

Virus may 'burn out naturally'

Says former WHO chief; Moderna's vaccine shows early promise

AGENCIES

Coronavirus could "burn out naturally before any vaccine is developed", according to a former World Health Organisation chief.

"We are seeing a roughly similar pattern everywhere - I suspect we have more immunity than estimated," Professor Karol Sikora, who previously directed the WHO's cancer program, said on Saturday.

"We need to keep slowing the virus, but it could be petering out by itself. It is my opinion that this is a feasible scenario."

His hopeful comments come days after a new study in the International Journal of Clinical Practice, using local authority "R" transmission rate data, estimated some 19 million people are "likely" to have already contracted the virus in the UK.

Recent polling by Opinium suggests the public are similarly pinning their hopes on a vaccine. Researchers found more than a quarter of UK respondents said they would not feel comfortable taking public transport until a vaccine is found.

Meanwhile, Moderna Inc yesterday said its experimental COVID-19 vaccine showed promise in a small early-stage trial, with the vaccine producing virus-neutralizing antibodies similar to that found in recovered patients.

Eight patients who were administered Moderna's vaccine were found to have antibody levels similar to those in blood samples of people who have recovered from COVID-19, according to early results from the study.

Moderna expects to start a larger late-stage trial in July.

There are currently no approved treatment or vaccine for COVID-19 and experts predict a safe and effective vaccine could take 12-18 months to develop.



Pan-democratic legislators Chan Chi-chuen and Chu Hoi-dick scuffle with security during Legislative Council's House Committee meeting, in Hong Kong, yesterday. Hong Kong's legislature plunged into chaotic scuffles for a second time this month, as pro-Beijing lawmakers yesterday took control of a key committee, paving the way for a debate on a bill that would criminalise abuse of China's national anthem.

PHOTO: REUTERS

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

KEY UPDATES

MORE THAN 315,000 DEAD

The novel coronavirus has killed at least 315,270 people since the outbreak first emerged in China last December, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP at 1100 GMT yesterday. At least 4,727,220 cases of coronavirus have been registered in 196 countries and territories. The United States has the highest number of deaths overall with 89,564 from 1,486,742 cases. Britain has the second highest toll, with 34,636 deaths. It is followed by Italy with 31,908 deaths, France with 28,108 deaths and Spain with 27,650 fatalities.

REMDESIVIR CLOSE TO EU NOD

The head of the European Union's medicines agency Guido Rasi yesterday said an initial authorisation for US pharmaceutical company Gilead's remdesivir as a COVID-19 treatment could be granted in coming days. The European Medicines Agency (EMA) has already recommended the compassionate use of remdesivir, which allows a drug to be administered to patients even before it has been fully authorised.

JAPAN SLIDES INTO RECESSION

Japan dived into its first recession since 2015, according to official data, with the world's third-largest economy shrinking by 0.9 percent in the first quarter as it wrestles with the fallout from the coronavirus. The drop in gross domestic product followed a 1.9 percent decline in the fourth quarter of 2019 as a tax hike and typhoons hit Japan hard - even before the pandemic shut down much of the economy.

'DEADLIEST' APRIL IN BELGIUM

Coronavirus brought Belgium its deadliest April since World War 2 last month, according to a new study as the country begins slowly to lift lockdown measures. A total of 14,790 people died in Belgium last month as COVID-19 swept the nation - substantially higher than the normal April total of deaths below 9,000, researchers from VUB university in Brussels found. Not since the Nazi occupation of the 1940s has Belgium seen such a high mortality rate in April.

CASES DECLINING IN RUSSIA

Russia yesterday reported 8,926 new cases of the novel coronavirus in the last 24 hours, pushing its nationwide case tally to 290,678. The daily rise in cases was for the third day in a row below 10,000, a threshold that it has been above for much of May. Russia's coronavirus taskforce said 91 people had died overnight, bringing the death toll to 2,722.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

Taliban blast near Afghan base kills 7, injures 40

Taliban fighters yesterday detonated a car bomb near an Afghan intelligence agency installation in the central province of Ghazni, killing at least seven people and wounding 40, officials and the Taliban insurgents said. "Around 4:30am, a base of the National Security (NDS) forces in Ghazni was targeted by a car bomb," said a police official, adding that seven people died at the blast site and 40 injured were taken to a military hospital. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said fighters of the Islamist group were responsible for the attack in Ghazni.

