

We are in uncharted territory, says WHO

Globally, COVID-19 has killed more than 3,155 people and infected over 92,723 in 78 countries

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

The world has entered uncharted territory in its battle against the deadly coronavirus, the UN health agency warned, as new infections dropped dramatically in China on Tuesday but surged elsewhere.

Globally, the virus has killed more than 3,155 people and infected over 92,723 in 78 countries and territories. A clear shift in the crisis emerges, with nine times as many new cases recorded outside China as inside, according to the World Health Organization.

"We are in uncharted territory," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said. "We have never before seen a respiratory pathogen that is capable of community transmission, but which can also be contained with the right measures."

China has imposed draconian quarantines and travel



War on virus: Army trucks spraying disinfectant on a street in Ulsan, South Korea, on Tuesday, to prevent the spread of COVID-19. *AP

restrictions to people indoors — a strategy that appears to have paid off as new cases have been generally falling for days.

'Safety gears' supply hit'
"We are concerned that countries' abilities to respond are being compro-

mised by the severe and increasing disruption to the global supply of personal protective equipment... caused by rising demand, hoarding and misuse," Mr. Ghebreyesus said, warning that "supplies are rapidly depleting."

Italy on Tuesday put the

death toll at 79, with more than 2,500 people infected — the most of any country in Europe. While Italy has locked down towns, other countries have stopped short of imposing mass quarantines and instead have discouraged large gatherings, delayed sporting events and

banned arrivals from virus-hit nations.

With concern growing about the impact on the global economy, G7 Finance Ministers and central bank chiefs will hold talks on Tuesday.

South Korea, the biggest cluster outside China, reported 851 new cases, its biggest daily increase, sending its total past 5,000 while its death toll rose to 28. "The entire country has entered a war with the infectious disease," South Korean President Moon Jae-in said.

By contrast, China reported 125 new cases — its lowest daily increase in six weeks — with all but 11 infections in Hubei province. The nationwide death toll rose to 2,943 with 31 more deaths, with 80,000 total cases.

China has even confirmed 13 imported infections, including eight Chinese nationals who worked at a restaurant in Italy's Lombardy.

Taliban attacks Afghan bases, throwing peace talks in doubt

33 attacks in 16 out of 34 Afghan provinces in just 24 hours

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

The Taliban carried out dozens of attacks on Afghan Army bases, officials said on Tuesday, hours after ending a partial truce and throwing into doubt peace talks between Kabul and the insurgents.

The intra-Afghan negotiations are due to begin March 10, according to a U.S.-Taliban deal signed in Doha on Saturday, but a dispute over a prisoner swap has raised questions about whether they will go ahead.

The agreement includes a commitment for the Taliban to release up to 1,000 prisoners and for the Afghan government to free around 5,000 insurgent captives — something the militants have cited as a prerequisite for talks but which President Ashraf Ghani has refused to

do before negotiations start.

The row has highlighted the tough road ahead, with the Taliban's decision to end a partial truce on Monday complicating matters further.

Six civilians killed

In the last 24 hours the Taliban conducted 33 attacks in 16 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, interior ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi said. "As a result, six civilians were killed and 14 wounded. Eight enemy were also killed, 15 wounded," he said on Twitter.

Two soldiers were killed in one of the attacks in southern Kandahar province, a government statement said.

An attack in Logar province near Kabul killed five security forces, the provincial governor's spokesman

Didar Lawang told AFP.

The halt to the limited truce, which began on February 22, ends what was a welcome reprieve for ordinary Afghans, who have borne the brunt of the deadly violence.

Kabul-based analyst Ahmad Saeedi told AFP the uptick in attacks reflected the insurgents' belief that "they have to keep the battlefield hot to be able to win on the negotiating table, as they did with the Americans."

Release of captives

Ghani's government last week sent a delegation to Qatar to open "initial contacts" with the insurgents but Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen on Tuesday said the militants would not meet Kabul's representatives except to discuss the release of their captives.

