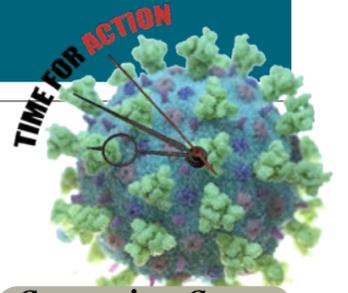


world



India to go under total virus lockdown

AFP | New Delhi

India's 1.3 billion people will go under "total lockdown" for 21 days to combat the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said yesterday.

"From 12 midnight today (1830 GMT Tuesday), the entire country will be in lockdown, total lockdown," Modi said in a national television address to the world's second most-populous nation.

"To save India, to save its every citizen, you, your family... every street, every neighbourhood is being put under lockdown."

India has lagged behind other nations in the number of COVID-19 cases, but there has been a sharp increase in recent days to 519 infections, including 10

“If these 21 days are not managed, the country and your family will go back 21 years... I am not saying this as your prime minister, I am saying it as your fellow citizen, family member.”

NARENDRA MODI, INDIAN PRIME MINISTER



deaths, according to the government.

A raft of lockdown measures has been brought in by individual states -- including sealing bor-

ders and restricting movement to only essential services -- to try and prevent an explosion of cases that could overwhelm the fragile public health system.

Modi warned that Indians had to observe the lockdown if they wanted to stop the spread of the deadly virus.

"This is a curfew... We will

have to pay economic cost of this, but to save every family member, this is the responsibility of everyone -- the biggest priority," the prime minister added.

"If these 21 days are not managed, the country and your family will go back 21 years... I am not saying this as your prime minister, I am saying it as your fellow citizen, family member."

India's government will soon announce a fiscal package to help the economy face the impact of the coronavirus, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said.

Sitharaman relaxed a number of tax compliance rules for individuals and firms and also raised the threshold of triggering insolvency cases to 10 mln rupees from 100,000 rupees currently.

Coronavirus Cases:

401,831

Deaths

17,501

Recovered:

103,820

Active cases

280,510

Closed cases

121,321

Russia has no 'clear picture' of extent of virus outbreak: official

Moscow

Russian authorities do not know the full extent of the coronavirus outbreak across the country and should step up measures to stem the pandemic, a top official said Tuesday.

Russia, which shares a border with China and has a population of 144 million, has officially reported 495 cases of the coronavirus but no confirmed fatalities.

"The problem is that the volume of testing is very low and no one has a clear picture" of the situation in Russia and the world, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin told President Vladimir Putin during a meeting.

"The picture that is unfolding is serious," said Sobyenin, who heads an anti-coronavirus task force at Russia's State Council.

He said the number of people infected with the coronavirus was "significantly" higher than official figures.

Taking the day to discuss the epidemic, Putin later visited Moscow's new infectious diseases clinic, where he donned a hazmat suit and met head doctor Denis Protsenko.

He warned the president that Russia may be headed for the Italian scenario of a spike in heavy cases and fatalities,



Putin visited Moscow's new infectious diseases clinic wearing a hazmat suit

particularly in Moscow.

"It is important to prepare for the 'Italian' scenario. If there is a big spike, and Moscow is headed there, our hospital is ready to transform," he said.

If new cases "suddenly" flatline, doctors will be overjoyed, but "we must still prepare for the worst," he told Putin.

Putin said last week that the coronavirus outbreak is under control in Russia.

The country has gradually tightened restrictions, halting cultural and sports events and closing schools and fitness clubs.

Saudi reports first Covid-19 casualty

AFP | Riyadh

Saudi Arabia yesterday reported its first death from the new coronavirus as the total number of infections spiked to 767, according to the health ministry.

An Afghan resident in the western city of Medina died from the virus, the ministry said, while reporting 205 new infections -- the biggest jump in the kingdom in a single day.

Saudi Arabia, which has reported the highest number of infections in the Gulf, began implementing a nationwide dusk-to-dawn curfew on Monday to limit the spread of the deadly COVID-19.

The Arab world's biggest economy has also closed down cinemas, malls and restaurants, halted flights and suspended the year-round umrah pilgrimage as it steps up efforts to contain the virus.

King Salman warned on Thursday of a "more difficult" fight ahead against the virus, as the kingdom faces the double blow of virus-led shutdowns and crashing oil prices.

