

WHO funding cut by US
World reaction

The US decision to freeze funding to the World Health Organization over what President Donald Trump said was its “mismanaging” of the global coronavirus pandemic triggered anger and concern. Here are some of the reactions from across the world to Trump’s move:

‘Critical to war against virus’

“(It is) not the time to reduce the resources for the operations of the World Health Organization or any other humanitarian organization in the fight against the virus. It is my belief that the World Health Organization must be supported, as it is absolutely critical to the world’s efforts to win the war against COVID-19.”
— UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres.



‘Undermining int’l cooperation’

“China is seriously concerned about the US announcement to suspend funding for the World Health Organization. The current global epidemic situation is grim. It is at a critical moment. This US decision will weaken WHO’s capacities and undermine the international cooperation against the epidemic.”
— Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian.



‘No justification’

“Deeply regret US decision to suspend funding to WHO. There is no reason justifying this move at a moment when their efforts are needed more than ever to help contain and mitigate the coronavirus pandemic. Only by joining forces we can overcome this crisis that knows no borders.”
— EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell



‘Blaming others won’t help’

“Blaming others won’t help. The virus knows no borders. One of the best investments is to strengthen the UN, above all the under-financed WHO... in the development and distribution of tests and vaccines.”
— German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas



‘World needs WHO more than ever’

“Halting funding for the World Health Organization during a world health crisis is as dangerous as it sounds. Their work is slowing the spread of COVID-19 and if that work is stopped no other organization can replace them. The world needs WHO now more than ever”
— Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates



SOURCE: AFP



Brazilian 99-year-old former WWII combatant Ermando Armelino Piveta gestures as he leaves the Armed Forces Hospital, after being treated for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and discharged, in Brasília, Brazil, on Tuesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

India lifts some curbs

Industries located in countryside to reopen next week; Pak export industries allowed to begin production

REUTERS, New Delhi

India will allow industries located in the countryside to reopen next week, as well as resuming farm activities to reduce the pain for millions of people hit by a lengthy shutdown in its coronavirus battle, the government said yesterday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi ordered the population of 1.3 billion to keep indoors for 19 days more after a strict three-week lockdown, saying it was critical to save lives amid the pandemic.

But he said he felt the pain of the poor and yesterday the home (interior) ministry released guidelines allowing limited resumption of commerce and industry in the hinterland, less affected by the pandemic.

“To mitigate hardship to the public, select additional activities have been allowed, which will come into effect from April 20,” it said.

Millions of people have been thrown out of work across south Asia since the lockdowns began last month, and growing anger in some areas was reflected in the commercial capital of Mumbai on Tuesday when hundreds mobbed a train station demanding transport home.

Neighbouring Pakistan, which also announced a two-week extension to its



shutdown to halt the virus, said it would reopen construction activity that provides a lifeline for the largest number of its people after agriculture.

Export industries, such as garments, will also be permitted to begin production, said Industries Minister Hammad Azhar, adding that the government had made an assessment of the sectors least vulnerable to infection.

“The low-risk industries, meaning where there is less danger of the epidemic’s spread as compared to others, they were identified,” he said.

India has 11,439 infections, government data showed yesterday, a jump of 1,076 from the previous day. These include 377 dead. Pakistan’s caseload is 5,988, including 107 deaths.

Health experts fear the small numbers relative

to some Western nations are a result of low levels of testing in the region and that actual infections could be far higher.

Widespread contagion could be disastrous for the millions living in dense slums in South Asia, where health services are overstretched.

India, the region’s biggest economy, has one doctor for every 1,500 citizens, short of the ratio of one for every 1,000 recommended by the World Health Organization. In some rural areas, the ratio is one doctor to 10,000 people.

“We had no choice but to extend the lockdown, but we are trying to protect livelihoods,” said Arvind Kejriwal, the chief minister of Delhi, which, along with Mumbai, accounts for more than a third of cases.

Meanwhile, India has agreed to sell hydroxychloroquine tablets to Malaysia for use in the treatment of Covid-19 patients, a Malaysian minister told Reuters yesterday, with New Delhi partially lifting its bar on exports of the anti-malarial drug.

India is the world’s largest producer of hydroxychloroquine, sales of which have soared across the world including in the United States, especially after President Donald Trump touted it as a potential weapon against Covid-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

China reports fewer cases

Says infections from Russia a worry

REUTERS, Suifenhe

China’s northeastern border with Russia has become a frontline in the fight against a resurgence of the coronavirus epidemic as new daily cases rose to the highest in nearly six weeks - with more than 90% involving people coming from abroad.