11 more deaths in Iran, 23 MPs contract COVID-19

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TEHRAN

Iran put its armed forces on alert on Tuesday to assist health officials in battling COVID-19 that has killed at least 77 people, an outbreak that has sickened top officials and pushed even its supreme leader into wearing disposable gloves while trying to reassure the nation.

Even as government officials sit meters (feet) away from each other at meetings now in an effort to stop its spread, the virus is ravaging both its civilian leadership and its Shiite theocracy. A top emergency official said at least 23 members of Par-

liament reportedly now suffer from the COVID-19 it causes.

On Tuesday, it announced 11 more deaths and 835 new infections — the biggest increase in a single day since the outbreak.

Experts worry Iran's percentage of deaths to infections, now around 3.3%, is much higher than other countries, suggesting the number of infections in Iran may be far greater than current figures show. Meanwhile, a gloved Ayatollah Ali Khamenei praised the doctors and nurses combating the outbreak. He urged the nation to pray.

France reports fourth death, sparks fear

REUTERS
PARIS

A fourth person has died in France due to COVID-19, the Health Ministry said on Tuesday. It gave no detail on the person's age or nationality.

On Monday evening, French health authorities reported 191 confirmed cases of coronavirus and said three people had died so far from the disease.

Fears of catching the virus have sparked a run on masks as well as sanitising hand gel in France, leading some stores and online retailers to hike prices.

U.S. death toll rises to six, all in Washington state

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LOS ANGELES

The number of U.S. deaths from COVID-19 disease rose to six on Monday, all in the state of Washington, officials said, signalling the contagion has taken root in the Pacific Northwest.

Vice-President Mike Pence announced a treatment for the disease could be available by summer or early fall, but that a vaccine was farther off.

Mr. Pence, the administration's pointman for the crisis, also said the government was moving to screen 100% of passengers flying in from Italy and South Korea,

two serious virus hot zones.

Five of the six American fatalities have been from King county, the most populous in Washington state and home to Seattle, a city of more than 700,000 people. The sixth victim was from neighbouring Snohomish county, officials said.

"The risk for all of us of becoming infected will be increasing," said Jeff Duchin, a health officer in King County.

The state reported four new cases, three from the same nursing home, taking the total number of U.S. cases to more than 90.

Netanyahu leads in Israel polls

He is likely to secure 59 seats, two short of a ruling majority

REUTERS
JERUSALEM

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu led on Tuesday in Israel's third national election in less than a year but was short of a governing majority, nearly complete results showed.

Mr. Netanyahu claimed victory in Monday's vote over his main challenger, former armed forces chief Benny Gantz of the centrist Blue and White party, after exit polls projected the right-wing leader's Likud party had come out on top.

"We turned lemons into lemonade," he told a cheer-



Benjamin Netanyahu

ing crowd at Likud's election headquarters.

But Mr. Gantz stopped short of conceding defeat, saying the election could result in another deadlock.

With some 90% of the

votes counted, Mr. Netanyahu, who has the pledged support of right-wing and religious parties for a coalition government, appeared to control 59 seats in Parliament, two short of a ruling majority.

The gap made former Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman's far-right Yisrael Beiteinu party a potential kingmaker.

A win for Mr. Netanyahu, 70, would be testament to the political durability of Israel's longest-serving leader, who fought the latest campaign under the shadow of a looming corruption trial.

MP challenges Nasheed on India stand

Muslims who are suffering in India deserve our attention, says Ali Hussain

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

A Maldivian legislator has challenged Speaker and Former President Mohamed Nasheed on his "selective" response to the treatment of Muslims in the neighbourhood.

In a tweet on February 28, Mr. Nasheed said: "I am delighted that Amal Clooney is working with Maldives to fight on behalf of the Rohingya people. As good Muslims, Maldivians have a duty to help our brothers and sisters, and it makes sense to begin with those who are closest to us."

It followed the Maldivian government's decision to join the Gambia in challeng-

ing Myanmar's treatment of Rohingya people at the International Court of Justice.

