

# India to monitor workers with app

REUTERS, New Delhi

India has mandated that all public and private sector employees use a government-backed Bluetooth tracing app and maintain social distancing in offices as New Delhi begins easing some of its lockdown measures in lower-risk areas.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government on Friday said India - the country with the largest number of people in lockdown - would extend its nationwide control measures for another two weeks from Monday to battle the spread of the coronavirus that causes the COVID-19 illness, but allow "considerable relaxations" in lower-risk districts. India has reported over 37,000 cases and 1,218 deaths from the virus.

As part of its efforts to fight the deadly virus, India last month launched the app Aarogya Setu - meaning Health Bridge - a Bluetooth and GPS-based system developed by the country's National Informatics Centre. The app alerts users who may have come in contact with people later found to be positive for COVID-19 or deemed to be at high risk.

"Use of Aarogya Setu shall be made mandatory for all employees, both private and public," India's Ministry of Home Affairs said in a notification late on Friday.

It will the responsibility of the heads of companies and organizations "to ensure 100% coverage of this app among the employees," the ministry said.

Officials at India's technology ministry and a lawyer who framed the privacy policy for Aarogya Setu told Reuters the app needs to be on at least 200 million phones for it to be effective in the country of 1.3 billion people.

The app has been downloaded around 50 million times on Android phones, according to Google Play Store data. The app's compulsory use is raising concerns among privacy advocates, who say it is unclear how the data will be used and who stress that India lacks privacy laws to govern the app.



People wear face masks as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 coronavirus as they use a phone app to scan a code required to prove their health and travel status before being allowed to enter a shopping mall in Beijing, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC LATEST UPDATES

### NEARLY 239,000 DEATHS

More than 238,810 people have died worldwide since the epidemic surfaced in China in December, according to an AFP tally at 1100 GMT yesterday based on official sources. In all, more than 3.3 million cases have now been reported in 195 countries and territories. In the United States, which has the highest toll, 65,068 people have died. Italy is the second hardest-hit country, with 28,236 dead, followed by the United Kingdom with 27,510, Spain 25,100 and France 24,594.

### GREEN LIGHT FOR REMDESIVIR

American authorities approve an experimental drug for emergency use on patients, in the latest step in the global push to find viable treatments and a vaccine. Remdesivir, an antiviral drug initially developed to treat Ebola, is given the green light after a major trial finds it boosted recovery in serious COVID-19 patients.

### BLOOD PRESSURE NOT A FACTOR

In reassuring news for millions of people, three major studies say commonly used blood pressure medicines do not heighten susceptibility to infection, or increase the risk of becoming seriously ill with the disease.

### SPANIARDS ALLOWED OUTSIDE

Spain's nearly 47 million people, under strict lockdown since March 14, are allowed outside for walks or sport. Many restrictions remain however. In towns of more than 5,000 inhabitants, children and the elderly cannot leave home at the same times.

### EUROPE CASES PASSES 1.5M

Over 1.5 million cases of coronavirus have been recorded in Europe, just under half the worldwide total, according to an AFP tally at 0850 GMT yesterday. With at least 1,506,853 infections, including 140,260 deaths, Europe is the hardest-hit continent.

### SRI LANKA EXTENDS LOCKDOWN

Sri Lanka on Friday extended its anti-virus lockdown for a second time, through May 11, as health authorities warned that the crisis was not yet under control in the island nation. The South Asian country has officially recorded 690 infections and seven deaths.

### CASES SURGE IN RUSSIA

Russia yesterday reported its largest increase in coronavirus cases with the new infections rising by nearly 10,000 in a single day. New infections jumped by 9,623 to 124,054 cases. Fifty seven people died over the past 24 hours, bringing the total death toll to 1,222.

### FRANCE EXTENDS EMERGENCY

France yesterday decided to extend a health emergency imposed to fight the new coronavirus for another two months until July 24, Health Minister Olivier Veran said. A proposal to go before parliament from Monday says the lifting this month of the emergency, which began on March 24, would "be premature" and "could see a risk of the outbreak" intensifying.

SOURCE: AFP, NEWS SITES

# Two more years of pandemic misery!

Experts say Covid-19 not going to stop until it infects 60 to 70 percent of people

CNN ONLINE

The new coronavirus is likely to keep spreading for at least another 18 months to two years—until 60% to 70% of the population has been infected, a team of longstanding pandemic experts predicted in a report released Thursday.

