

INDIAN NATIONAL AMONG 15 NEW CASES IN U.A.E.

Over 1 lakh virus cases globally; US reports more deaths, infections

**AGENCIES**  
MARCH 7

THE NUMBER of cases from the new coronavirus topped 100,000 worldwide as official data Saturday showed a significant hit to Chinese exports after the deadly outbreak brought much of the country to a halt.

The World Health Organisation called the spread of the virus "deeply concerning" as a wave of countries reported their first cases of the disease — which has now killed nearly 3,500 people and infected more than 100,000 across 92 nations and territories.

Officials across the US reported a total of 312 cases of coronavirus and 17 deaths, with Florida reporting the first deaths on the East Coast and, along with Georgia, new cases on Saturday. Florida officials reported on Friday night that there had been two deaths in the state related to the coronavirus.

The US was also battling to contain an outbreak on a cruise ship where 21 people have tested positive for the virus. The Grand Princess has been stranded off San Francisco since Wednesday — when it was supposed to dock — after it emerged that two people who had been on the ship during its previous voyage had contracted the virus. One later died.



Workers disinfect the ground around the Kaaba, in Mecca, on Saturday. AP

US Vice President Mike Pence said the ship will be brought to a non-commercial dock this weekend and all 3,533 passengers and crew will be tested.

An Indian national is among 15 new cases of the deadly coronavirus in the UAE, taking the total number of confirmed infections in the country to 45, health officials have said. The Ministry of Health and Prevention (MoHAP) on Friday said in a statement that 13 out of 15 new cases in the UAE re-

cently arrived from abroad.

The death toll from the novel coronavirus in Iran continued to rise on Saturday with 21 more people killed, including a politician who became the eighth official to succumb to the disease.

Health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour announced 1,076 additional cases had been confirmed in the past 24 hours, bringing the overall tolls to 145 dead and 5,823 infected.

The number of infections climbed past 7,300 in Europe on

Friday — more than doubling in just three days. France, Britain, Spain, the Netherlands, Italy and others each recorded their biggest one-day increases in cases. Italy's death toll rose by 36 to 233 on Saturday while the cases shot up by 1,247 to hit 5,883.

A cruise ship on Egypt's Nile River with over 150 tourists, including Indians, and local crew was in quarantine Saturday in the southern city of Luxor, after 12 people tested positive for the coronavirus.

EU CALLS FOR SOLIDARITY AMONG MEMBERS

TOP EU officials called for solidarity among members, responding to moves by some to restrict exports on medical equipment

FRANCE, GERMANY and others have imposed limits on the export of equipment, some of which is badly needed but in short supply

JANEZ LENARCIC, a top EU official, said bans were permitted under European treaties but hinted at a desire to have them removed



Greek PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis does a fist bump as a coronavirus 'precaution'. Reuters

PHILIPPINES

Clashes leave 14 militants, 4 soldiers dead

Manila: Philippine troops have killed at least 14 Muslim militants aligned with the Islamic State group in a weeklong offensive in a southern province that also left four soldiers dead, a regional military commander said Saturday.

Lt Gen Cirilito Sobejana said an unspecified number of militants, including gunmen belonging to the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, were wounded in clashes in the towns of Ampatuan and Datu Hoffer Ampatuan in Maguindanao province. The bodies of five of the slain militants were recovered by government forces, he said, adding that 10 soldiers were wounded in the fighting.

DUBAI

Indian killed, another injured in accident

Dubai: A 19-year-old Indian national has been killed and another injured in a road accident in Dubai after their vehicle hit a stationery truck, according to a media report. A Dubai Police official told Gulf News that the accident happened around 5:27am on Friday on the Sheikh Zayed Road in Dubai. The van, in which they were travelling, hit the stationery truck and the passenger in the van was killed. Muhammed Savad, who hailed from Mallappuram in Kerala, was in the passenger seat when the accident took place and died on the spot, the Gulf News reported.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, MARCH 7

FORMER VICE President Joe Biden has put an exclamation point on his Super Tuesday victories by winning the most delegates on the presidential primary calendar's biggest night.

The Associated Press has allocated more than 92% of the 1,344 delegates that were up for grabs on Tuesday, and Biden has such a commanding lead that Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders cannot catch up as the remaining votes from that day's 14 state primaries are counted.

CHINA

70 trapped as hotel used for quarantine collapses

authorities said.

The official People's Daily said the hotel had opened in June 2018 with 80 rooms and was being used to quarantine people during the coronavirus outbreak. No reason was given for the collapse of the hotel.