Apparently responding to Mr. Nasheed's tweet, Ali Hussain, an MP from the ruling coalition, said in a tweet the same day: "Also the Muslims who are suffering in India deserve our attention. India is closer to us in many ways so there is no reason why we can't raise our concerns."

Asked about his tweet, Mr. Hussain told *The Hindu* via telephone from Male: "Yes, I strongly believe that we cannot be selective in our pursuit of justice." "Whether it is the revocation of Article 370 [that gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir], or the passage of the Citizenship



Mohamed Nasheed

[Amendment] Act, I have closely followed many discussions in academic circles, among lawyers, including many of my classmates," said Mr. Hussain, an alumnus of the National Law School, Bangalore.

"Reading on the Citizenship Act and listening to arguments made by many, I am able to appreciate the

concerns over the infamous amendment that is not just discriminatory, but also arbitrary," he said. "Moreover, the transfer of a senior judge [Justice Muralidhar] just hours after he questioned the Delhi police on the recent violence raises serious questions about the space for independent judiciary [in India]," he said.

Observing that India was a "close friend", Mr. Hussain said it was therefore Maldives's duty to urge its friend to be fair to all its citizens. Asked about Mr. Hussain's position, Mr. Nasheed, widely hailed as pro-democracy activist, said "racial disturbances" anywhere were "unfortunate". The idea upon which India was born was "co-existence", despite different languages, ethnicities or religions, he said.

U.S. votes in crucial primaries after three ex-rivals back Biden

Klobuchar, Buttigieg and O'Rourke endorse the former V-P

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HOUSTON

Americans vote on Tuesday in primaries that play a major role in who will challenge Donald Trump for the presidency, a day after key endorsements dramatically boosted Joe Biden's hopes against surging leftist Bernie Sanders.

The backing of Mr. Biden by three of his ex-rivals marked an unprecedented turn in a fractured, often bitter campaign.

The Democratic establishment is desperate to unite around a moderate candidate who can triumph over frontrunner Sanders, a self-

described democratic socialist, and face President Trump in November.

The 77-year-old former Vice-President is consolidating support among moderates eager to blunt the advance of Mr. Sanders, who could take a potentially insurmountable lead in the all-important delegate count after Super Tuesday.

Mr. Biden has been riding high with key endorsements that built into a political crescendo on Monday.

He took the stage at a rally in Dallas, Texas joined by Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar, who told the crowd she was ending her cam-

paigned and endorsing Mr. Biden for president.

Mr. Biden later introduced Beto O'Rourke, who made a big splash early in the Democratic race but then fizzled out. Mr. O'Rourke remains popular in Texas, the state with the largest delegate haul on Tuesday after California.

"We need somebody who can beat Donald Trump (and) in Biden we have that man," Mr. O'Rourke said.

Hours earlier Pete Buttigieg, the 38-year-old former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, threw his support behind Biden a day after quitting the race himself.

ELSEWHERE



Pope Francis tests negative for COVID-19

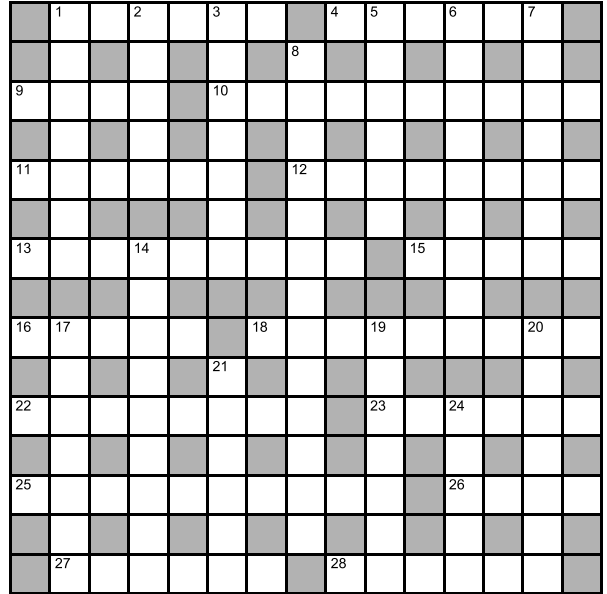
VATICAN CITY
Pope Francis, who is suffering from a cold, has tested negative for the coronavirus, as Italy battles Europe's worst outbreak. Earlier, rumours were doing the rounds that the pope had himself come down with COVID-19. AFP

