

PANDEMIC WATCH



In Lahore. AP

PAKISTAN

China sends more medical supplies

Islamabad: Pakistan is set to receive more medical supplies from its all-weather ally China to fight the coronavirus outbreak in the country where the COVID-19 cases have sharply increased to 4,892 and death toll reached 71, officials said on Saturday. The total number of cases on Saturday rose to 4,892 with more than 294 fresh infections. The death toll has reached 71. A special plane will arrive from China later Saturday with more medical supplies. It is the second plane to arrive in two days, said Naghmana Hashmi, Pakistan's Ambassador to China.

IRAN

Govt begins lifting lockdown restrictions

Tehran: Iran began reopening government offices Saturday after a brief nationwide lockdown to help contain the worst coronavirus outbreak in the Middle East, which has killed more than 4,300 people in the country. Authorities had ordered most government agencies and all non-essential businesses to remain closed for a week after the Nowruz holiday ended on April 4. Government offices outside the capital, Tehran, reopened Saturday with two-thirds of employees coming in and the remainder working from home, media reported.

URUGUAY

Australian stranded on ship depart

Montevideo: More than 100 Australians and New Zealanders left Uruguay on a chartered flight after two weeks stranded aboard a virus-infected cruise ship, Montevideo's Carrasco airport said Saturday. Of 217 people aboard the ship, 128 had tested positive for coronavirus and had been blocked from docking. An agreement between the Uruguayan and Australian governments was made to create a "sanitary corridor" to take the mostly elderly tourists to the airport where they boarded a flight for Melbourne.

US first to top 2,000 deaths in a day

Going to have to make a decision, and I only hope to God it's the right decision: Trump; United States nears Italy's total death toll

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON, APRIL 11

THE US has become the world's first country to have registered more than 2,000 COVID-19 deaths in a single day with over 2,100 fatalities reported in the past 24 hours, according to Johns Hopkins University data.

The outbreak has now claimed the lives of at least 18,860, people in the US, which also leads the world in the number of confirmed infections with 503,594, by the Baltimore-based school's count. Italy has registered 18,849 deaths according to an AFP tally.

We're not doing anything until we know this country is going to be healthy... We don't want to go back and start doing it over again.

— DONALD TRUMP



At a COVID-19 alternative site, meant to relieve pressure on hospitals, in Chicago on Friday. AP

As he grapples simultaneously with the most devastating public health and economic crises of a lifetime, President Trump finds himself pulled in opposite directions on what to do next. Bankers, corporate executives and industrialists plead with him to reopen the country as soon as possible, while the medical experts beg for more time to curb the coronavirus.

The phone calls from his business friends compete against the television images of overwhelmed hospitals. The public health experts tell him what he is doing is working, so he should not let up yet. The economic advisers and others in his White House tell him what he has done has worked, so he should begin to figure out how to ease up. Tens of thousands more could die. Millions more

could lose their jobs.

"I'm going to have to make a decision, and I only hope to God that it's the right decision," Trump said on Friday during his daily news briefing on the fight against the pandemic that has put more than 16 million Americans out of work. "But I would say without question it's the biggest decision I've ever had to make."

Seizing on new estimates of a lower-than-projected death toll, the president signaled that he wanted to start resuming business on some basis after his current stay-at-home guidelines expire on April 30. But he also promised to listen to public health officials cautioning against a premature move.

The death toll in New York State from COVID-19 is "stabilising" but at a horrific rate, Governor Andrew Cuomo said on Saturday as he announced that 783 more people died in the state.

Cuomo said the "good news" is that the infection curve is "continuing to flatten" and the number of hospitalisations appears to have hit a plateau-shaped apex.

Trump announces visa sanctions against countries refusing to take back their citizens

LALIT K JHA
WASHINGTON, APRIL 11

US President Donald Trump on Friday announced a new visa sanction norm, providing for visa denial to citizens of countries which either deny or dilly-dally in repatriating their citizens during the pandemic.

Trump issued the memorandum for visa sanctions, which would be effective immediately and valid till December 31, this year, saying the countries "denying or unreasonably delaying" the repatriation of their citizens would be deemed to be causing "unacceptable public health risks for Americans".

