

10 THE OUTBREAK THE WORLD

PANDEMIC WATCH



In Dhaka. Reuters

BANGLADESH

Govt extends shutdown to April 11

Dhaka: Bangladesh on Saturday extended the nationwide transport shutdown till April 11 as the country recorded its biggest single-day increase of COVID-19 cases with nine new positive tests, taking the country's total to 70. The country reported two more deaths, taking the total fatalities to eight, according to data. The tally of infections increase to 70 after nine more people, including two children aged under 10, tested positive. This is the biggest jump in positive tests over a 24-hour period since Bangladesh announced its first cases on March 8

SINGAPORE

Sixth COVID-19 death reported, cases top 1,100

Singapore: Singapore on Saturday reported its sixth death from the coronavirus as the confirmed cases rose to 1,114, the health ministry said, a day after Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced home-based learning for schoolchildren and closure of most workplaces to curb the spread of the disease. Lee, during a televised speech to Singaporeans, said he was worried that unless "we take further steps, things will gradually get worse or another big cluster may push things over the edge".

AUSTRALIA

Sikh community delivers food to those in need

Melbourne: The Sikh community in Australia is working tirelessly to deliver free meals and groceries to people struggling with self-isolation and financial hardship amid the coronavirus crisis. The Sikh Volunteers Australia (SVA) has called upon families in Victoria to reach out to the group for free meal deliveries. The group, which has over a dozen of delivery vans and only 20 volunteers, deliver more than 800 meals a day. "The initiative was started three years ago in South East part of Melbourne and we have been serving free food packs to those in need..." SVA member Manpreet Singh said on Saturday.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

PARIS, APRIL 4

A MAN wielding a knife attacked residents venturing out to shop in a town under lockdown south of the French city of Lyon Saturday, killing two people and wounding others, prosecutors said.

The anti-terrorism prosecutor's office told The Associated Press the attack took place at 11 a.m. in a commercial street in Romans-sur-Isère. The alleged attacker was arrested by police nearby. Prosecutors did not identify him. They said he had no documents but claimed to

US reports highest 1-day toll of 1,480

Americans should wear face masks while outside, recommends Trump — then says he won't

AGENCIES

APRIL 4

THE UNITED States recorded nearly 1,500 deaths from COVID-19 between Thursday and Friday, according to the Johns Hopkins University tracker, the worst 24-hour death toll globally since the pandemic began.

With 1,480 deaths counted between 8.30 pm (0030 GMT) Thursday and the same time Friday, according to the university's continuously updated figures, the total number of people who have died since the start of the pandemic in the United States is now 7,406.

President Donald Trump has recommended Americans to cover their faces with scarves or homemade cloth masks while going outside to curb the spread of the coronavirus though he would not wear one himself.

Citing the US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Trump urged people to wear face coverings like scarves or homemade cloth masks, and to keep medical-grade masks available for the health workers.

"The CDC is advising the use of non-medical cloth face covering as an additional voluntary public health measure," Trump told reporters during a press briefing at the White House on Friday.

"The CDC is not recommend-



A protest to call for the release of detained immigrants in Colorado, citing the pandemic. AP

ing the use of medical-grade or surgical-grade masks. Those needs to be used for medical people working to save lives of Americans," he said.

However, Trump said he will not follow that guidance. "I just don't want to wear one myself, it's a recommendation," he said.

"Somehow sitting in the Oval Office behind that beautiful Resolute Desk, the great Resolute Desk, I think wearing a face mask as I greet presidents, dictators, kings, queens, I don't know, I don't see it for myself," he said.

EXPLAINED

Effect of redrawing official guidelines may be limited

WHILE GLOBAL bodies have so far advised use of masks by ordinary citizens only in cases when they are sick or coughing. Some in the Trump administration were reportedly uncomfortable with changing this. They called for the directive to apply only to the worst-hit areas. Others felt wearing masks would lead to people neglecting social distancing, which is still seen as the most effective measure. With experts feeling that Trump undercut the CDC advisory by saying he would not wear one, it is unclear if the move will yield the desired impact.

U.S., RUSSIA SPAR OVER DELIVERY OF RELIEF MATERIAL

AN ODD new front in the US-Russian rivalry has emerged as a Russian military cargo plane bearing a load of urgently needed medical supplies landed at JFK airport

RUSSIA CAST it as magnanimous aid supply to a struggling country. Trump referred to the shipment as "aid," and said it was "a very nice offer" from Putin

THE US State Department insisted that the delivery was a mere commercial transaction: that the US had paid Russia for the supplies it needed, albeit at a discount, and that it wasn't a gift



New York state pleads for aid as death count soars

ALAN FEUER

NEW YORK, APRIL 4

NEW YORK, the increasingly battered epicentre of the nation's coronavirus outbreak, on Friday reported its highest number of deaths in a single day, prompting state officials to beg the rest of the United States for assistance and to enact an emergency order designed to stave off medical catastrophe.

