

# British PM moved to intensive care

Spokesman says Johnson is stable and conscious; Foreign Secretary takes over 'many of PM's duties'

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was taken into intensive care on Tuesday with COVID-19, while Japan's leader declared a month-long state of emergency for Tokyo and six other regions to keep the virus from ravaging the world's oldest population.

Mr. Johnson, 55, the first major world leader confirmed to have COVID-19, was in stable condition and conscious at a London hospital, where he was receiving oxygen but was not on a ventilator, said his spokesman James Slack.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has taken over many of Mr. Johnson's duties temporarily while he is being treated. Britain has no official post of deputy Prime Minister.

"We're desperately hoping that Boris can make the speediest possible recovery," said Cabinet minister Michael Gove, who is among scores of British officials in self-isolation. Mr. Johnson's fiancée is recovering from coronavirus symptoms.

Japan's Prime Minister made the emergency declaration after a spike in infections in Tokyo, but it was a stay-at-home request – not an order – and violators will not be penalised. Despite having relatively few infections and deaths, Japan is a worrying target for a virus that has been killing the elderly at much higher rates than other age groups.

**Caution ahead of Easter**  
Italy's commissioner for fighting COVID-19 appealed to Italians ahead of Easter weekend not to lower their guard and to abide by a lockdown now in its fifth week.

Citing data that shows that pressure on Italian intensive care wards is easing, Domenico Arcuri, Italy's commissioner for the coronavirus emergency, said "the cruel reality is stronger than algorithms."



**Under care:** A journalist at work and a woman, right, with a banner seeking protective gear outside London's St. Thomas' hospital, where PM Johnson is under treatment. •AFP

## Abandoned pets die in Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KARACHI

The carcasses of hundreds of caged cats, dogs and rabbits have been found inside Pakistan's pet markets, which were hurriedly shuttered when the country plunged into a lockdown. In Karachi, animals still alive in the corner of the sprawling Empress Market were rescued only after intervention by activists. The carcasses of about 20 dogs were found dumped in a sewer near Tollinton market in the city.

repeatedly. "I beg you, in the next hours and days, do not cancel this number from your memory."

**Sense of normalcy**  
U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams said that if Americans continue to practice social distancing for the rest of April, "we will be able to get

## U.K. set for 66,000 deaths, highest in Europe: study

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS

Britain could see as many as 66,000 COVID-19 deaths during the first wave of the current pandemic, a study showed on Tuesday, making the outbreak there by far the deadliest in Europe.

Modelling conducted by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington's School of Medicine showed that approximately 1,51,680 people were likely to die



from the virus across the continent.

More than 5,000 people have died from COVID-19 in Britain, fewer than in Spain, Italy and France.

But Britain's epidemic lags behind the rest of the continent by several days.

The study found that Britain could experience 66,000 COVID-19 deaths by July, far more than Italy, the next most severely impacted, with around 20,000. Spain and France were next, with 19,000 and 15,000 predicted deaths.

## Spain's toll rises to 743 after drop

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MADRID

Spain's death toll from COVID-19 increased to 743 on Tuesday after falling for four straight days, lifting the total to 13,798, the Health Ministry said. However, it emphasised that the rise was due to weekend deaths being tallied and that the overall "downward trend" is continuing. The new figure represents a 5.7% increase over Monday's 637 deaths.

## Daytime jogging banned in Paris

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS

Paris officials said on Tuesday they would ban daytime jogging as people continue to flout anti-coronavirus lockdown rules, after France recorded its highest daily death toll of 833 in just 24 hours. Under nationwide confinement rules that came into force on March 17, people can leave their homes only for essential purposes, which had included a solo walk or run within one km of their homes.

# U.S. death toll crosses 11,000

Officials tell Americans to brace for one of the worst periods

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WASHINGTON

Americans were put on notice on Monday not to let up in the fight against COVID-19, as a grim milestone of 11,000 deaths cast a pall over the first signs of optimism about the outbreak's trajectory.

The U.S. has emerged as one of the world's worst-hit nations, with a steadily mounting number of fatalities and millions facing the possibility of economic ruin.

Authorities began the week by telling frightened communities to brace for one of the worst periods yet in an outbreak that has not yet reached its peak.

Johns Hopkins University, which has been keeping a running tally of coronavirus numbers, said more than 3,69,000 U.S. cases had been confirmed, with 10,986 deaths by late Monday.

New York State has recorded its highest number of COVID-19 deaths in 24 hours, Governor Andrew Cuomo said on Tuesday, adding though that hospitalizations appeared to be "plateauing."

Mr. Cuomo said 731 people succumbed to the new



**Making it count:** A man casting his ballot in a Democratic presidential primary poll in Wisconsin on Tuesday. •AFP

coronavirus on Monday, bringing the State's total death toll to 5,489. The previous single-day record was 630, set on Friday.

