmate killed and five others injured, officials said.

According to prison rights activists, the prisoners were demanding their release due to the threat to their lives in view of COVID-19 which has infected 77

people in the country.

The protests led to a riot inside the jail situated in the north central town of Anuradhapura.

"There was unrest in the prison this afternoon following a protest by inmates. When the prison officials were countering the riot to bring it under control, there was an attempt by the inmates to flee the jail. The resultant shooting killed one while five others were injured," the police said in a statement.

## EXPLAINED Fear of another wave in some countries

COUNTRIES LIKE China and Hong Kong, where local infections have died down or are under control, are now fearing another wave of infections, this time "imported" through foreigners or citizens returning from other nations. Such cases have the potential to reignite community spread of the virus, as per reports. Experts also said that imported cases posed a threat to the economic recovery of a country. New cases could lead to measures including crowd bans staying in effect, which could potentially prevent businesses from regaining normalcy.



Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in Tehran, Saturday. Reuters

Anyone caught violating the curfew faces up to one year in prison.

Several countries in the Middle East have closed schools, universities and nonessential

businesses. Many are threatening fines or jail time to those caught violating the decrees.

Saturday is Mother's Day in the Middle East, and many took to social media to lament the fact that they would not be able to visit family members.

Iraq, which has reported 193 cases and 14 deaths, has struggled to maintain a weeklong curfew in Baghdad as religious pilgrims have continued to try to visit a major Shiite Muslim shrine in the capital.

The tiny, energy-rich nation of Qatar is warning citizens and residents to honor home quarantine rules. The state-run Qatar News Agency said authorities "captured 10 people" who broke the rules. It said those who disobey the orders could face prosecution.

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC: FOUR KEY FIGURES

**\$1.2 mn**

The amount pledged by Afghanistan, Maldives for SAARC Corona Emergency fund. Afghanistan pledged \$1 million, Maldives \$200k

**100,000**

The number of test kits for the coronavirus that China is sending to Philippines. It is supplying gear to numerous countries

**624,000**

The number of people who passed through TSA outbound checkpoints at US airports, the lowest such recorded figure

**36%**

The percentage of the global coronavirus death toll that Italy presently accounts for. Its mortality rate is currently 8.6%

## US issues 'major disaster' declaration for New York state

NEW YORK TIMES  
NEW YORK, MARCH 21

The Trump administration has issued a Major Disaster Declaration for the state, meaning more federal aid is coming to New York as cases of coronavirus show no sign of abating.

As of Saturday morning, more than 8,300 New York state residents had tested positive for the virus. With 6 percent of the US population, the state now accounts for nearly half of the 18,000 cases in the country tallied by The New York Times.

The designation by the Federal Emergency Management Agency gives New York access to billions of dollars in aid from the Disaster Relief Fund. State officials and doctors have been sounding the alarm about an impending shortage of supplies, hospital beds and ventilators as the number of confirmed coronavirus cases continue to climb.

On Friday night, Senator Chuck Schumer of New York announced that the Trump administration had issued a Major Disaster Declaration for the state, which now has the most coronavirus cases in the nation.

"It's imperative that the federal government does everything within its power to sup-

## TRUMP vs DOCTOR

■ Trump and the govt's top infectious disease expert, Dr Anthony Fauci, sparred on whether a malaria drug would help coronavirus patients

■ "No," Fauci said on using the drug to prevent COVID-19. "What you're referring to specifically is anecdotal... not done in a controlled clinical trial"

■ But Trump stuck to what his gut was telling him. Trump said he disagreed with the notion that there is no magic drug. "Maybe and maybe not," he said. "Maybe there is, maybe there isn't"

port New York in the state effort to stem the spread of the deadly coronavirus," said Schumer, the Senate Minority Leader.

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo on Friday issued a decree meant to compel New Yorkers to stay indoors as much as possible, ordering all nonessential businesses to keep their workers home.



A nearly-empty Times Square in New York. AP

## Respect China, but unfortunate virus got out of control: Trump

LALIT K JHA  
WASHINGTON, MARCH 21

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump has said he greatly respects China and shares a "very good" relationship with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, but termed it "unfortunate" that the coronavirus began in the Communist nation and got out of control.

Speaking at a press briefing on Friday, Trump said he considered Xi as a friend and asserted that the Chinese President respects the US. "I have a very good relationship with China and with President Xi. I have great respect for President Xi. I consider him to be a friend of mine. It is unfortunate that this got out of control," he said.

Trump reiterated that coronavirus originated from China.

"They (coronavirus) came from China, it got out of control. Some people are upset..." he said.



Trump reiterated that the virus originated in China

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told the same press briefing that China's delay in sharing information about the virus had created risks to people worldwide.

"We need to know immediately. The world is entitled to know. The Chinese government was the first to know of this risk to the world, and that puts a special obligation to make sure that data gets to our scientists, our professionals," Pompeo said. PTI

## 'DO I WANT TO DIE IN HOSPITAL...OR WOULD I LIKE TO DIE AT HOME?'

# Who gets the ventilator? British doctors face difficult choices

STEPHEN GREY & ANDREW MACASKILL  
LONDON, MARCH 21

THE CORONAVIRUS pandemic is forcing senior doctors in Britain's National Health Service to contemplate the unthinkable: how to ration access to critical care beds and ventilators should resources fall short.

The country's public health system, the NHS, is ill-equipped to cope with an outbreak that is unprecedented in modern times. Hospitals are now striving to at least quadruple the number

of intensive care beds to meet an expected surge in serious virus cases, senior physicians told Reuters, but expressed dismay that preparations had not begun weeks earlier.

Rahuldeb Sarkar, a consultant physician in respiratory medicine and critical care in the English county of Kent, said local NHS trusts across the country were reviewing decision-making procedures drawn up, but never needed, during the 2009 H1N1 flu pandemic. They cover how to choose who, in the event of a shortage, would be put on a ventilator and for how long.



A paramedic near an ambulance in Cheshunt, Britain. Reuters

"It will be tough, and that's why it's important that you know, that two or more consultants will make the decisions."

Sarkar said the choices extended not only to who was given access to a ventilator but how long to continue if there was no sign of recovery. "In normal days, that patient would be given some more days to see which way it goes," he added.

Matt Mayer, head of the local medical committee covering an area in south of England, said GPs had been sent face masks in boxes that said "best before 2016" and that have been relabelled with

new stickers reading "2021".

"If you are going to lead people into a hazardous situation then you need to give them the confidence that they have the kit to do a decent job and they are not just going to become cannon fodder," said Harwood the anaesthetist.

Dr Alison Pittard, dean of the Faculty of Intensive Medicine and a consultant in Leeds, northern England, said, if rationing became necessary, medical ethics should still prevail and guidelines needed to be issued on a national level.

Pittard said patients with pre-existing conditions who al-

ready had life-threatening health difficulties should be having conversations with their family about how they wished to spend their last days, in the event of them being infected.

"If I get coronavirus now I've got a very high chance of dying of it," she said, putting herself into the shoes of such a patient. "So do I want to die in hospital and when my relatives can't come in to visit me because it's too risky, or would I like to die at home?"

"And if I want to go into hospital, do I then want to go to intensive care where my chances of surviving are minimal?" REUTERS