Libyan forces aligned with Tripoli govt claim key air base

Forces aligned with Libya's internationally recognised government yesterday said they had taken control of an air base south-west of Tripoli in what could be their most significant advance for nearly a year. Watiya air base, 125 km (80 miles) from the capital, has been an important strategic foothold for LNA forces loyal to eastern-based commander Khalifa Haftar, who launched an offensive to capture Tripoli in April 2019. The advance comes after GNA forces pushed back against their rivals in recent weeks with increased support from Turkey, capturing towns on the coast west of Tripoli last month.

Americans will be expelled from Iraq and Syria: Iran



Americans will be expelled from Iraq and Syria, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Sunday, renewing Iran's demand for US troops to be withdrawn from the Middle East. Khamenei said Americans' actions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria had led to them being hated, according to a transcript of a speech to students published on his website. "The Americans won't stay in Iraq and Syria and will be expelled," Khamenei said.

Malaysia's king upholds PM's appointment

Malaysia's king yesterday said the appointment of Muhyiddin Yassin as PM during turmoil this year was proper and constitutional. Muhyiddin's appointment on March 1 has been challenged by the opposition who say it was not clear that Muhyiddin had majority support from among the 222 members of parliament's lower house. The lower house speaker had initially approved a motion tabled by Muhyiddin's 94-year-old predecessor, Mahathir Mohamad, seeking a vote of no confidence in Muhyiddin, but the vote was postponed indefinitely after the government shortened Monday's meeting, only allowing time for the royal address.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

Virus a 'wake-up call' for the world

Warns UN chief, says crisis showcased world's fragility

AFP, Geneva

The coronavirus pandemic should serve as a "wake-up call" to the world which must be more united in responding to the crisis, UN chief Antonio Guterres said yesterday.

The secretary-general said COVID-19 was the "greatest challenge of our age" and had demonstrated the world's fragility, as nations went their own way in tackling the pandemic.

Guterres said the crisis was an opportunity to rebuild a better world - but he questioned whether countries were up to it.

Despite great scientific and technological advances in recent decades, a virus had "brought us to our knees", the United Nations chief said at the start of a virtual meeting of the World Health Organization's (WHO) World Health Assembly.

He said the pandemic had exposed the frailties not just in health systems but in international institutions, tackling the climate crisis, cyber-security and nuclear disarmament.

"COVID-19 must be a wake-up call. It is time for an end to the hubris," Guterres said, slamming countries for their disjointed approach.

"We have seen some solidarity, but very little unity in our response to COVID-19."

"Different countries have followed different, sometimes contradictory strategies

and we are all paying a heavy price. "Many countries have ignored the recommendations of the World Health Organization.

"As a result, the virus has spread across the world."

He said COVID-19 was now spreading in the southern hemisphere, where its impact might be "even more devastating".

Guterres reiterated his call for a WHO-led international response, expanded mental health services and policies to address the social and economic problems caused by the crisis.

"Unless we control the spread of the virus, the economy will never recover," the secretary-general said.

The former Portuguese prime minister and former head of the UN refugee agency said the recovery from the crisis must lead to more equal and sustainable economies.

It is "an opportunity to rebuild differently and better", he said, referring to the climate crisis and flawed social protection systems.

"Instead of going back to systems that were unsustainable, we need to make a leap into a future of clean energy, inclusivity and equality, and stronger safety nets, including universal health coverage."

But he asked: "We can do it, but will we?"

"Either we get through this pandemic together, or we fail."



ASIA'S BIGGEST-EVER DRUGS BUST

Huge fentanyl haul seized in Myanmar

Experts fear spread of drug in the region; 193m yaba tablets seized

REUTERS, Jakarta

Myanmar police say they have seized a huge haul of liquid fentanyl, the first time one of the dangerous synthetic opioids that have ravaged North America has been found in Asia's Golden Triangle drug-producing region.