Having largely stamped out domestic transmission of the disease, China has been slowly easing curbs on movement as it tries to get its economy back on track, but there are fears that a rise in imported cases could spark a second wave of Covid-19.

Beware

FROM PAGE 12
Jahid said the symptom of dengue and covid-19 is very similar - fever.

“So, we have to be careful. If we are not aware of the reason for fever, then there is a chance of wrong treatment,” he said, adding that this year dengue patients have already started getting admitted to hospitals and it may increase in the coming days.

“Houses should be kept clean and there should be no place where water can stand still. So, while coronavirus is one issue, dengue is another very important issue to be aware of,” he said.

The country witnessed the worst ever dengue situation last year and the authorities should take preventive measures right away to avoid a repeat of such an outbreak, Jahid said. A total 1,01,354 dengue cases were reported last year, of which 49,544 were outside Dhaka. The number of deaths from dengue was 179, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

The virologist said that it is better to install mosquito nets on doors and windows and hanging the mosquito net over the bed.

In case anyone is infected with dengue, Jahid suggested keeping the patient under a mosquito net at all times to prevent Aedes mosquitoes spreading the viruses to healthy people.

2020 PRESIDENTIAL RACE

Obama endorses Biden

Says his longtime VP can unify, ‘heal’ a nation

AFP, Washington

Barack Obama endorsed Joe Biden’s White House bid on Tuesday, saying his longtime vice president can unify and “heal” a nation struggling through some of its darkest moments.

The formal backing by perhaps the most popular politician in America is the latest boost for Biden’s surging candidacy, and a further sign that Democratic leaders are rallying around the party flagbearer more than six months before November’s election.

“Joe has the character and the experience to guide us through one of our darkest times and heal us through a long recovery,” Obama said in a 12-minute video.

“I believe Joe has all the qualities we need in a president right now.”

The cherished endorsement comes at a time of deep national anxiety, with the vast majority of Americans under stay-at-home orders due to the coronavirus pandemic



that has killed nearly 25,000 people in the United States.

With President Donald Trump’s handling of the outbreak under the spotlight, Obama signalled he believed Biden -- with four decades of government experience -- would be a far more capable manager of the US response.

“Joe helped me manage H1N1 (influenza) and prevent the Ebola epidemic from becoming the type of pandemic we’re seeing now,” Obama said.

Biden, 77, promptly expressed his thanks in a tweet.

“Barack -- This endorsement means the world to Jill and me,” the Democratic stalwart said.

“We’re going to build on the progress we made together, and there’s no one I’d rather have standing by my side.”

Biden is the Democratic Party’s presumptive nominee to challenge Trump, after his lone remaining opponent Bernie Sanders dropped out of the race last week.

Positioning ICU patients on stomachs can save lives!

CNN ONLINE

On Friday, Dr. Mangala Narasimhan received an urgent call. A man in his 40s with Covid-19 was in a dire situation, and her colleague wanted her to come the intensive care unit at Long Island Jewish Hospital to see if he needed to be put on life support.

Before I come over there, Narasimhan told the other doctor, try turning the patient over onto his stomach and see if that helps.

Narasimhan didn’t need to go the ICU. The flip worked.

Doctors are finding that placing the sickest coronavirus patients on their stomachs -- called prone positioning -- helps increase the amount of oxygen that’s getting to their lungs.

“We’re saving lives with this, one hundred percent,” said Narasimhan, the regional director for critical care at Northwell Health, which owns 23 hospitals in New York. “It’s such a simple thing to do, and we’ve seen remarkable improvement. We can see it for every single patient.”

“Once you see it work, you want to



do it more, and you see it work almost immediately,” added Dr. Kathryn Hibbert, director of the medical ICU at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Patients with coronavirus often die of ARDS, or acute respiratory distress syndrome. The same syndrome also kills patients who have influenza, pneumonia and other diseases.

Seven years ago, French doctors published an article in the New England Journal of Medicine showing that patients with ARDS who were on ventilators had a lower chance of dying if they were placed on their stomachs in the hospital. Ever since, to varying degrees, doctors in the United States have been placing ventilated ARDS patients on their stomachs.

Now they’ve doubled down on this with coronavirus patients, and it’s paying off. When the patient at Long Island Jewish was placed on his stomach, his oxygen saturation rate, a measure of oxygen in the blood, went from 85% to 98%, a huge jump.

The ventilated patients typically stay on their stomachs for about 16 hours a day, going on their backs for the rest of the time so doctors have better access to their front side and can more easily give them the treatments they need.