"Countries that deny or unreasonably delay the acceptance of their citizens, subjects, nationals, or residents from the US during the ongoing pandemic caused by SARS-CoV-2 create unacceptable public health risks for Americans," Trump said.

The process would be initiated by the secretary of Homeland Security who would

EXPLAINED

Parameters will be key

At a time when nations around the world have suspended or heavily restricted travel, the US is yet to lay out what it considers "unreasonable delay" in repatriation, nor at what point this would be considered an impediment. Experts say that this move must be accompanied by clear criteria in order to avoid exacerbating chaos globally at a sensitive time.

With 2 hours' notice, Turkey puts millions under lockdown

NEW YORK TIMES
APRIL 11

TURKEY'S CITIES fell quiet on Saturday, a day after the authorities ordered a two-day curfew for 31 provinces, and as the country's death toll from the coronavirus pandemic climbed above 1,000.

The lockdown, which came with two hours' notice, affected Istanbul and Ankara, where international flights were halted and schools and bars closed three weeks ago.

"We urge all citizens who live in these 31 provinces to comply with this weekend's lockdown without panicking," Fahrettin Altun, the country's communications director, said on Twitter.

Altun asked people to maintain their social distance in the

time before the lockdown went into effect at midnight. But soon after the news was announced, hundreds of people rushed to late-night stores to shop for essentials in Istanbul, a city of 16 million. Video posted to Twitter and Facebook showed the chaos as scores of densely packed crowds — some people wore no masks — jostled to enter a store and fights broke out.

The Interior Ministry said in a statement that bakeries, pharmacies and health facilities could operate during the lockdown. Certain energy companies, distribution firms and some gas stations were also exempted. The number of cases of Covid-19 increased by 4,747 and 98 people died in the past 24 hours, raising the death toll to 1,006. Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said.

If China considered developing nation, make America one too, says Trump

LALIT K JHA
WASHINGTON, APRIL 11

IF CHINA is considered a developing country, make the United States too a developing one, US President Donald Trump said on Friday, alleging that Beijing has taken advantage of his country.

"China has been unbelievably taken advantage of us and other countries. You know, for

instance, they are considered a developing nation. I said well then make us a developing nation too," Trump told reporters.

Reiterating that United States was taken advantage of by the World Trade Organisation, Trump said the Chinese economy started booming after it joined WTO with the help of the US.

"If you look at the history of China, it was only since they

went into the WTO that they became a rocket ship with their economy. They were flattered for years and years," he said.

"Frankly, for many, many decades. And it was only when they came into the WTO that they became a rocket ship because they took advantage of all — I'm not even blaming them. I'm saying how stupid were the people that stood here and allowed it to happen," he said. **PTI**



COVID PIÑATAS

Piñatas depicting the novel coronavirus at a workshop in Guatemala City, Guatemala, on Saturday. Reuters

Death toll hits 19,000 as Italy plans more testing, tracing

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ROME, APRIL 11

ITALY PLANS to increase testing for the coronavirus and use voluntary contact tracing whenever it exits from a lockdown that's currently in effect until at least May 3.

Italy has topped 19,000 deaths and 150,000 cases. Deaths rose by 619 to 19,468, while the cases reached 152,271

Italy's special commissioner for the virus emergency Domenico Arcuri told SKYTG 24 there will be mandatory blood tests to set up a system of "immunity passports."

The voluntary contact tracing mobile apps will allow people to know if they have come in contact with someone who is positive for the virus. Then they can be tested in an effort to limit further spread.

The blood tests identifying anti-bodies are still being developed. Virologists have cautioned the tests will not prove immunity but will give a snapshot whether a person has been in contact with the virus.

UK warns public to follow rules, toll up by 917

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, APRIL 11

BRITISH HOME Secretary Priti Patel on Saturday warned the UK public to continue to follow the strict social distancing as the death toll from coronavirus rose by 917 to hit a total of 9,875.

The senior Indian-origin Cabinet minister, who led the daily Downing Street briefing, said that a majority of the population have been following the government's stay-at-home guidance but there was a small minority who should be aware



Medical staff outside the NHS in London on Saturday. Reuters

that the police forces have the powers they require to impose the lockdown measures.

"We have given the police

powers to enforce the measures we have put in place, including through enforcement fines.

"If you don't play your part... our selfless police will be unafraid to act. You will be endangering the lives of your own family, friends and loved ones," she said.

