Stay vigilant and avoid going out

Wuhan people told as authorities fear second wave of infection

REUTERS, *Wuhan*

The top official in China's coronavirus epicentre of Wuhan warned residents to stay vigilant and avoid going out, even as the latest data showed a decline in new cases in the mainland and no new infections in the central city.

The country where the virus emerged late last year will observe three minutes of silence nationwide today to mourn the thousands of "martyrs" who died in the fight against the pandemic, the official Xinhua news agency said.

Air raid sirens and the horns of automobiles, trains and ships will "wail in grief" after the silence, to be observed at 10:00 am, it added.

China appears to have curbed the epidemic with draconian curbs that paralysed the world's second-biggest economy for two months.

Yesterday, the National Health Commission reported 31 new cases, down from 35 a day earlier and dramatically lower than February's peak. All but two involved travellers from overseas.

Total infections on the mainland, a figure that excludes asymptomatic patients, stand at 81,620, while the death toll rose by four to 3,322. Worldwide, the number of cases has topped 1 million, with at least 52,000 deaths.

Beijing has pushed industries to return to work as the epidemic eases, hoping for a quick recovery from what many analysts expect to have been a deep contraction of China's economy in the first quarter.

Officials are concerned about the risk of a second wave of infections. The threat of a rebound in Wuhan remains high, said Wang Zhonglin, chief of its Communist Party, ordering residents to avoid leaving their homes unless necessary.

General view of the temporary hospital for Covid-19 patients located at the Ifema convention and exhibition centre in Madrid yesterday. More than 900 people died in Spain over the past 24 hours for the second day running, government figures showed yesterday, although the rate of new infections and deaths continued to slow. PHOTO: AFP

UK virus deaths could reach 1,000 per day at Easter peak

Warns health secretary; PM continues self-isolation

AGENCIES

UK deaths from coronavirus could reach as many as 1,000 per day around the peak of the country's epidemic, which could come around Easter Sunday, health secretary Matt Hancock warned yesterday.

The health secretary's dire admission was given at the opening of the new NHS Nightingale hospital to fight the Covid-19 outbreak in London.

The government said yesterday it was rushing to build more emergency field hospitals ahead of an expected surge in cases, hours after recording a record 684 deaths from the disease. UK's coronavirus death toll now stands at 3,605.

Two new facilities will be built in Bristol in the west and Harrogate in the north to house up to 1,500 patients, the state-run National Health Service (NHS) said in a statement.

The announcement comes as a similar 4,000-bed facility in London -- built in less than ten days -- was opened yesterday, and as criticism mounts over the government's failure to provide screening, particularly for frontline healthcare workers.

"Further such hospitals will open next in Birmingham and Manchester, offering up to 3,000 beds between them," the NHS statement added.

Under-fire govt rushes to build more field hospitals

UK's death toll rises to **3,605** after an increase of **684**

Meanwhile, Boris Johnson has said he will remain in self-isolation due to a high temperature, despite completing his planned seven-day period.

Earlier, Johnson said Britain will "massively increase testing" for the Covid-19 virus following criticism of his initial light-touch approach to the outbreak.

Heir to the throne Prince Charles Thursday made his first public comments since coming out of self-quarantine after contracting the disease, telling the PA news agency the experience had been "strange, frustrating and often distressing".

In a video message, he praised the "utter, selfless devotion to duty" of Britain's health workers.

Britain is currently in the second week of a three-week lockdown, with non-essential shops shut and the public asked to stay at home to try to limit the spread of the coronavirus, reports AFP.

The government has promised an enormous package of support for businesses and employees hit by the measures.

New government figures show 950,000 people applied for state welfare support known as universal credit in the last two weeks. It is available to the unemployed and those on low incomes.

Could TB vaccine protect medics from Covid-19?

AFP, *Paris*

Could a common vaccine used for decades to protect against tuberculosis help shield health workers from Covid-19?

While developing a specific immunisation against the coronavirus sweeping the planet will likely take many months, researchers are studying the potential benefits of the BCG shot, which many people around the world receive as children.