They recommended that the US prepare for a worst-case scenario that includes a second big wave of coronavirus infections in the fall and winter. Even in a best-case scenario, people will continue to die from the virus, they predicted.

"This thing's not going to stop until it infects 60 to 70 percent of people," Mike Osterholm, who directs the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) at the University of Minnesota, told CNN.

"The idea that this is going to be done soon defies microbiology."

Osterholm has been writing about the risk of pandemics for 20 years and has advised several presidents. He wrote the report along with Harvard School of Public Health epidemiologist Marc Lipsitch, who is also a top expert on pandemics;



Dr. Kristine Moore, a former Centers for Disease Control and Prevention epidemiologist who is now medical director for CIDRAP; and historian John Barry, who wrote the 2004 book "The Great Influenza" about the 1918 flu pandemic.

Because Covid-19 is new, no one has any immunity, they said. "The length of the pandemic will likely be 18 to 24 months, as herd immunity gradually develops in the human population," they wrote.

Their predictions are different from models presented by groups such as the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at

the University of Washington or the models produced by Imperial College London, whose report predicting millions of deaths in the US and UK helped galvanize responses by both governments.

The CIDRAP-led team used those reports, historical data on past pandemics, and published reports about the medical details of Covid-19 to put together their forecast.

"I have said for a long time that when you are trying to understand how infectious disease is going to unfold, you should rely on history as well as models," Lipsitch told CNN. For instance, pandemic infections don't tend to die down in the summer, like seasonal flu does, he said.

"Because of a longer incubation period, more asymptomatic spread, and a higher R0, COVID-19 appears to spread more easily than flu," they wrote in the report. R0 is the average number of other people infected by each patient.

"A higher R0 means more people will need to get infected and become immune before the pandemic can end," they add. "Based on the most recent flu pandemics, this outbreak will

likely last 18 to 24 months."

They said government officials should stop telling people the pandemic could be ending and instead prepare citizens for a long haul.

Three scenarios are possible, they said:

Scenario 1: The first wave of Covid-19 in spring 2020 is followed by a series of repetitive smaller waves that occur through the summer and then consistently over a one- to two-year period, gradually diminishing sometime in 2021.

Scenario 2: The first wave of Covid-19 is followed by a larger wave in the fall or winter and one or more smaller waves in 2021.

Scenario 3: A "slow burn" of ongoing transmission. "This third scenario likely would not require the reinstitution of mitigation measures, although cases and deaths will continue to occur."

A vaccine could help, the report said, but not quickly. "The course of the pandemic also could be influenced by a vaccine; however, a vaccine will likely not be available until at least sometime in 2021," they wrote.



'So what?' Says Bolsonaro as 6,300 die in Brazil

AFP, Rio De Janeiro

Rarely have two words ignited such a firestorm of controversy.

"So what?" said Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro on Tuesday when a journalist asked him about the fact that more than 5,000 Brazilians had died of the coronavirus.

The far-right leader's off-the-cuff comment has been sparking anger ever since, with governors, politicians, healthcare professionals and media figures all weighing in to express their outrage at his lack of empathy.

Bolsonaro is no stranger to controversy. But his latest remark sparked such a fury because Brazil is facing a seemingly uncontrollable outbreak of the disease and is still several weeks away from the peak of the pandemic, with a death toll that threatens to surpass even the most dire predictions.

There have been more than 91,000 officially confirmed cases so far but scientists warn the real figure could be 15 to 20 times higher.

With a death toll that has already topped 6,300, the giant South American country is facing as grim a scenario as Italy or the United States.

"So what? I'm sorry. What do you want me to do?" Bolsonaro said Tuesday when questioned about his country passing the 5,000-death mark, more than China. He joked that even though his middle name is Messias, or Messiah, "I don't do miracles."

The head of the doctors' union in Sao Paulo, Eder Gatti, called on television for "a more serious attitude from the president of the republic."

# Virus 'natural in origin'

Reiterates WHO as Trump says it originated from Wuhan lab

AFP, Geneva

The World Health Organization reiterated Friday that the new coronavirus was of natural origin after US President Donald Trump claimed he had seen evidence it originated in a Chinese lab.

Scientists believe the killer virus jumped from animals to humans, emerging in China late last year, possibly from a market in Wuhan selling exotic animals for meat.

Trump claimed Thursday that he had seen proof that the Wuhan Institute of Virology was actually the source of the outbreak, although he refused to give details.

Asked about Trump's claim during a virtual press conference, WHO emergencies chief Michael Ryan stressed that the UN health agency had "listened again and again to numerous scientists who have looked

at the sequences" of the virus.