He said New York appeared be nearing the peak of its pandemic, with a three-day average of hospitalizations down.

"If the curve is turning, it's because the rate of infection is going down. If the rate of infection is going down, it's because physical distancing is working."

Authorities have warned that between 1,00,000 and 2,40,000 people could die in the U.S., even in a best-case scenario.

Nine States – all con-

trolled by Republican governors – have still not yet ordered total lockdowns, much to the frustration of public health experts.

**SC nod for voting**  
The Wisconsin Supreme Court blocked a last-minute attempt by the Governor there to postpone the next day's Democratic presidential primary and other elections because of the epidemic and ruled that the vote should go ahead.

In a 4-2 decision, the top State court overturned an executive order from the Democratic Governor Tony Evers, who had sought to delay the election until June due to the outbreak.

# No new COVID-19 deaths in China

REUTERS  
BEIJING

Mainland China reported no COVID-19 deaths for the first time since the pandemic began and a drop in new cases on Tuesday, a day before the central city of Wuhan, where the virus emerged late in December, was set to lift its lockdown.

China had reported 32 new infections on Monday, down from 39 a day earlier, according to the National Health Commission.

For the first time since the

Commission began publishing nationwide data in late January, Wuhan saw no new deaths.

Wuhan, a city of 11 million that reported only two new infections in the past fortnight, is due to allow residents to leave the city on Wednesday for the first time since it was locked down on January 23 to curb the spread of the virus.

From midnight, traffic control checkpoints in Wuhan will be dismantled, and normal operation of rail-

ways, airports, waterways, highways and buses will resume.

But zero new cases do not mean zero risks, the provincial counter-epidemic authority said in a statement.

Wuhan residents are urged not to leave their neighbourhood, their city and even the province unless necessary.

Zhejiang, a populous province in the east, will conduct all the necessary tests on people arriving from Wuhan over the next 14 days.

# 'Stay at home for the country'

India sends emergency medical supplies to Sri Lanka

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

For people who have braved a war for 30 years, living in camps and amid fear, staying at home in the wake of pandemic cannot be difficult, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa said, urging citizens to stay at home for the country's sake.

Speaking at a televised address on Tuesday night, Mr. Rajapaksa outlined the initiatives being taken by the government led by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, his younger brother, to combat COVID-19 that has so far affected 185 persons, of whom six have died.

Underscoring the pandemic's impact on the global economy, and on Sri Lanka's garment exports and revenue from foreign remittances, PM Rajapaksa sought the country's cooperation to take on the "enemy" [virus], in order to put the country back on track.



Mahinda Rajapaksa

Even as calls from the political opposition to reconvene Parliament grow louder, Mr. Rajapaksa said: "When we tried to pass an interim budget before dissolution of Parliament [on March 2], the Parliament did not support us," asking "what use" reconvening Parliament could be now. The opposition has maintained that reconvening Parliament would be in democratic spirit, and allow for grievances from all parts of the country to be heard better.

Apparently responding to requests from former Mus-

lim parliamentarians and civil society members, seeking burial rights for Muslim victims – authorities cremated the body of a Muslim victim sparking concern – Mr. Rajapaksa said: "This is not the time to fulfil special religious or ritual rights... this is the time to think about the country."

**Leaders thank India**  
Earlier, Both Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Mahinda Rajapaksa tweeted thanking India for a special consignment of essential medicines that arrived in Sri Lanka via a special Air India charter flight. The 10-tonne consignment of "life-saving" medicines were requested by the Government of Sri Lanka, a press release from the Indian High Commission in Colombo said.

"This is yet another manifestation of India's unwavering commitment to stand with Sri Lanka, in rain and in shine," the statement said.

# White House pushes unproven drug

Scientists say more testing is needed before hydroxychloroquine is proven safe

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump and his administration are promoting an anti-malaria drug not officially approved for fighting the new coronavirus, even though scientists say more testing is needed before it's proven safe and effective against COVID-19.

Mr. Trump's Trade Adviser Peter Navarro championed hydroxychloroquine in television interviews Monday, a day after the President publicly put his faith in the medication to lessen the toll of the coronavirus pandemic.

"What do I know, I'm not a doctor," Mr. Trump said on Sunday. "But I have common sense." In promoting the drug's possibilities, the President has often stated, "What have you got to lose?"

Mr. Trump held out promise for the drug as he grasps for ways to sound hopeful in the face of a mounting death toll and

with the worst weeks yet to come for the U.S. The virus has killed more than 10,000 in the U.S., and measures meant to contain its spread have taken a painful economic toll and all but frozen life in large swaths of the country.

But medical officials warn that it's dangerous to be hawking unproven remedies, and even Trump's own experts have cautioned against it.