Laboratories and pharmaceutical firms are racing to find medicines to tackle Covid-19, which has infected more than a million people, killed at least 50,000 and for which there is currently no known treatment, vaccine or cure.

"We have known for decades that BCG has non-specific beneficial effects", in that it protects against diseases other than the one for which it was created, Camille Locht, of the French public health research institute Inserm, told AFP.

Children vaccinated with BCG suffer less from other respiratory illnesses, it is used to treat certain bladder cancers and it could protect against asthma and autoimmune diseases such as type 1 diabetes.

Researchers want to test whether the tuberculosis vaccine could have a similar effect against the new coronavirus, either by reducing the risk of being infected, or by limiting the severity of the symptoms.

In France, where the BCG vaccine was compulsory until 2007, "most of the study participants will have already had a first vaccination", but the protective effect of this decreases over time, said Locht.

The BCG vaccine does not directly protect medics against the coronavirus, but provides a boost to the immune system which may lead to improved protection and a milder infection.

In the case of Covid-19, in addition to infection by the virus itself, some patients have also suffered excessive immune responses, with the uncontrolled production of pro-inflammatory proteins, cytokines.

However, researchers in Spain, instead of using the BCG, would like to try a new tuberculosis vaccine developed by the biotech firm Biofabri.

In Germany, the Max Planck Institute for Infectious Biology is also preparing a trial with a genetically-modified vaccine candidate, developed by the Serum Institute of India.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

LATEST UPDATES

MORE THAN 53,693 DEATHS

The worldwide number of officially confirmed fatalities from the novel coronavirus rose to 53,693 yesterday. More than 1,035,380 declared cases have been registered in 188 countries and territories. Of these cases, at least 201,500 are now considered recovered. Italy has 13,915 fatalities, with 115,242 infections. Spain has recorded 10,935 fatalities and 117,710 infections. France has reported 5,387 deaths and 73,743 cases while US has the highest official number of infected people with 245,573 cases and 6,058 deaths.

$4 TRILLION COST

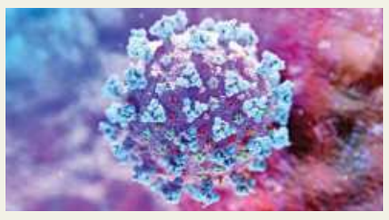
The pandemic could cost the global economy $4.1 trillion as it ravages United States, Europe and other major economies, the Asian Development Bank warns. The estimated impact is equivalent to 4.8 percent of worldwide output based on a range of scenarios, but the lender says losses from "the worst pandemic in a century" could be higher.

CONFINEMENT FOR HALF OF HUMANITY

More than 3.9 billion people -- half of the world's population -- have been called on or obliged by their authorities to stay at home in more than 90 countries or territories, according to an AFP database. Thailand becomes the latest nation to join the group yesterday introducing a six-hour night curfew.

RAMADAN SOAPS UNDER THREAT

Ramadan television soaps are struggling to keep the cameras rolling just weeks before the Islamic holy month, when they are highly popular during the fasting period. Many countries in the Middle East have imposed tough restrictions, forcing studios to shut down temporarily and others to work under strict rules.



INDIANS TO DISPEL 'DARKNESS'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi calls on confined Indians to hold candles and mobile phones aloft for nine minutes on Sunday to dispel the "darkness and uncertainty" of the coronavirus crisis. He also urged current and former Indian sports stars to help "boost morale" and encourage people to adhere to a nationwide lockdown aimed at containing the coronavirus.

Germans to be fined for breaking distancing rules

GERMANS RISK BEING FINED

($540) for standing too close to each other from yesterday as officials crack down on people flouting rules brought in to control coronavirus. German Chancellor Angela Merkel comes out of two weeks quarantine, leaving her Berlin home and returning to her office after she was forced into quarantine following contact with a Covid-19-infected doctor.