Critical care specialists say being on the belly seems help because it allows oxygen to more easily get to the lungs. While on the back, the weight of the body in effect squishes some sections of the lungs.

“By putting them on their stomachs, we’re opening up parts of the lung that weren’t open before,” Hibbert said.

There is a downside to placing ventilated coronavirus patients on their stomachs. Ventilated patients require more sedation when they’re on their stomachs, which could mean a longer stay in the ICU.



Firefighters unload a patient from their ambulance on a sarcophagus stretcher outside the Montpellier University Hospital which houses a Covid-19 test center yesterday, during the 29th day of a lockdown in France aimed at curbing the spread of the pandemic.

PHOTO: AFP

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

LATEST UPDATES



UK WAS TOO SLOW TO ACT

Britain was initially too slow to respond to the novel coronavirus outbreak and did not learn quickly enough from other countries, opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer said yesterday. Prime Minister Boris Johnson initially refrained from approving the stringent controls that other

European leaders imposed but then closed down the country when projections showed a quarter of a million people could die in the United Kingdom. So far, more than 12,000 people with COVID-19 have died in British hospitals, though new official data indicates the true death toll could be much larger.

TWO MILLION CASES WORLDWIDE

More than two million cases of the new coronavirus have been officially registered around the world, half of them in Europe, according to a tally compiled by AFP at 1000 GMT yesterday based on official sources. At least 2,000,576 infections, including 126,871 deaths, have been recorded. Europe is the hardest hit continent, with 1,010,858 cases and 85,271 fatalities. The United States, where the virus is spreading most rapidly, registered 609,240 cases, and 26,033 deaths.

AVOID ‘CORONAVIRUS DIVORCE’

Worried about a “coronavirus divorce”? An enterprising Japanese short-term rental firm is marketing its empty apartments as a way for stressed couples to get some time apart during the virus lockdown. “Please consult with us before thinking about ‘coronavirus divorce,’” the Tokyo-based Kasoku urges customers, offering its Airbnb-like fully-furnished units as “temporary shelters” for people to escape the family, whether to work or just get some peace and quiet.

CASH-STRAPPED THAIS SELL JEWELLERY

Thais are flocking to Bangkok’s Chinatown to sell their gold jewellery as the price of the precious metal spikes and the economy tanks due to the coronavirus pandemic. Gold surged to a seven-year high on Tuesday to \$1,731.25 an ounce.

S KOREA HOLDS POLLS

South Korean voters yesterday turned out in force to back President Moon Jae-in’s handling of the coronavirus epidemic, putting on compulsory face masks and gloves to give his Democratic party a parliamentary majority according to exit polls. South Korea was among the first countries with a major virus outbreak to hold a national election since the global pandemic began, and a raft of safety measures were in place around the vote.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

Last month’s pay still due

FROM PAGE 12
a sit-in in front of the factory, some of the workers said.

Fashion Forum Manager Mesbah Uddin said the terminated workers were there because the factory was paying their salaries.

Also in Ashulia, Alpha Clothing Ltd terminated nearly 150 workers in two phases, said Khairul Minto, organising secretary of Garment Sramik Trade Union Kendra.

Alpha’s management asked workers, employed less than a year ago, to submit their factory identity cards before taking last month’s salary and leave.

Only those who submitted their identity cards got paid, grieving workers told The Daily Star.

Hundreds of disgruntled workers from different garment factories in Gazipur blockaded Dhaka-Mymensingh highway demanding arrears and protesting the recent layoffs.

Over 1,200 workers of Zaman Fashions Ltd at Tepirbari took to the streets for what many of them said was unpaid salary for the last three months.

Several thousand workers of Intermax Garments Ltd, Stylecraft Limited and

Shyanoli Garment Limited were also on the streets demanding last month’s pay.

Protests rocked Badda, Uttara and Mirpur in the capital.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association claims that its member factories paid last month’s salary to approximately 19,19,600 of their 24,72,417 workers as of yesterday.

At least 1,186 of 2,274 bgmea member factories have paid the salaries, it said.

“I hope 80 percent of workers will receive the salary by today [April 16]. The banks are helping us,” BGMEA President Rubana Haq said in a WhatsApp audio message.

“By April 20, all workers will receive the salary. Mostly the small and medium garment factories are delaying the payment,” she told The Daily Star in the message.

She added that she had urged factory owners not to terminate any worker.

Meanwhile, reiterating earlier orders from the authorities, the DIFE said only the factories that have work orders from the international retailers and brands and the ones that are making personal protective equipment are allowed to run their units after ensuring adequate safety measures for the workers.