Last week, the kingdom unveiled stimulus measures amounting to 120 billion riyals (\$32 billion) to support businesses and said it plans to



An empty road in the Saudi capital Riyadh after authorities imposed a curfew for 21 days to curb the spread of the coronavirus

raise borrowing to 50 percent of GDP.

Similar restrictions and stimulus measures have been reported by other countries in the Gulf, where more than 2,100 coronavirus infections have been reported so far.

Bahrain recorded its third death from the virus on Tuesday, while Oman said it would from March 29 suspend all passenger flights -- except to and from Musandam bordering the United Arab Emirates.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's cabinet on Tuesday said anyone caught intentionally spreading the virus could face up to 10 years in jail, according to state media.

Kuwait -- which has recorded 191 cases so far -- has taken the strictest measures in the Gulf by largely locking down the country to combat the spread of COVID-19.

South Africa's coronavirus cases surge past 500

Johannesburg

South Africa reported more than 150 new coronavirus cases on Tuesday, taking the new tally to 554, the highest in Africa, a day after it ordered a three-week lockdown.

"As of today, there are 554 cases of coronavirus in South Africa," Health Minister Zweli Mkhize, told a news conference.

"For the next week or two we still expect the numbers to go up. This is a disease pattern we cannot predict."

Britain in lockdown

London

Britain was under lockdown Tuesday, its population joining around 1.7 billion people around the globe ordered to stay indoors to curb the "accelerating" spread of the coronavirus. Across Europe, Asia, North America, the Middle East and parts of Africa, governments have told their citizens to remain at home as they grapple with a disease that has claimed thousands of lives -- and shows no signs of slowing.

But in a sign of hope, China's central Hubei province, where the deadly coronavirus first emerged late last year, is to lift travel curbs after two months under lockdown.

The British government, which has faced accusations it dithered over the health crisis and needlessly allowed schools to remain open far longer than European counterparts, came into line on Monday.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson ordered a three-week shutdown of "non-essential" shops and services and banned gatherings of more than two people.

Turks fight coronavirus with secret weapon: eau de cologne



Health Minister Fahrettin Koca urged Turks to use cologne as an alternative hand sanitiser

Istanbul

In Turkey, sprinkling hands with cologne has long been a ritual for a visit to the barber, a meal at a restaurant or even a trip on the bus.

It is seen as a symbol of hospitality, as well as an aid to hygiene, in a country that sets great store by both.

Now Turkish cologne -- found in almost every household, either in the fridge or a closet -- is seeing unprecedented demand as a weapon in the fight against the novel coronavirus.

Many Turks believe cologne, which has a high alcohol content, is effective in keeping hands and faces clean and thus warding off the risk of COVID-19.

Long queues could be seen outside cologne shops in Istanbul's busy spice market, in the historic Eminonu district, in early March before Turkey announced its first confirmed case.

Now shops and pharmacies have put up signs reading "cologne sold out".

People are commonly seen sprinkling cologne into their hands in the middle of the street, while taxi drivers offer doses to their clients.

Middle East

| Country | Total cases | new cases | Total deaths | New Deaths | Total recovered | Active cases | Serious, Critical | Tot cases/1m pop |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Bahrain | 389 | +13 | 3 | +1 | 164 | 212 | 2 | 229 |
| Saudi Arabia | 767 | +205 | 1 | +1 | 28 | 738 | | 22 |
| UAE | 248 | +50 | 2 | | 45 | 201 | 2 | 25 |
| Kuwait | 191 | +2 | | | 39 | 152 | 5 | 45 |
| Oman | 84 | +18 | | | 17 | 67 | | 16 |
| Jordan | 127 | | | | 1 | 126 | | 12 |
| Iraq | 316 | +50 | 27 | +4 | 75 | 214 | | 8 |
| Egypt | 366 | | 19 | | 68 | 279 | | 4 |

Trump says 'not easy' to get face masks

Reuters | Washington

US President Donald Trump yesterday acknowledged the difficulty of procuring crucial healthcare supplies amid the coronavirus pandemic as state and local officials raise alarms about a health-care delivery system in danger of collapse.

In an early morning tweet, Trump said:



"The World market for face masks and ventilators is Crazy. We are helping the states to get equipment, but it is not easy."