## Severe side effects

The American Medical Association's president, Dr. Patricia Harris, said she personally would not prescribe the drug for a coronavirus patient, saying the risks of severe side effects were "great and too significant to downplay" without large studies showing the drug is safe and effective for such use.

"People have their health to lose," she said. "Your heart could stop."



President Donald Trump opening a COVID-19 test kit in Washington. •AP

In a heated Situation Room meeting of the White House's coronavirus task force on Saturday, Mr. Navarro challenged the top U.S. infectious disease expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci, over his concerns about recommending the drug based only on unscientific anecdotal evidence.

Mr. Navarro, who has no formal medical training, erupted at Mr. Fauci, raising his voice and claiming the reports of studies he had col-

lected were enough to recommend the drug widely, according to a person familiar with the exchange who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the blow-up.

Mr. Fauci has repeatedly said current studies provide only anecdotal findings that the drug works. In response, Mr. Navarro told CNN on Monday, "I would have two words for you – 'second opinion.'"

## Off-label prescribing

Doctors are already prescribing the malaria drug to patients with COVID-19, a practice known as off-label prescribing.

Research studies are now beginning to test if the drugs truly help COVID-19 patients, and the Food and Drug Administration has allowed the medication into the national stockpile as an option for doctors to consider for patients who cannot get into one of the studies.

# Cardinal Pell acquitted of sexual offences

Vatican welcomes the decision, says ex-treasurer waited for truth to emerge

REUTERS  
MELBOURNE

Australia's highest court acquitted former Vatican treasurer George Pell on Tuesday of sexually assaulting two teenaged choirboys in the 1990s, freeing the 78-year-old cardinal after 404 days in jail.

The Vatican welcomed the decision and praised Mr. Pell for having "waited for the truth to be ascertained".

In a statement it said it always had confidence in Australian justice, that Mr. Pell had always maintained his innocence and that the Holy See reaffirmed its "commitment to preventing and pursuing all cases of abuse against minors".

The High Court, ruling

from Brisbane, ordered Mr. Pell's convictions be quashed and verdicts of acquittal be entered in their place, ending the most high profile case of alleged historical sex abuse to rock the Roman Catholic Church.

The seven judges of the High Court agreed unanimously that the jury in the cardinal's trial "ought to have entertained a doubt" about his guilt. Mr. Pell, who has maintained his innocence throughout the lengthy court process, cannot be retried on the charges.

"I hold no ill will toward my accuser, I do not want my acquittal to add to the hurt and bitterness so many feel; there is certainly hurt and bitterness enough," Pell said



George Pell

in a statement shortly before he was driven away from the maximum security Barwon Prison near Melbourne.

The verdict comes in the middle of Holy Week, the period leading up to Easter, the most important day in the Christian calendar.

A few hours after Mr. Pell's acquittal, Pope Francis offered his morning Mass for those who suffer from unjust sentences. Francis did not mention Mr. Pell by name.

## 'Unjust sentences'

"I would like to pray today for all those people who suffer unjust sentences resulting from intransigence (against them)," Pope Francis said, speaking extemporaneously at the start of the Mass.

An investigation of Mr. Pell by the Vatican was mooted but never formally begun. The Pope appointed Mr. Pell to overhaul the Vatican's vast finances in 2014 and has withheld comment on the case throughout the trial and appeals.

# Chad's former dictator under house arrest

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
DAKAR

Former Chadian dictator Hissene Habre has been granted 60 days of home arrest by Senegal's Justice Ministry because of the threat of COVID-19 in the prison where he is serving a life sentence.

"Habre was not released. Hissene Habre is still in prison, it is simply the place of detention that has changed," Justice Minister Malick Sall said in the announcement late Monday. "Habre is an international political prisoner who has been entrusted to us by the international community his security is the responsibility of the state of Senegal."

# Prince Harry and Meghan to start non-profit in U.S.

They have planned many projects under the name Archewell

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

Prince Harry and his wife Meghan Markle are planning to launch a wide-ranging non-profit organisation named Archewell, reports on Tuesday said.

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex told the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper they were establishing the organisation in the U.S., where they are now based.

The charitable organisation will include emotional support groups, a multimedia educational empire and a well-being website among other things.

They said they wanted "to



Prince Harry and wife Meghan in London, in this file photo. •REUTERS

*Telegraph* said.

They have delayed releasing full details about it because of the COVID-19 pandemic and will make an announcement "when the time is right", they told the paper.

Their proposals are for "a vast and ambitious array of projects" under the name Archewell to replace their previous "Sussex Royal" brand, it added.

The new name is reportedly derived from the Greek word Arche, meaning "source of action", and was the inspiration behind the name of their son, Archie Mountbatten-Windsor.