NIGERIAN MAN SHOT DEAD

A Nigerian man has been shot dead for allegedly flouting a stay-at-home order aimed at curbing the spread of coronavirus, police and a lawmaker said yesterday. Nigeria has introduced a raft of measures, including lockdowns of major cities, to try to contain the virus, which has infected 184 people, two of them fatally. SOURCE: AFP

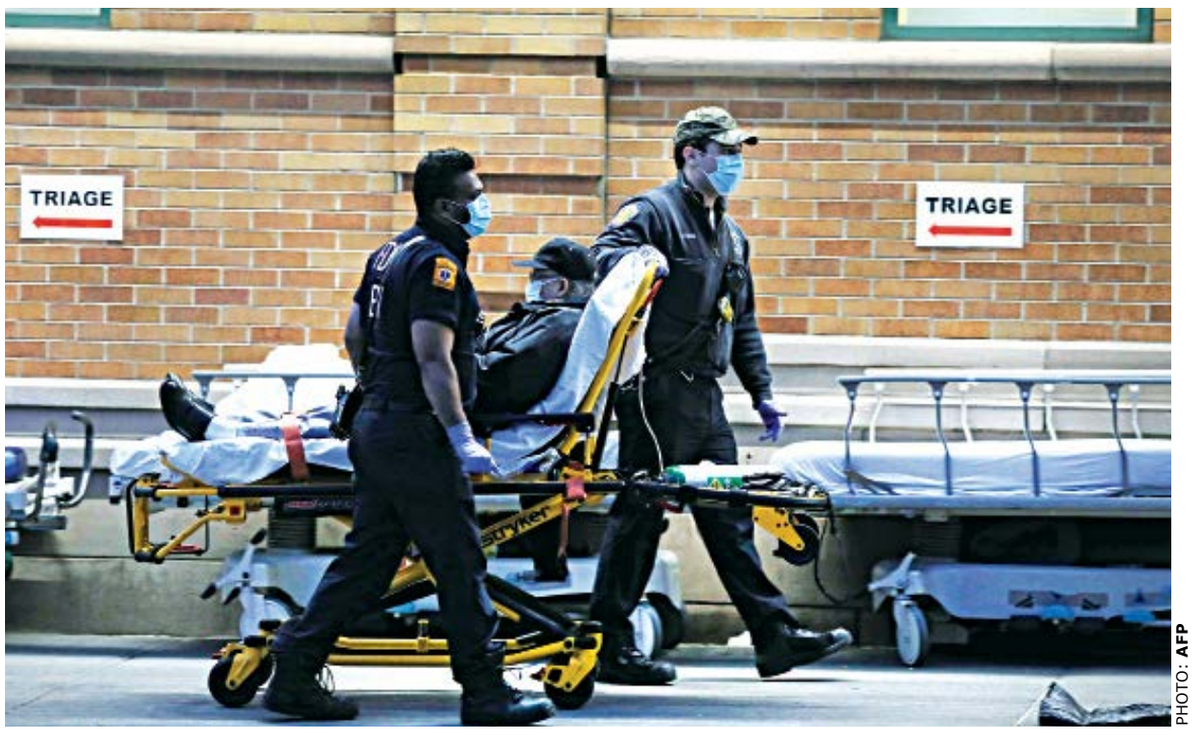


PHOTO: AFP

Medical workers bring in patients at a special coronavirus intake tent at Maimonides Medical Center in the Borough Park section of Brooklyn in New York City which has seen an upsurge of coronavirus patients on Thursday.

It's time to go home

Australian PM tells visitors, int'l students

ABC NEWS ONLINE

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison has told visitor visa holders and international students the time has come to return to their home countries as the coronavirus pandemic continues.

After meeting with the National Cabinet yesterday, Morrison said those in Australia who are here under various visa arrangements and cannot support themselves that "there is the alternative for them to return to their home countries".

"Australia must focus on its citizens and its residents to ensure that we can maximise the economic supports that we have," he said.

However, the Prime Minister stated international visitors who have critical skills could be the exception.

"For those backpackers in Australia who are nurses or doctors, or have other critical skills that can really help us during this crisis, then there will be opportunities for them," he said.