The official Xinhua News Agency said the committee responsible for working safety under the State Council, China's cabinet, has sent an emergency working team to the site.

The Fujian provincial government said that as of Friday, the province had 296 cases of coronavirus and 10,819 people had been placed under observation after being classified as suspected close contacts.

Over 7,000 cases in S Korea, most traced to secretive church

JANE CHUNG  
SEOUL, MARCH 7

SOUTH KOREA'S coronavirus cases jumped above 7,000 on Saturday, up by 448 from the previous day, with more than half of the total number linked to a secretive church at the centre of the country's outbreak, health authorities said.

The death toll rose by two to 46, according to the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC).

Since mid-February when a woman tested positive after attending services at a branch of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus in the southeastern city of Daegu, the number of infections has ex-



At a hospital in South Korea on Saturday. AP

ploded in South Korea, giving it the most cases outside China.

There are 7,041 cases in total including a new small cluster of cases reported on Saturday at an apartment complex in Daegu, where some members of the church live, the KCDC said.

While 448 new cases remain a sizeable jump, it marked a third straight day of declines in the number of new cases for South Korea. "There is a possibility that new cases increase as tests are still underway," Kwon Jun-wook, deputy director at the KCDC told a briefing.

Lee Man-hee, the founder of the church, apologised on Monday calling the epidemic a "great calamity". The large amount of infections in the country has prompted nearly 100 nations to impose curbs on travelers from South Korea.

On Friday, South Korea said it would suspend visas and visa waivers for Japan in response to Tokyo's travel restrictions on Koreans. REUTERS

ALLOCATION OF DELEGATES NEARLY OVER

Biden wins most Super Tuesday delegates

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Joe Biden. AP/File

Biden built his delegate lead on Tuesday by racking up huge victories in Alabama, North Carolina and Virginia, while scoring a narrow win in Texas. In

PRIMARIES: THE DEMOCRATS

all, Biden won 10 states and Sanders won four.

"Look, not long ago the press and the pundits declared this campaign dead, but this week we saw tremendous support across the nation," Biden told supporters by phone Friday

evening. "We changed the whole narrative."

Sanders won California and three other states — Colorado, Utah and his home state of Vermont. Although Sanders won the biggest state, California, he didn't rack up the commanding lead required to surpass Biden's haul.

Biden has won at least 610 delegates from Tuesday's contests, while Sanders has won at least 513, according to the AP delegate count. There are 102 delegates still to be allocated.

Overall, Biden has 664 delegates to Sanders' 573. Sanders started the week with a six-del-

egate lead. Biden's performance was all the more remarkable considering his slow start in the first three contests. Less than a month ago, Biden didn't win a single delegate in New Hampshire.

The contest could now become a drawn-out two-man battle for delegates to win the nomination at the Democratic National Convention in July. It takes a majority of pledged delegates won in primaries and caucuses — 1,991 — to win the nomination on the first ballot.

With only two viable candidates left in the race, the prospect of a contested convention is remote.

Three Saudi princes detained over 'coup plot'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
RIYADH, MARCH 7



Mohammed bin Salman

SAUDI AUTHORITIES have detained three princes including King Salman's brother and nephew on charges of plotting a coup, the US media reported Friday, signalling a further consolidation of power by the kingdom's de facto ruler.

The detentions cast aside the last vestiges of potential opposition to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Prince Ahmed bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, a brother of King Salman, and the monarch's nephew Prince Mohammed bin Nayef were accused of treason and taken from their homes early Friday by black-clad royal guards, the Wall Street Journal reported citing unnamed sources.

The Saudi royal court has accused the two men, once potential contenders for the throne, of "plotting a coup to unseat the king and crown prince" and could face lifetime imprisonment or execution, the newspaper said.

The New York Times also reported the detentions, adding that Prince Nayef's younger brother, Prince Nawaf bin Nayef, had also been detained. The authorities did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The detentions mark the latest crackdown by Prince Mohammed, who has consolidated his grip on power with the imprisonment of prominent clerics and activists as well as princes and business elites.

Prince Mohammed has also faced a torrent of international condemnation over the murder of critic Jamal Khashoggi inside the kingdom's Istanbul consulate in October 2018.

"Prince Mohammed is emboldened — he has already ousted any threats to his rise and jailed or murdered critics

EXPLAINED

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Consolidation of power

THE DETENTIONS come at a sensitive time for the kingdom, when Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had recently halted pilgrimages to Mecca in a bid to limit the threat posed by the coronavirus. The move, which has few precedents, had drawn complaints within the kingdom, as per reports. Fears about the outbreak have also led to oil prices slumping, in turn affecting Saudi's revenue. In such a volatile atmosphere, the detentions are therefore widely seen as a step up in the crown prince's efforts to consolidate his position.