Tornadoes hit Tennessee, killing at least 22 people

NASHVILLE
Tornadoes ripped across Tennessee, U.S., on Tuesday, shredding 40 buildings and killing 22 people. Daybreak revealed a landscape littered with blown-down walls and roofs. AP

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12874

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



(set by Afterdark)

- 11 Keep actors on line before end of scene (6)
- 12 Brilliant story and climax concealing theme to the extremes (8)
- 13 Carrier of germs seen suffering (9)
- 15 Centre admits rebellion first off (5)
- 16 Explicit footnote (5)
- 18 Set and stable, in another way, is hard (9)
- 22 Wizard and wise men on a vessel, perhaps touring Italy (8)
- 23 Belgians dismiss engineering degree; broadcast message (6)
- 25 Slow eatery receives reprimand (10)
- 26 Everyone with money ultimately band together (4)
- 27 Two small toffees with hole in the middle given as desserts (6)
- 28 Outlook of a party's to seize power (6)
- 29 A four point rejoinder on the beginning by head of state gets reactions (7)
- 20 Small vehicle on lease; red in colour (7)
- 21 Dumb and slow at the start, after interval begins to get fast (6)
- 24 Reserved for great party (5)
- 2 Operator has time book (5)
- 3 Oriental Insurance finally adjusts rates by the middle of the month (7)
- 5 Hot lady dancing without Romeo! Not quite (6)
- 6 Typical of mess, opening late at Tenali; irritating (9)
- 7 Perhaps Michael Jackson and John Lennon are in Germany aboard a ship (7)
- 8 Relatives upset over last sister's evil act (8-2-3)
- 14 School's invitees becoming problematic (9)
- 17 By changing sides, guides become teaching assistants (7)
- 19 A four point rejoinder on the beginning by head of state gets reactions (7)
- 20 Small vehicle on lease; red in colour (7)
- 21 Dumb and slow at the start, after interval begins to get fast (6)
- 24 Reserved for great party (5)

ACROSS

- 1 Constructed outhouse to keep a pet primarily (6)
- 4 Pieces of used ginger found on the surface of soup (6)
- 9 Work in northeast? Not a chance (4)
- 10 Amazing that writing could stop South's revolt (10)

DOWN

- 1 Depot for fruit's not new, it's behind the road (7)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to puzzle 12873

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Attaching to detachment

The Gita offers practical guidance to all with regard to day-to-day problems while also explaining the esoteric philosophy of the Upanishads. Sravana or listening to Bhagavad Gita expositions has to be followed up by manana or retrospection of what has been heard and that too repeatedly to keep the mind fit, healthy and free of impurities, pointed out Sri-mati Sunanda in a discourse. It is similar to the time and effort that one spends regularly to exercise the body to be physically fit. One has to have constant check on the mind and see that it is alert and free of ill feelings.

Each one is responsible for his life and should learn to accept the circumstances of one's birth and upbringing and not blame the world or others. Most of life's problems faced by individuals can be linked to their attachment to people, places or objects. This attachment is wrongly perceived as love and many a time it results in hurt, mental anguish and disappointment. Attachment is only conditional love whereas detachment actually fosters the spirit of true love that does not alter under any situation or circumstance.

The turtle exemplifies pure love in the way it takes care of the young ones very devotedly but does not expect anything from them in return. There is no unhappiness in true sacrifice. But if one feels obliged for help from people it causes misery. It is important that one continues to function in the same situations but with a detached attitude, that is freeing oneself from expectations from the other. This gives peace and satisfaction. Action done wholeheartedly and devotedly without attachment to results makes for perfection. We have to act in the world while doing our best and be detached as far as results are concerned. By dedicating all to God, one learns to accept things as they are with no regrets.