"But our focus and our priority is on supporting Australians and Australian residents with the economic supports that are available."

Morrison said there still remained a number of people in the country on visitor visas.

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দরপত্র দাখিল ও উন্মুক্তকরণের সময় বৃদ্ধি সংক্রান্ত পুনঃ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

আসবাবপত্র, কম্পিউটার সামগ্রী, মনিহারি সামগ্রী এবং ৩য় ও ৪র্থ শ্রেণীর কর্মচারীগণের পোশাক ও আনুষঙ্গিক সামগ্রী ক্রয়ের নিমিত্ত 'দৈনিক বাংলাদেশ প্রতিদিন' ও দৈনিক 'দি ডেইলি স্টার' পত্রিকায় বিগত ১৫/০৩/২০২০ খ্রিঃ তারিখে দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশিত হয়। সাম্প্রতিক সময়ে বহির্বিশ্বের পাশাপাশি বাংলাদেশেও করোনা ভাইরাস (কোভিড-১৯) এর সংক্রমণের কারণে গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার ২৬/০৩/২০২০ খ্রিঃ হতে ০৪/০৪/২০২০ পর্যন্ত সাধারণ ছুটি ঘোষনা করেন। কিন্তু করোনা ভাইরাস (কোভিড-১৯) এর পরিস্থিতি স্বাভাবিক না হওয়ায় এই ছুটি ০৫/০৪/২০২০ হতে ০৯/০৪/২০২০ পর্যন্ত বর্ধিত হয় এবং এর সাথে যথাক্রমে ১০/০৪/২০২০ ও ১১/০৪/২০২০ তারিখের সাপ্তাহিক ছুটিও সংযুক্ত করা হয়। এ প্রেক্ষিতে ০৭/০৪/২০২০ খ্রিঃ তারিখের পরিবর্তে আগামী ২০/০৪/২০২০ খ্রিঃ তারিখ বিকাল ৪:৩০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত শিডিউল বিক্রয় করা হবে ও ০৮/০৪/২০২০ খ্রিঃ তারিখের পরিবর্তে আগামী ২১/০৪/২০২০ খ্রিঃ তারিখ সকাল ১১:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত দরপত্র দাখিল করা যাবে এবং আগামী ০৮/০৪/২০২০ খ্রিঃ তারিখের পরিবর্তে আগামী ২১/০৪/২০২০ খ্রিঃ তারিখ সকাল ১১:৩০ ঘটিকায় দরপত্র উন্মুক্ত করা হবে।

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GD-719

Saving lives 'prerequisite' to save jobs: WHO, IMF chiefs

AFP, *Geneva*

The WHO and IMF chiefs insisted yesterday that saving lives was a "prerequisite" to saving livelihoods in the coronavirus pandemic -- a crisis they called "one of humanity's darkest hours".

World Health Organization director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and International Monetary Fund managing director Kristalina Georgieva said getting the Covid-19 virus under control first was necessary to revive economic activity -- though they admitted it was difficult to strike the right balance.

The world economy has been pummelled by the virus and the associated lockdowns, with more than half the population of the planet under some kind of stay-at-home order to

stem the spread of the pandemic.

Covid-19 has killed more than 50,000 people, while more than a million have tested positive for the virus.

"As the world responds to Covid-19, country after country is faced with the need to contain the spread of the virus at the cost of bringing its society and economy to a standstill," Tedros and Georgieva wrote in a joint article in the British newspaper The Daily Telegraph.

"At face value there is a trade-off to make: either save lives or save livelihoods. This is a false dilemma -- getting the virus under control is, if anything, a prerequisite to saving livelihoods."

The pair said that in too many countries -- notably poorer ones -- the health systems were "unprepared for an onslaught" of Covid-19 patients and urged states to prioritise spending on healthcare.

"The course of the global health crisis and the fate of the global economy are inseparably intertwined. Fighting the pandemic is a necessity for the economy to rebound," they wrote.

"Our joint appeal is that in one of humanity's darkest hours, leaders must step up right now for people living in emerging markets."