In the 24 hours through 12 am on Friday, 562 people — or one almost every two-and-a-half minutes — died from the virus in New York State, bringing the total death toll to nearly 3,000, double what it was only three days before. In the same period, 1,427 newly sickened patients poured into the hospitals — another one-day high — although the rate of increase in hospitalizations seemed to stabilise, suggesting social-distancing measures may have started working.

Despite the glimmer of hope, the new statistics were a stark reminder of the gale-force strength of the crisis that is



Reuters

threatening New York, where more than 102,000 people — nearly as many as in Italy and Spain, the hardest-hit European countries — have now tested positive for the virus. The situation, as it has been for weeks, was particularly dire in New York City, where some hospitals have reported running out of body bags and others have begun to plan for the unthinkable prospect of rationing care.

"It is hard to put fully into words what we are all grappling with as we navigate our way through this pandemic," Vicki L. LoPachin, chief medical officer of Mount Sinai Health System, wrote in an email to the staff on Friday. "We are healing so many and comforting those we can't save — one precious life at a time." NYT

China pushes for quiet burials amid death toll questions

AMY QIN & CAOLI

APRIL 4

LIU PEIFEN held the small wooden box that contained his father's remains. Only two months ago, he had helplessly clutched his father's frail hand as the elderly man took his last breath, and the pain was still raw. He wept.

But there was little time, or space, for Liu to grieve. He said officials in Wuhan had insisted on accompanying him to the funeral home and were waiting anxiously nearby. Later, they followed him to the cemetery where they watched him bury his father, he said. Liu saw one of his minders taking photos of the funeral, which was over in 20 minutes.

"My father devoted his whole life to serving the country and the party," Liu, 44, who works in finance, said by phone. "Only to be surveilled after his death."

For months, the residents of Wuhan had been told they could not pick up the ashes of their

loved ones who had died during the height of China's coronavirus outbreak. Now that the authorities say the epidemic is under control, officials are pushing the relatives to bury the dead quickly and quietly, and they are suppressing online discussion of fatalities as doubts emerge about the true size of the toll.

As China tries to control the narrative, the police in Wuhan, where the pandemic began, have been dispatched to break up groups on WeChat, a popular messaging app, set up by the relatives of coronavirus victims. Government censors have scrubbed images circulating on social media showing relatives in the city lining up at funeral homes to collect ashes. Officials have assigned minders to relatives like Liu, to follow them as they pick burial plots, claim their loved ones' remains and bury them, grieving family members say.

"Where is the dignity after death?" Liu asked. "Where is the humanity?" NYT



Workers observe silence in Hunan on Saturday as China holds mourning for those who died of COVID-19. Reuters



SAYING THANK YOU

A child next to a mural in tribute to the NHS in Pontefract, Britain, on Saturday. Britain is unlikely to lift its stringent lockdown rules until the end of May, a government adviser said on Saturday as the death toll rose by 708 in 24 hours. Reuters

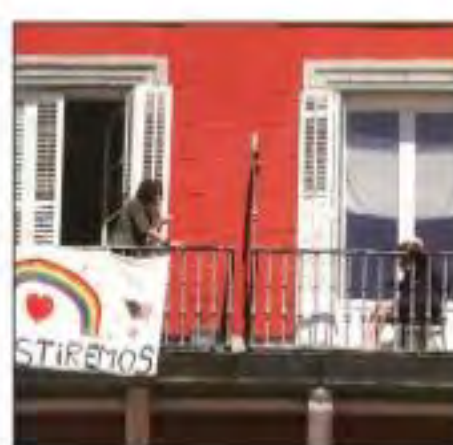
Spain's daily toll falls for 2nd day in row

REUTERS

MADRID, APRIL 4

THE DAILY pace of new coronavirus infections and deaths in Spain slowed again on Saturday as Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez was expected to announce a new extension to lockdown measures that have confined most Spaniards to their homes for three weeks.

The total death toll rose to 11,744 — the world's second highest — on Saturday from 10,935 the day before, the Health Ministry said, representing a 7% increase



Neighbours chat from their balconies in Madrid. Reuters

in total deaths after a 9% rise on Friday. That is less than half the

pace of the around 20% increase registered a week ago.

