

Nine killed, one missing in Indonesia bridge collapse



People search for the missing after a footbridge collapsed killing nine on Indonesia's Sumatra island

Bengkulu | Indonesia

Nine people drowned and another was missing after a bridge collapsed on Indonesia's Sumatra island, the disaster agency said yesterday.

Some 30 people, mostly students, were on the bridge Sunday afternoon in the town of Kaur when the newly built crossing suddenly collapsed, hurtling some teens into the water below while others clutched on to the railing.

The water level in the river below the bridge was higher than usual with strong currents after torrential downpours pounded the Bengkulu region at the southern end of Sumatra.

"Some managed to save themselves but 10 others could not fight against the current

and drowned, they were swept away" Ujang Syafiri, head of the disaster mitigation agency, told AFP, adding that the bridge may have collapsed due to excessive weight.

A search and rescue team scoured a 20-kilometre radius to find a teenager who is still missing, he said.

Another victim was rescued after falling into the river but is seriously injured and has been taken to hospital.

Parts of the Southeast Asian archipelago have received torrential downpours as the rainy season kicks into high gear.

In and around the capital Jakarta, some 67 people were killed this month as record rains triggered flooding and landslides.

Lax construction standards have raised widespread concerns about building and construction safety in Indonesia.

France agrees to take back 43 illegal waste containers from Malaysia

Reuters | Paris

Malaysia has shipped 43 illegal plastic waste containers back to France as part of a crackdown on illegal trafficking of waste, the two governments said in a joint statement yesterday.

The southeast Asian nation last year became the world's

main destination for plastic waste after a Chinese ban on imports of plastic waste disrupted the flow of more than 7 million tonnes of trash annually. The company responsible for shipping the containers has been identified and fined 192,000 euros (\$212,793.60), the statement added.

SARS-like virus spreads in China

● Total number of people diagnosed with the virus rose to 218

● Shanghai confirmed its first case yesterday

● South Korea also reported its first case

● Scientists warned that the number of cases in Wuhan was likely to be closer to 1,700

AFP | Beijing

A SARS-like virus has killed a third person, spread around China and reached another Asian country, authorities said yesterday, fueling fears of a major outbreak as millions begin travelling for the Lunar New Year in humanity's biggest migration.

The new coronavirus strain, first discovered in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, has caused alarm because of its connection to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which killed nearly 650 people across mainland China and Hong Kong in 2002-2003.

Wuhan has 11 million inhabitants and serves as a major transport hub, including during the annual Lunar New Year holiday which begins later this week and sees hundreds of millions of Chinese people travel across the country to visit family.

Weighing in on the matter for the first time, Chinese President Xi Jinping said yesterday that safeguarding people's lives should be given "top priority" and that the spread of the epidemic "should be resolutely contained", according to state broadcaster CCTV.

Xi said it was necessary to "release information on the ep-

China's pneumonia-stricken Wuhan

Third person confirmed dead as nearly 140 new cases announced on Jan 20



What we know so far:

Three people have died as of Jan 20 from respiratory illness, believed caused by new virus from the same family as SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome).
Nearly 140 new cases announced, most of them in Wuhan.
Two cases reported in Beijing, one in Shenzhen.

No human-to-human transmission confirmed so far, but Wuhan health officials say possibility "cannot be excluded".

A total of 218 people have now been diagnosed with the virus.
Two cases detected in Thailand, one in Japan. All patients had visited Wuhan.

Chinese scientists say they believe pathogen is previously unknown type of coronavirus.
Hong Kong scientists say genetic sequencing of virus indicated 80% similar to SARS found in bats, but it's too soon to conclude it as a SARS strain.

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No human-to-human transmission has been confirmed so far, but authorities have previously said the possibility 'cannot be excluded'

idemic in a timely manner and deepen international cooperation," and ensure people have a "stable and peaceful Spring Festival", the broadcaster said.

The total number of people diagnosed with the virus rose to 218, as Shanghai confirmed its first case yesterday and 136 new cases were found over the weekend in Wuhan, 15 in southern Guangdong province and five in Beijing, according to CCTV.

A third person died in Wuhan, the local health commission said.

According to Shanghai's health commission, its first case -- a 56-year-old woman who was hospitalised last Wednesday -- also came from Wuhan.

The patient's vital signs are stable and two of her close contacts are under medical observation, it said through its official Twitter-like Weibo account.

South Korea yesterday also reported its first case -- a 35-year-old woman who flew in from Wuhan. Thailand and Japan have previously confirmed a total of three cases -- all of whom had visited the Chinese city.



A seafood market is believed to be the centre of the outbreak in the city, but health officials have reported that some patients had no history of contact with the facility

No human-to-human transmission has been confirmed so far, but authorities have not ruled out the possibility.

There are also six suspected cases in Shanghai and four provinces and regions in the east, south and southwest of the country.

"Experts believe that the current epidemic situation can still be controlled," the National Health Commission said Sunday.

Detection measures

A seafood market is believed to be the centre of the outbreak in Wuhan, but health officials



have reported that some patients had no history of contact with the facility.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said on Twitter Monday that "an animal source seems the most likely primary source" with "some limited human-to-human transmission occurring between close contacts".

Scientists with the MRC Centre for Global Infectious Disease Analysis at Imperial College in London warned in a paper published Friday that the number of cases in Wuhan was likely to be closer to 1,700, much higher than the official figure.

Indian 'Rapunzel' remains a cut above with longest teen hair

Ahmedabad | India

A 17-year-old Indian girl has retained her crown as the teen with the world's longest hair more than a decade after she stopping getting her tresses cut following a bad experience at a salon.

Nilanshi Patel, from the small town of Modasa in Gujarat state, remains a cut above the rest according to the Guinness World Records having bettered her record of 170.5 centimetres (5.59 feet) set in December 2018 with a new length of 190 centimetres.

Her proud father said his only child's locks had turned her from a local celebrity into an international one.

Nicknamed "Rapunzel" by her friends and schoolmates after the long, flowing hair of the princess in the Brothers Grimm fairytale, Patel said she has not visited a hairdresser for 11 years after a hair-raising ordeal.

"At six, I had a very bad experience at a local salon," she said.

"Since then I have been apprehensive about cutting my hair. My parents accepted my wishes and now my locks have become my lucky charm."

Patel has to wear high-heeled shoes if she does not want her hair to touch the ground.

Apart from that, Patel said she cares for her hair like every other teenager -- but with help from her mother. "I do what every teenager does. Wash the hair every week and oil it once or twice a week," the aspiring engineer said, adding that she dries it by sitting in the sun or with a hairdryer.

"Mostly I keep a braid, but while playing or for some occasions, I tie the hair into a bun. The only time I have trouble is while swimming."



Nearly 80 'highly dangerous' inmates escape Paraguay prison

Asuncion

Nearly 100 prisoners, many of them members of a big Brazilian drug and arms-trafficking gang and described as "highly dangerous," escaped Sunday from a Paraguayan prison near the border with Brazil, police said.

The inmates, both Brazilians and Paraguayans, made their getaway through a tunnel they had built from the prison in the border city of Pedro Juan Caballero, police spokeswoman Elena Andrada said.

"Our best men have gone to the border to attempt to recapture the prisoners," she said. The number of escapees totalled 76, including 40 Brazilians and 36 Paraguayans, officials said.

Justice Minister Cecilia Perez issued a sharp condemnation, telling reporters that it must have taken prisoners "several weeks" to build the tunnel, and adding, "It is evident that the staff knew nothing and did nothing."