



Coronavirus: 'Worst yet to come' for countries in conflict, says UN chief



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

United Nations | United States

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres yesterday renewed his call for a global ceasefire, urging all parties to conflict to lay down arms and allow war-torn nations to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

"The worst is yet to come," Guterres said, referring to countries beset with fighting like Syria, Libya and Yemen.

"The COVID-19 storm is now coming to all these theatres of conflict."

Guterres said there had been some progress following his March 23 call for peace, but that fighting still rages in a number of countries, hampering the ability to put into place plans to combat the virus.

"The need is urgent," Guterres said at a UN press conference. (Continues on page 2)

Bahrainis complying with stay-at-home orders, Google report says

▶▶ Page 3



02 Indian minister applauds Bahrain's fight to tackle COVID-19

04 Oil price barrels ahead

08 Coronavirus survivors donate plasma

210 fils (includes VAT)



A million and more

Global Coronavirus (Covid-19) cases exceed one million

● New Google data from 131 countries showed extraordinary decline in human movement

Beijing/New York

Global cases of the new coronavirus have shot past 1 million with more than 53,000 fatalities, a Reuters tally showed yesterday, as death tolls kept soaring in the United States and western Europe while the world economy spiralled disastrously.

Just in the previous day, there were 6,095 new deaths - nearly double all fatalities in China, where the COVID-19 disease originated. In a list based on officially-reported data, Italy leads with 13,915 deaths, followed by Spain with 10,935 deaths. But the United States was becoming the new epicentre, with 243,635 cases - by far the most of any nation - and 5,887 deaths.

Outside the West, China's epidemic has stabilised after draconian containment measures and it was planning to mourn its "martyrs" on Saturday with a three-minute silence. The outbreak in badly-hit Iran still raged while it sparred with traditional foe the United States on the geopolitical stage.

With Europe accounting for more than half of cases around the world, France and Britain were also struggling to prop up health services under massive strain.



A man looks at a sign hanging from a foot bridge warning against the spread of COVID-19 in Nairobi, Kenya. - Reuters

Though the official figures were shocking enough, health experts and even some governments acknowledge they do not capture the full spread of the virus. It often goes undetected in people with minor symptoms or none at all.

With airlines largely grounded, businesses closed, layoffs mounting and millions of people at home under lockdowns, the economic fallout was shaping into worse than the 2008 financial crisis.

Rather, comparisons were being drawn with such traumatic periods as World War Two or the 1930s Global Depression.

While prosperous Western nations are reeling, there is concern about potentially far worse impact in nations already struggling with poverty, insecurity and weak health systems.

In Iraq, three doctors involved in the testing, a health ministry official and a senior political of-

COVID-19

Tolls on April 3 at 1100 GMT

Countries and territories affected		188	
Total deaths	New deaths	Total cases	New cases
53,693	1,975	1,035,386	35,350

New since April 2 at 1900 GMT

Most affected countries

	Total deaths	New deaths	Cases
ITALY	13,915	—	115,242
SPAIN	10,935	932	117,710
US	6,058	451	245,573
FRANCE*	5,387	—	73,743
CHINA (mainland)	3,322	4	81,620
IRAN	3,294	134	53,183
BRITAIN	2,921	—	33,718
NETHERLANDS	1,339	—	14,697
BELGIUM	1,143	132	16,770
GERMANY	1,017	145	79,696
SWITZERLAND	431	—	18,194
TURKEY	356	—	18,135

Sources: AFP tally from official data *Incomplete data © AFP

New findings

Coronavirus may spread through normal breathing: US scientists

Washington

The new coronavirus might spread through the air via normal breathing and speaking, a top US scientist said yesterday as the government was poised to recommend the use of face masks for everyone.

Anthony Fauci, head of infectious diseases at the National Institutes of Health, told Fox News the guidance on masks would be changed "because of some recent information that the virus can actually be spread even when people just speak, as opposed to coughing and sneezing."

As it stands, the official advice is that only sick people need to cover their faces, as well as those caring for them at home.

Fauci's comments come after the National Academy of



Until now, US health agencies have said that the primary pathway of transmission is respiratory droplets. - AFP

Sciences (NAS) sent a letter to the White House on April 1 that summarised recent research on the subject.

It said that though the research isn't yet conclusive, "the

results of available studies are consistent with aerosolisation of virus from normal breathing."

Until now, US health agencies have said that the primary pathway of transmission is

respiratory droplets, about one millimetre in diameter, expelled by sick people when they sneeze or cough.

These quickly fall to the ground around a meter away.

But if the virus can be suspended in the ultrafine mist we expel when we exhale, in other words an aerosol, it becomes much harder to prevent its spread, which in turn is an argument in favour of everyone covering their faces.

The aerosol debate

A recent NIH funded study published in the New England Journal of Medicine found that the SARS-CoV-2 virus could become an aerosol and remain airborne for up to three hours.

This triggered a debate even as critics said the findings were overblown because the team behind the study used a medi-

cal device called a nebulizer to deliberately create a viral mist and argued this would not occur naturally.

The NAS letter pointed to preliminary research by the University of Nebraska Medical Center that found the genetic code of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, its RNA, were found in hard to reach areas of patients' isolation rooms.

The NAS scientists also pointed to two other studies -- both not yet peer reviewed -- from Hong Kong and from mainland China.

The Hong Kong researchers collected viral samples from patients with the coronavirus and other viral respiratory illnesses, and gave some of the patients face masks.

The masks reduced the detection of both droplets and aerosols for coronavirus patients.

(Continues on page 2)

New York makes plea for help

New York suffered its deadliest single day from the novel coronavirus, with 562 additional deaths across the state for a total of 2,935 fatalities, Governor Andrew Cuomo said yesterday.

Cuomo warned that people were going to die in the near term due to a lack of ventilators of hospital beds and called for resources from across the United States to be deployed to New York to help it deal with the growing crisis in the state.

ficial said there were thousands of cases of COVID-19, many times more than publicly reported.

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro further played down the pandemic, saying it is "not all it's being made out to be" and denying that any hospital had reached full capacity. But with his closest aides refusing to support his plan to relax coronavirus rules to keep the economy going, according to sources with knowledge of the dispute, Bolsonaro was looking increasingly isolated.

Though there was little cause for cheer anywhere, one positive offshoot of the crisis has been a massive drop in pollution. One expert said carbon dioxide emissions could fall this year by the largest amount since World War Two. (See pages 3, 8, 9)