A total of 809 people died from the disease over the past 24 hours, down from Friday's 932 and Thursday's daily record of 950, the figures showed.

Meanwhile, the total number of registered infections rose to 124,736 on Saturday from 117,710 on Friday, when Spain overtook Italy in the total number of infections for the first time.

Some of Madrid's most famous tourist sites, such as the Royal Palace and Las Ventas bullring, stood eerily quiet on Saturday, as Spaniards readied

themselves for a fourth week living under one of Europe's strictest lockdowns.

Only employees in essential sectors such as health are free to travel to and from work. Restaurants, bars and shops are shuttered, and social gatherings are banned.

In a press conference on Friday, Health Minister Salvador Illa said premier Sanchez would call opposition leaders following a meeting of his coronavirus task force on Saturday to let them know his decision on extending the lockdown from the current end date of April 13.

Probe if virus manmade, trace origin: Pakistan lawmaker to UN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 4

A PAKISTANI lawmaker has appealed to the United Nations to form a commission to probe if coronavirus is a man-made or a naturally grown virus and also trace its origin, according to a media report.

Former interior minister and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Senator Rehman Malik, in a letter to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, suggested the proposed commission on COVID-19 under UN Convention on Biological Weapons, 1975 might comprise of virologists, scientists, professors, researchers, analysts and experts in microbiology and virology, the Dawn News reported.

"Many claims, speculations, conspiracy theories and misinformation about the disease have found their way into the international print and electronic media, blurring distinction between real and fake news," he said.

He said that he was not blaming any government or a group or levelling any allegation or endorsing any media report. However, he added, he had drawn Guterres' attention to apprehensions being shown by the international media.



In Peshawar, Saturday. AP

OTHER TOP GLOBAL STORIES

France: Knifeman kills 2 in attack on passersby

Afghan forces arrest IS leader behind attack on gurudwara

Trump fires intel official with key impeachment role

UK: Keir Starmer emerges new leader of Labour party

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KABUL, APRIL 4

AFGHAN FORCES have arrested the leader of the country's Islamic State group affiliate and the mastermind behind the attack on a gurudwara last month that killed 25 worshippers, authorities said Saturday.

The National Directorate of Security (NDS) said in a statement that Aslam Farooqi, also known as Abdullah Orakzai, had been arrested along with 19 other men in a "complex operation".

Speaking on condition of anonymity, an NDS official told



At least 25 people were killed in the attack. Reuters/File

AFP Farooqi was the mastermind behind an IS-claimed attack on a Sikh temple in Kabul last month that killed at least 25 people.

Known as Islamic State in the

Khorasan (IS-K), the Afghan IS branch has been on its backfoot in recent months. In November, Afghan officials said IS-K had been completely defeated in Nangarhar, one of the key eastern provinces where they first sought to establish a stronghold in 2015.

In the years since, they have claimed responsibility for a string of horrific bombings across Afghanistan.

In its statement, the NDS said Farooqi had admitted to having links with "regional intelligence agencies" — a clear reference to Pakistan, which Afghanistan routinely blames for supporting jihadists and helping the Taliban.

Washington: President Donald Trump has announced he was firing a senior intelligence official who had a central role in the complaint last August that sparked his impeachment trial.

In a letter to the Senate Intelligence Committee on Friday, Trump said he had lost confidence in Michael Atkinson.

Atkinson reviewed and transmitted an anonymous whistleblower's complaint in August that alleged Trump had sought personal political favors from Ukraine in violation of US law. The complaint became the basis for Trump's impeachment, which included a trial for removal in the Senate in January. AFP

ADITI KHANNA

LONDON, APRIL 4

KEIR STARMER, the former shadow Brexit Secretary, on Saturday emerged as the winner of a three-way race to replace Jeremy Corbyn as the Leader of the UK's Opposition Labour party.

The 57-year-old was elected after he defeated Rebecca Long-Bailey and Indian-origin MP Lisa Nandy, who were a distant second and third respectively in a postal ballot of party members, trade unionists and registered supporters.

In his video victory message, Sir Keir Starmer said his



Keir Starmer

task was to "lead this great party into a new era, with confidence and hope".

"We will shine a torch on critical issues and where we see mistakes or faltering government or things not happening as quickly as they should we'll challenge that and call that out," said Starmer, the MP for Holborn and St Pancras in London, who had fought on a "unity" platform. PTI