She unveiled a new set of measures to combat domestic and child abuse, including a 2 million pounds fund to enhance online support services and helplines, as she highlighted a new set of challenges being faced by the country's security services during the lockdown imposed to curb the spread of the virus. **PTI**

Spain's daily death toll at 510, lowest in 19 days

REUTERS
MADRID, APRIL 11

THE NUMBER of coronavirus deaths in Spain fell for a third consecutive day on Saturday, with 510 fatalities reported in the past 24 hours — the smallest overnight increase since March 23.

Spain's total death toll from COVID-19 disease rose to 16,353, the Health Ministry said in a statement, while the number of confirmed cases climbed to 161,852 from 157,022 a day earlier.

The slowdown is an encouraging sign for the country, which has suffered the third-highest number of casualties from the virus after Italy and the United States. At the beginning of April, the overnight death tally rose as high as 950, overwhelming the national health service and forcing regional authorities to set up temporary mortuaries in an ice rink and disused public buildings.

But as the rate of new cases and deaths slows, the government is contemplating a gradual unwinding of lockdown measures.



Firefighters mark the death of a colleague. Reuters

'I CANNOT BUY FOOD ANYWHERE, NO SHOPS OR RESTAURANTS WILL SERVE ME'

Africans targeted in China: 'If you're black, you can't go out'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING, APRIL 11

AFRICANS IN southern China's largest city say they have become targets of suspicion and subjected to forced evictions, arbitrary quarantines and mass coronavirus testing as the country steps up its fight against imported infections.

China says it has largely curbed its COVID-19 outbreak but a recent cluster of cases linked to the Nigerian community in Guangzhou sparked the alleged discrimination by locals and virus prevention officials.

Local authorities in the industrial centre of 15 million said at least eight people diagnosed with the illness had spent time in the city's Yuexiu district, known as "Little Africa".

Five were Nigerian nationals who faced widespread anger after reports surfaced that they had broken a mandatory quarantine and been to eight restaurants and other public places instead of staying home. As a result, nearly 2,000 people they came into contact with had to be tested for COVID-19 or undergo quarantine, state media said.

Guangzhou had confirmed 114 imported coronavirus cases



Africans have become targets of suspicion. Reuters/Representative

as of Thursday — 16 of which were Africans. The rest were returning Chinese nationals. It has led to Africans becoming

targets of suspicion, distrust and racism in China. Several Africans told AFP they had been forcibly evicted from their homes and turned away by hotels.

"I've been sleeping under the bridge for four days with no food to eat... I cannot buy food anywhere, no shops or restaurants will serve me," said Tony Mathias, an exchange student from Uganda who was forced from his apartment on Monday.

"We're like beggars on the street," the 24-year-old said.

Police in Guangzhou declined to comment when contacted by AFP.

A Nigerian businessman said

he was evicted from his apartment earlier this week.

"Everywhere the police see us, they will come and pursue us and tell us to go home. But where can we go?" he said.

Thiam, an exchange student from Guinea, said police ordered him to stay home on Tuesday even after he tested negative for COVID-19 and told officers he had not left China in almost four years. He believes the measures are unfairly targeting Africans.

"All the people I've seen tested are Africans. Chinese are walking around freely but if you're black you can't go out," he said.

Lankan Navy increases patrolling to prevent spread of virus from India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COLOMBO, APRIL 11

THE SRI Lankan Navy has intensified its coastal patrolling to prevent the possible spread of the novel coronavirus through "infected" Indian fishermen that it fears might "poach" in their territorial waters.

Navy chief Piya de Silva on Friday said they have strengthened patrolling, especially in northern, western and north-western coastal areas. The Lankan Airforce would also be on hand to assist.

"There is a possibility that infected Indian fishermen could

poach in our waters. They could have contact with our people and pass on the virus," he said.

Poaching in each other's waters by fishermen of both the countries has been a recurring problem since the recent past.

The frequent incidents of poaching have drawn top-level talks between the two nations across the Palk Strait, which is between Tamil Nadu and Jaffna district of the Northern Province of Sri Lanka.

The fishermen issue also figured in the talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Sri Lankan counterpart Mahinda Rajapaksa during the latter's visit to India in February.