

1971

East Pakistan declares its independence from Pakistan to form Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Liberation War begins.

1975

The Biological Weapons Convention comes into force.

1979

Anwar al-Sadat, Menachem Begin and **Jimmy Carter** sign the Egypt–Israel Peace Treaty in Washington, D.C.



1981

Social Democratic Party (UK) is founded as a party.



As of now, we do not know the extent of the economic recession to come, but it is likely to be historically unrivalled since the Industrial Revolution.

will be for the poorest of the world; but we can be sure we are going to find out. From refugees to those living daily with weak health systems, they fear that, when the infection catches them, there will be few places to hide.

What chance, then, of any success for the clear call of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres this week for a worldwide cease-fire? He articulated the fears of those in areas of conflict of the impact of the disease on the vulnerable, the displaced, on women and children. But he also recognized the ability of a common fight against the disease to “open doors” for diplomacy. He is absolutely right to do so. Many politicians know the phrase “a ladder to climb down” when a point of stalemate has been reached, and when a party dare not budge for fear of appearing “weak.”

Nor do we know how bad this

knows that a conflict has become even less understandable than when it started, it is impossible for either side to “win,” or has gone on so long that every avenue to settlement has become discredited, a diplomatic search is mounted for such a ladder to climb down so that progress can be made and face saved.

If you truly want to end a conflict, now is the chance — and the virus is your ladder.

People all over the world will be urging “take it.” In Libya, recover the humanitarian truce. Stop the onslaught in Syria. In Yemen, no one can win on the back of a broken people. Israelis and Palestinians have been brought closer in dealing with the coronavirus. A checkpoint is no deterrent, so they could take the chance to move beyond the Washington announcement to something more inclusive. And perhaps the US and Iran could both take steps, instead of trading unending accusations and claims against one another. If US sanctions are to be eased, it would be essential for some genuine, verified response from Iran to allow progress. Both steps should be taken, as their respective populations fear tomorrow more than each other. The political differences in the region are real, and not to be minimized, but perhaps they could be put to one side as increasing numbers of families grieve, from Texas to Tehran and virtually all points in between.

It's time to heed and act upon the secretary-general's call.

and their Economies



Fiscal policy will have to play a leading role in mitigating the shock, with fiscal positions reverting to medium-term paths consistent with debt sustainability once the crisis has passed. Targeted cash transfers could also be considered to help individuals and households under strain.

regimes, the exchange rate should be allowed act as a shock absorber.

Protecting lives and livelihoods

Importantly, countries in sub-Saharan Africa shouldn't have to 'go it alone'.

Too often, financing limits recourse to supportive policies when major shocks hit. The international community needs to do its utmost to help ease these constraints and ensure that peoples' lives and livelihoods are not destroyed.

While the priority is on protecting life, the IMF is helping where it can, by supporting livelihoods.

The Fund is making \$50 billion available via rapid-disbursing emergency facilities, including \$10 billion on highly concessional terms for low-income countries.

With this, we are accelerating efforts to back countries in the region. So far, we've received requests for emergency financing from close to 20 countries, with requests from another 10 or more countries likely soon.

Our member countries need us more than ever. Discussions between IMF teams and country officials are advancing quickly, and we expect the first wave of this support to be delivered in early April.

For countries facing difficult debt situations, the priority—people's health—is the same. Here, the international community can step up. Immediate debt relief through the Fund's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust can help free up resources for much needed health spending. These countries should also reach out to donors to secure grant and concessional financing.

International response

In the same vein, the Fund is working closely with our partners—the World Bank, World Health Organization, African Development Bank and African Union—to respond to this crisis. The speed and strength of the international community's response will be paramount.

To paraphrase Gabriel Garcia-Marquez: humanity, like armies in the field, advances at the speed of the most vulnerable.

Countries in sub-Saharan Africa can be assured they have the full force, and full speed, of the IMF behind them.



TOP
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TWEETS

01



Iran's confirmed corona cases is now 27,017 with 2,077 deaths. In the last 24 hours there have been 2,206 new cases and 143 deaths. In total 43 doctors and nurses have died from corona.

@thekarami

02



Spoke with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud regarding the #coronavirus and we agreed all countries need to work together to contain the pandemic and stabilize energy markets. Thankful for #SaudiArabia's partnership in the face of the threats posed by #Iran's regime.

@SecPompeo

03



HE Interior Minister: We appreciate the efforts and support of all in activating the initiatives of the national plan, along with the official and civic bodies for their cooperation and national sense to move forward in the implementation of the national plan.

@moi_bahrain

04



We are marking these festivals at a time when our nation is battling the COVID-19 menace. The celebrations will not be like they are usually but they will strengthen our resolve to overcome our circumstances. May we keep working to fight COVID-19 together.

@narendramodi

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)

Letter from China



DAVID CULVER, CNN CORRESPONDENT

It's a bit strange to think how quickly we normalize the abnormal. I would have never thought I'd have a preferred type of face mask. I like the ones that sit securely over my nose and mouth yet simultaneously allow for some air to circulate so I don't feel my own breath clinging to my skin all day; I also prefer the straps that go around my head rather than tug at my ears. For some reason the latter gives me a headache after a few hours. Nor would I have realized the value of an average body temperature reading. Mine was 36.7 C at last check, which was a few hours ago when I reentered my hotel lobby. Too high a reading and it could mean getting denied access to a hotel, shopping mall, restaurant or even a city here in China. And in some cases, it'll get you reported to police. This however is the reality of life as the extreme government lockdown attempts to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus in China.

On January 22nd I reported from Wuhan, the 'epicenter' of the virus outbreak. Already the vast majority of the people there were wearing face masks and starting to limit their exposure outside. At the time we really could not imagine how big this would get.

Other Chinese cities have since followed suit; in Shanghai — a normally bustling metropolis of some 25 million people — it took us half a dozen phone calls to find a sit-down restaurant that was open. Eating out during this “special time”, which is how many locals have referred to life in China

amid this coronavirus outbreak, has been a particularly bizarre and depressing experience.

When we pulled up to the restaurant, we found most of the entries closed and at the only open entrance there was a security guard taking the temperature readings of all the guests. We also had to provide them with our name, ID or passport number, and phone number. You're then strongly encouraged to use hand sanitizer provided in a pump-action bottle.

This “special time” is no longer isolated to China; the global community is now trying to cope with the uncertainties ahead.

As we were being seated, we quickly realized that we were the only ones there. Immediately after placing the menus in front of us, the server provided a further sampling of hand sanitizer. He offered two different types in case we had a preference. We handled the menu with purified hands and sanitized again immediately after paging through the selections.

As our dinner went on, a few more customers arrived. The host deliberately sat them at opposite ends of the restaurant, leaving several empty tables to serve as a safety buffer between the diners. The server explained that their restaurant policy was only to serve three tables at one time, assuming there was even that much demand.

When we finished our meal and asked for the check, the server tried to entice us with ordering dessert. We politely refused. But he insisted on at least bringing us a cake. Within seconds a chocolate heart cake was placed in front of us. As we left the host thanked us repeatedly for coming and apologized for the inconveniences of his city. “This is a ‘special time’,” he told us. “Please wish China well so we can get through this.”

Scenes like this are now commonplace in China, and with the continued spread of the virus internationally, other countries are beginning to adopt similar measures.

What we're seeing is a new normal created around the world where cultural norms are shifting so as to limit or eliminate human-to-human contact, where governments are being tested on how they navigate a crisis that they're still struggling to understand and where businesses are facing mounting levels of economic impact.

This “special time” is no longer isolated to China; the global community is now trying to cope with the uncertainties ahead.