In a signal that Asia's drug syndicates have moved into the lucrative opioid market, Reuters can reveal more than 3,700 litres of methylfentanyl was discovered by anti-narcotics police near Loikan village in Shan State in northeast Myanmar.

The seizure of the fentanyl derivative was part of Asia's biggest-ever interception of illicit drugs, precursors and drug-making equipment, including 193 million methamphetamine tablets known as yaba. At 17.5 tonnes, the yaba almost equalled the amount seized in the previous two years in Myanmar.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said the scale of the bust was unprecedented and Myanmar's anti-drug authorities had "dismantled a significant network" during a two-month operation involving police and military. Also seized were almost 163,000 litres and 35.5 tonnes of drug precursors, as well as weapons. There were more than 130 arrests.

Even so, the methylfentanyl discovery was an ominous indicator for the region's illicit drug market, the UN agency said. Fentanyl itself is 25 to 50 times stronger than heroin.

As well as being easier and cheaper to produce than heroin, strong synthetic opioids like fentanyl can be readily concealed and transported as only small amounts can deliver thousands of doses.

"We have repeatedly warned the region fentanyl could become a problem but this is off the charts," said the UNODC's Southeast Asia and the Pacific representative Jeremy Douglas. "It is the shift in the market we have been anticipating, and fearing."



Lydia Hassebroek says hi to her friend Rose through her kitchen window during the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Brooklyn, New York, US. Photo was taken on Sunday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Bangladesh Land Port Authority
T.C.B Bhaban (5th Floor)
Kawran Bazar, Dhaka- 1215
www.bsbk.gov.bd

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e-Tender Notice

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents of following package from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches.

Sl. No.	Name of work	Tender ID	Last date & time of submission documents	Tender/proposal opening date & time
1.	Construction of open stackyard, transshipment yard, parking yard & internal road at Korotaili, Gobra-kura-Korotaili Land Port, Mymensingh.	461162	21-Jun-2020 13:30	21-Jun-2020 14:00
2.	Construction of weighbridge scale at Gobra-kura-Korotaili Land Port, Mymensingh.	461219	21-Jun-2020 14:00	21-Jun-2020 15:00
3.	Construction of warehouse watch tower and external electrification at Gobra-kura- Korotaili Land Port, Mymensingh	461426	21-Jun-2020 13:30	21-Jun-2020 15:30

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Hasan Ali
Project Director
Development of Gobra-kura-Korotaili Land Port
Phone: 55013830

GD-864

Ardern NZ's most popular PM in a century

REUTERS, Auckland

Jacinda Ardern became New Zealand's most popular prime minister in a century, a Newshub-Reid Research poll showed yesterday, thanks to her COVID-19 response that made the country among the most successful in curbing the spread of the disease.

The first public poll since the coronavirus crisis took hold showed popularity for Ardern's Labour jumped 14 points to 56.5% - the highest for any party ever. As preferred PM, Ardern was at 59.5%, up 20.8 points on the last poll and the highest score for any leader in the Reid Research poll's history.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Department of Architecture
Ministry of Housing and Public Works
Sthapatya Bhaban, Segunbagicha, Dhaka-1000
www.architecture.gov.bd
Phone No-02-9555253

Memo No-General-556/Stha Dated-18-05-2020


e-Tender Notice

This is to notify for all concern that the following Re-Tender have published through e-GP Portal. Previous tender (ID NO. 436344) has been canceled.

Sl.No.	Tender ID	Package No.	Name of Works	Publishing Date & Time	Last selling Date & Time	Closing Date & Time
01.	461372	DOA/e-GP/ 20-06	Computer Accessories	19 May 2020 10:00	08 June 2020 12:00	08 June 2020 14:00
02.	461402	DOA/e-GP/ 20-07	Engineering & Other Equipment.	19 May 2020 11:00	09 June 2020 12:00	09 June 2020 14:00

The interested persons/firms/supplier may visit the website www.eprocure.gov.bd to get details of the e-Tender.

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will not be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP portal (<https://eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guideline are available at the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).


(Biswajit Barua)
Superintending Architect
Circle-Co-ordination
Department of Architecture,
Segunbagicha, Dhaka-1000.
Telephone-02-9555253.

Signature of the tenderer, full name with designation date, address and seal.

GD-865