Trump abruptly replaces acting chief of staff with close ally

JEFF MASON & STEVE HOLLAND  
PALM BEACH, MARCH 7

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump parted ways on Friday with acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney and replaced him with conservative lawmaker and close ally Mark Meadows, who was a strong Trump defender during the Democratic impeachment drive.

Representative Meadows takes over as the White House struggles to advance a consistent message about the coronavirus crisis and as Trump goes into a bruising re-election contest.

He becomes the fourth chief of staff in Trump's three years in office, tasked with attempting to bring order to a chaotic presidency.

Meadows is a member of the US House of Representatives from North Carolina and was a combative defender of the president during the impeachment saga, so much so that Trump singled him out for praise at a February 6 event after the Republican-led Senate acquitted the president. NYT

TRUMP CAMPAIGN FILES LAWSUIT AGAINST CNN

Washington: The Trump Campaign has filed a defamatory lawsuit against CNN, accusing the cable news network of making false statements that the campaign "assessed the potential risks and benefits of again seeking Russia's help in 2020 and has decided to leave that option on the table".

After The New York Times and The Washington Post, this is the third lawsuit by the Trump Campaign. Trump, who is seeking his re-election, has often described these three US media outlets as "fake media".

The lawsuit, filed in the US District Court in Atlanta, seeks to hold CNN accountable for intentionally publishing false statements against President Trump's campaign. PTI

FOR THE PEOPLE OF IDLIB PROVINCE, THERE HAS BEEN NO LET-UP IN THE VIOLENCE

Only choice is to wait for death, say Syrian refugees fleeing war

CARLOTTA GALL  
IDLIB, MARCH 7

BEFORE THE war in Syria, Idlib city, with its tree-lined avenues and white-stone buildings, was known for its calm, provincial air.

Today it overflows with families who fled the war in other parts of Syria, swelling the population to nearly 1 million people.

To the north, nearly 1 million people are living along roadsides and in olive groves in what is already one of the worst humanitarian disasters of Syria's brutal

nine-year war.

To the south and east, Syrian government forces backed by Russian warplanes are closing in, now just 5 miles away. When they reach Idlib city, its million residents are likely to flee.

Dr Hikmat al-Khatib, an orthopedic surgeon, urged his parents to move to a town to the north. But when it was bombed his mother decided to stay put.

"Her words shocked me," al-Khatib said. "The only choice is to wait for death."

Amina Sahloul was sitting on the floor around a stove in a large



Tear gas fired near Turkey's Pazarkule border crossing. Reuters

underground room for women and children. She had arrived hours earlier, after fleeing her village in the dead of night, clinging with her five grandchildren behind her on a single motorcycle.

"We came away because of the airstrikes," she said. "They started dropping cluster bombs. It was like fire raining in the sky."

There has been no letup for the people of Idlib province as the forces of President Bashar Assad of Syria, backed by Russian air power, have smashed their way forward, demolishing towns and villages in the south

and east of the province with punishing airstrikes.

A cease-fire declared Thursday by Turkey, which backs Syrian opposition forces, and Russia, which backs the Syrian government, seemed to be holding on Friday but few believe it will last. Assad has insisted he will continue his offensive to retake Idlib province, and rebel groups have vowed to resist.

Most of the province's three million people are civilians, and they are desperate for an end to the violence. They cling to the hope that Turkey's growing de-

ployment of troops into the province will stop the onslaught.

"Anything that makes us feel secure or takes the regime away from us is a very good thing," said Abdul Razzaq, the head of the emergency relief for the Syrian charity, Violet. "But Idlib city is huge and where to take them?" he said.

In a camp called Al Nasr, new arrivals have pitched tents just yards from the concrete wall topped with rolls of barbed wire that marks the Turkish border.

Four families were squeezed into one tent set up on top of the

camp sewer. "No one else would take it," said Hannah al-Mijan, a farmworker and mother of seven. "We do not have money to build."

The family had been displaced twice and without work they had fallen into debt. "We are below zero," she said. Her husband, Muhammad, shushed her, telling her not to shame them.

This time they chose to live within 100 yards of the border wall. Were they not scared that this place would also be bombed?

Al-Mijan shook her head, and gestured at the hill opposite. "That's Turkey," she said. NYT