

Keep an eye on 'anywhere and everywhere' COVID-19

“If it's anywhere, it's everywhere and people travelling have to understand that. This virus is widespread and people have to take that very, very seriously”
MARGARET HARRIS
 WHO SPOKESWOMAN



Passengers wearing protective face masks sit in a plane at Sharm el-Sheikh International Airport in Egypt

Reuters | Geneva

The World Health Organisation yesterday urged travellers to wear masks on planes and keep themselves informed as COVID-19 cases surge again in some countries, prompting new restrictions in places like Australia.

Spokeswoman Margaret Harris urged people not to be caught off-guard by resurgent local epidemics and quarantine measures, saying: "If it's anywhere, it's everywhere and people travelling have to understand that."

"This virus is widespread and people have to take that very, very seriously."

The WHO said last month that it would update its travel guidelines ahead of the northern hemisphere summer holidays but they have not yet been released.

In the meantime, travellers should "remember things will change, or may well change", Harris said at a Geneva briefing. "We're seeing a lot of upticks,

YOU KNOW WHAT

WHO acknowledges airborne spread of COVID-19

The World Health Organisation yesterday acknowledged "emerging evidence" of the airborne spread of the novel coronavirus, after a group of scientists urged the global body to update its guidance on how the respiratory disease is spread.

WHO expert Benedetta Allegranzi said the organisation believed it had "been open to the evidence on modes of transmission" of the new virus.

a lot of changes in different countries, countries that had successfully shut down their first transmission are seeing second upticks," she added, mentioning Australia and Hong Kong.

Lockdown measures were reimposed in Australia's second biggest city on Tuesday, confining Melbourne residents to their homes unless undertaking essential business, as officials scramble to contain a coronavirus outbreak.

The WHO's previous guid-

ance for travellers has included common-sense advice applicable to other settings such as social distancing, washing your hands and avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Harris also proposed on Tuesday wearing a mask on planes, a measure which is already a requirement of many airlines.

"If you are flying, there is no way you can social distance in a plane, so you will need to take other precautions including using a face covering," she said.

Bolsonaro tests positive for coronavirus



Reuters | Sao Paulo

Brazil President Jair Bolsonaro has tested positive for the novel coronavirus, he said in a television interview yesterday.

World Health Organisation's regional director Carissa Etienne during a meeting with Pan American Health Organization directors wished Bolsonaro a speedy recovery from his positive test result for COVID-19.

"The message is that this virus is unpredictable and does not respect race, class or people in power, despite security around any president," said PAHO director for communicable diseases Marcos Espinal.

For Brazil, the infection of its president should reinforce the need to strengthen implementations of social distancing recommendations and the use of masks to mitigate the spread of coronavirus, he said.

Etienne said Latin America and the Caribbean now account for 50 per cent of the COVID-19 cases in the Americas.

Some of Latin America's most persistent problems have contributed to the scale of the pandemic in the region, Etienne said: inequality, political division and health systems that have been weakened by years of under-investment.

News in brief

◆ The US government has awarded Novavax Inc \$1.6 billion to cover testing and manufacturing of a potential vaccine for the novel coronavirus in the United States, with the aim of delivering 100 million doses by January.



The award announced by the US Department of Health and Human Services is the biggest yet from "Operation Warp Speed," the White House initiative aimed at accelerating access to vaccines and treatments to fight COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused by the coronavirus.

US awards Novavax \$1.6 billion for coronavirus vaccine

◆ India's Sovereign Pharma said it has dispatched the first batch of generic remdesivir for drugmaker Cipla Ltd, as the country recorded more than 22,000 new coronavirus cases yesterday. At current capacity, Sovereign can supply 50,000 to 95,000 vials per month of the injectable, the company said in an emailed statement on Tuesday. It did not disclose how many vials are there in the batch for Cipla.

India's dispatches first batch of remdesivir to Cipla

◆ British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was accused yesterday of trying to rewrite history for appearing to blame the deadly spread of coronavirus in care homes on the institutions themselves.

The government initially said it did not believe care homes were at particular risk, and has been slow to roll out testing of both staff and patients. In an interview on Monday, Johnson said: "We discovered too many care homes didn't really follow the procedures in the way that they could have."