"We are assured that this virus is natural in origin," he said, reiterating a stance the UN agency has expressed previously.

Ryan said countries must lift lockdowns gradually, while still being "on the look-out" for COVID-19 and ready to restore restrictions if the virus jumps back.

Even if the virus is coming under control, communities must know to still follow physical distancing and hygiene measures, and testing of suspect cases must continue, he said.

"It's really important that as countries ease those measures that they are constantly on the look out for a jump in infections and in particular are dealing with transmission in special settings," Ryan told a news conference.

His comments came after WHO's

emergency committee, made up of 19 independent experts, met for the first time since making its declaration three months ago.

"While maintaining the global alert level, the experts made a range of general recommendations on how the WHO and countries should adjust their response to the pandemic.

It called among other things for broad cooperation to "identify the zoonotic source of the virus and the route of introduction to the human population." It also called on WHO to "update recommendations on appropriate travel measures" linked to the outbreak, and to consider "the balance between benefits and unintended consequences," such as the difficulties of transporting humanitarian aid when so many flights are grounded.



People hold signs during a protest demanding to reopen the Illinois economy in front of a James R. Thompson Center in Chicago, Illinois, Friday.

PHOTO: AFP



A woman walks past a television news screen showing a picture of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un attending a ceremony to mark the completion of Suncheon phosphatic fertilizer factory, at a railway station in Seoul, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Kim Jong Un reappears

AFP, Seoul

North Korea's Kim Jong Un has made his first public appearance in nearly three weeks, state media reported yesterday, following intense speculation that the leader of the nuclear-armed nation was seriously ill or possibly dead.

State television showed Kim walking, smiling broadly and smoking a cigarette at what the North said was the opening of a fertilizer factory on Friday in Suncheon, north of Pyongyang.

Rumours about Kim's health have been swirling since his conspicuous no-show at April 15 celebrations for the birthday of his grandfather, the North's founder -- the most important day in the country's political calendar.

His absence triggered a series of fevered rumours and unconfirmed reports over his condition, while the United States and South Korea insisted they had no information to believe any of the

conjecture was true.

Seoul's unification ministry reacted to yesterday's report by saying "groundless" speculation about Kim had caused "unnecessary confusion", calling for more careful consideration in future.

Kim's sudden death would have left Pyongyang facing an unplanned succession for the first time in its history and raised unanswered questions over who would succeed him and take over the North's nuclear arsenal.

Footage showed Kim in his trademark black suit, waving to hundreds of workers who cheered his appearance and released balloons.

He was flanked by senior officials -- including his sister and close adviser Kim Yo Jong -- and showed no outward signs of ill health. At one point Kim sat in front of a sign that described the event as a factory opening ceremony for May 1, 2020, but his appearance could not be independently verified.

# 'Never happened'

Biden denies sex assault charge

AFP, Washington

US presidential candidate Joe Biden on Friday emphatically denied sexually assaulting a former aide, saying the alleged incident 27 years ago "never happened."

The former vice president thus broke a month of silence on the most potentially damaging claims he has confronted since launching his White House bid a year ago.

Republicans have tried to use them to damage his prospects against President Donald Trump in November's election.

"They aren't true. This never happened," Biden said in a statement addressing the accusations made by Tara Reade, a former staffer in his Senate office.

The campaign of the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee had forcefully denied the allegations, but Biden himself had yet to address them publicly until now.

Biden, 77, said Reade's then-supervisor and former senior staffers in his office "have said, unequivocally, that she never came to them and complained or raised issues."

Reade said on a podcast in March that then-senator Biden sexually assaulted her in a Capitol Hill corridor in 1993, when she was 29. Reade, now 56, alleged that Biden pinned her against a wall when she brought him a gym bag, put his hands "down my skirt" and violated her.

Reade's public account evolved over time. In early 2019, when Biden was preparing his presidential bid, she was among multiple women who accused Biden of touching them inappropriately, or in ways that made them feel uncomfortable. She has since presented a more serious claim of assault to media outlets, and filed an incident report with the Washington police in early April in which she did not name Biden.

Trump, who faces Biden in a presidential election, himself faced more than a dozen accusations of sexual harassment and assault before he became president.

He came out Friday on the side of Biden, telling a right-wing radio host: "I would just say to Joe Biden: Just go out and fight it. It's, you know, it's one of those things."

Table with 2 columns: S.No. and Details. It lists various government services and their locations, including the Prison Sunamganj and various district offices.