Outrage at UK PM comments on virus-hit care homes

◆ Beijing yesterday reported zero new coronavirus cases for the first time since the emergence of a cluster in the Chinese capital in June that prompted fears of a domestic second wave. A total of 335 people have been infected since a cluster emerged at the city's massive Xinfadi wholesale market in early June.

◆ Australia warned its citizens yesterday they could face "arbitrary detention" if they travel to China. "Authorities have detained foreigners because they're 'endangering national security'. Australians may also be at risk of arbitrary detention," the latest warning said.

◆ A Vietnamese man accused of "defaming" the country's leaders for broadcasting his pro-democracy views on Facebook was jailed for eight years on Tuesday after a lightning-quick trial denounced by rights groups. Nguyen Quoc Duc Vuong's arrest follows the detention of a number of high-profile journalists and activists in recent months ahead of the regime's five-yearly party congress, slated for next January.

◆ Nearly 11 million stressed-out Chinese students began taking the country's gruelling annual college entrance exam on Tuesday following a month-long coronavirus delay, with inspectors this year checking both for cheaters and fevers. The two-day test -- known in Chinese as the "gaokao" -- is an annual moment of great anxiety for students and parents who dream of sending their children to university, but the coronavirus added another layer of pressure by closing schools for months.

US makes it official

Begins withdrawal from World Health Organisation

USA Today | Washington

The United States has officially begun its withdrawal from the World Health Organisation, amid a continuing spike in the COVID-19 cases in many states across the US.

The US Congress received formal notification of the decision yesterday, more than a month after President Donald Trump announced his intention to end the US relationship with the WHO and blasted the multilateral institution as a tool of China.

The White House said the withdrawal would take effect on July 6, 2021.

Democrats said the decision was irresponsible and ill-considered, noting it comes as the pandemic is raging and international cooperation is vital to confront the crisis.

"This won't protect American lives or interests -- it leaves Americans sick & America alone," Sen. Bob Menendez, the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Affairs Commit-



The US Congress received formal notification of the decision yesterday from President Donald Trump

tee, tweeted after receiving the White House's notification. "To call Trump's response to COVID chaotic & incoherent doesn't do it justice."

Tarik Jasarevic, a spokesman for the WHO, said the organisation had received reports of the United States' formal notification. "We have no further information on this at this stage," he said.

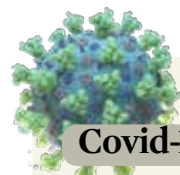
The formal withdrawal comes as the United States nears 3 million reported coronavirus cases and more than 130,000 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University data. Globally, there have been 11.6 million cases and almost 540,000 deaths.

Trump and his advisers have blasted the WHO for failing to

press China to be more transparent about the scope and severity of the COVID-19 outbreak, which began in Wuhan, China.

Trump has said that China "has total control" over the WHO, even though it contributes far less than the US to the health organisation's budget. The US has contributed approximately \$450 million dollars a year.

Menendez and other Senate Democrats have introduced legislation to reverse the decision and restore US funding to the WHO. It's unclear how far that could get in the GOP-controlled chamber, although some Republicans have also expressed concern with Trump's decision.



Global

Covid-19 Cases:

11,867,906

Deaths

544,141

Recovered:

6,826,936

New cases

+135,325

New deaths

+4,001

Middle East

Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	New deaths	Total Deaths
1 USA	3,061,033	+770	133,749
2 Brazil	1,643,539	+537	66,093
3 India	742,016	+479	20,653
4 Russia	694,230	+198	10,494
5 Peru	305,703	+180	10,952
6 Chile	301,019	+50	6,434
7 Spain	298,869	+4	28,392
8 UK	286,349	+155	44,391
9 Mexico	261,750	+480	31,119
10 Iran	245,688	+200	11,931
11 Italy	241,956	+30	34,899
12 Pakistan	234,509	+77	4,839
13 Saudi Arabia	217,108	+49	2,017
14 Turkey	207,897	+19	5,260

Figures as of closing

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases	Serious, Critical	Tot cases/1m pop
Egypt	76,222		3,422		21,238	51,562	41	745
Saudi Arabia	217,108	+3,392	2,017	+49	154,839	60,252	2,268	6,235
UAE	52,600	+532	326	+2	41,714	10,560	1	5,317
Kuwait	51,245	+601	377	+4	41,515	9,353	159	11,997
Oman	48,997	+1,262	224	+6	31,000	17,773	127	9,593
Qatar	100,945	+600	134	+1	94,903	5,908	154	35,952