

Former French minister dies of COVID-19



Patrick Devedjian (Courtesy of BFMTV)

DW |

A close adviser of former French President Nicolas Sarkozy and former president of a Parisian administrative district has died from COVID-19, the Haut-de-Seine department announced on Sunday.

Patrick Devedjian was the minister in charge of dealing with French recovery from the 2008 financial crisis. The 75-year-old first publicly announced he was suffering from symptoms of the novel coronavirus on Wednesday.

North Korea fires more missiles

Reuters | Seoul

North Korea fired what appeared to be two short-range ballistic missiles into the ocean off its east coast yesterday, the latest in an unprecedented flurry of launches that South Korea decried as “inappropriate” amid the global coronavirus pandemic.

Two “short-range projectiles” were launched from the coastal Wonsan area, and flew 230 kilometres (143 miles) at a maximum altitude of 30 kilometres (19 miles), South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff reported.

Magnitude 5.8 quake hits Indonesia

Reuters | Jakarta

A magnitude 5.8 earthquake struck Indonesia on Saturday, the European Mediterranean Seismological Centre said, but there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties.

The quake’s epicentre was 105 kilometres (65 miles) south of Palu on the island of Sulawesi, and 40 km (25 miles) below the earth’s surface.

US Coronavirus deaths could reach 200,000, Fauci warns

Reuters

US deaths from coronavirus could reach 200,000 with millions of cases, the government’s top infectious diseases expert warned yesterday as New York, New Orleans and other major cities warned they would soon run out of medical supplies.

Dr Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, estimated in an interview with CNN that the pandemic could cause between 100,000 and 200,000 deaths in the United States.

Since 2010, the flu has killed between 12,000 and 61,000 Americans a year, according to the website of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The 1918-19 flu pandemic killed 675,000 in the United States, according to the CDC.

A shortage of ventilators in several major cities worsened



Dr Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases,

as the US death count crossed 2,100 on Saturday, more than double the level from two days ago. The United States has now recorded more than 123,000 cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus, the most of

any country in the world.

New York City will need hundreds more ventilators in a few days and more masks, gowns and other supplies by April 5, Mayor Bill de Blasio told CNN on Sunday.

New Orleans will run out of ventilators around April 4 and officials in Louisiana still do not know whether they will receive any ventilators from the national stockpile, the governor said.

Louisiana has tried to order 12,000 ventilators from commercial vendors and has received 192, Governor John Bel Edwards said on CBS’ “Face the Nation.”

“We haven’t yet been approved for ventilators out of the national stockpile. I continue to press that case and I hope we will be cut in for a slice of what they have left,” Edwards said. “It is the one thing that really keeps me up at night.”

8 killed as plane reportedly carrying medical supplies crashes in Philippines



The burnt out shell of an aircraft that caught fire at Manila airport late Sunday

CNN | Manila

A Tokyo-bound plane crashed while taking off from Ninoy Aquino International Airport in the Philippines capital city of Manila yesterday, killing all eight on board, airport personnel said.

All passengers on board Lion Air Flight RPC 5880 died after the plane caught fire as it was taking off from the airport, according to Manila’s Interna-

tional Airport Authority.

An American and Canadian were on board the flight, according to the flight’s passenger manifest.

The other six on board were Filipino, according to the manifest.

The passengers included medical personnel, according to Red Cross spokesman Richard Gordon.

The plane was reportedly carrying medical supplies, the Philippines News Agency said, adding that the plane caught



RP-C5880 (Courtesy of samchui)

fire on the runway.

The crashed aircraft, is an Israel Aircraft Industries IAI-1124A Westwind model. It was equipped with two General Electric GE-CJ610 engines, a report said.

Covid-Worried German State Finance Minister Dies

IANs, DW | Berlin

German provincial Finance minister, who was reportedly worried about the financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic, has been found dead, having allegedly committed suicide, reports said yesterday.

The mutilated body of Thomas Schafer, the Finance Minister of Hesse, where the country’s financial centre Frankfurt is, was found on a high-speed train line in the town of Hochheim, police said, local media reported.

Police said that it seemed to be a suicide case and investigations were on.



German state finance minister Thomas Schäfer File Photo, Image credit: IANs/Patricka

The body was found by some passers-by, who informed paramedics, but they were unable to

identify the remains due to the extensive injuries.

Schafer, 54, left a note about the reasons for killing himself, a German daily said, citing sources close to the investigation.

According to local media in Hesse, Schafer regularly appeared in public in recent days, for example, to inform the public about financial assistance during the coronavirus crisis.

Schäfer had been widely expected to succeed state premier, Volker Bouffier, if he decided not to stand for re-election in 2023.

In a statement, Bouffier said that the state’s leadership has

received the news with “sadness and disbelief.”

Bouffier also said that Schäfer had been living under considerable worry and stress because of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

“His main concern was whether he could manage to fulfill the huge expectations of the population, especially in terms of financial aid,” Bouffier said on Sunday. “For him, there was clearly no way out. He was disappointed and so he had to leave us. That has shocked us, has shocked me.”

“Our sincere condolences go to his closest relatives,” he added.

Latest developments

President Donald Trump said that he would issue a travel warning for the hard-hit New York area to limit the spread of the coronavirus, backing off from an earlier suggestion that he might try to cut off the region entirely.

Detroit auto show canceled due to coronavirus

The World Health Organization (WHO) is closely following the development of the coronavirus in Taiwan and is learning lessons from how they are fighting it, the body said yesterday, after complaints from Taiwan it was being intentionally ignored.

Britain has placed an order for 10,000 ventilators to be made by a consortium of companies including Ford (F.N), Airbus (AIR.PA) and Rolls-Royce (RR.L) as part of efforts to fight the coronavirus.

How the European Union responds to the coronavirus outbreak will determine its future credibility, a French minister said yesterday, after the bloc failed to agree last week on measures to cushion the economic blow from the pandemic.

Ireland’s government is to roll out a voluntary phone-tracking app to alert users if someone they have been in contact with develops COVID-19, its health service said on Sunday, two weeks before the pandemic is expected to peak in the country.

Uruguay confirms first coronavirus death, cases hit 303

South African police fired rubber bullets towards hundreds of shoppers queuing outside a supermarket in Johannesburg as authorities battled to keep people at home in a bid to halt the spread of the coronavirus.



Confronts coronavirus head-on



Chennai policeman Rajesh Babu has found a creative way to get people to take precautions against the COVID-19 outbreak: a helmet made to make people think of the coronavirus. India has been under a countrywide lockdown from Wednesday, but the authorities are struggling to keep people in their homes.

The British government admitted yesterday that the coronavirus lockdown could last a “significant” time as a leading expert warned it could be in place until June. “I can’t make an accurate prediction but everyone I think does have to prepare for a significant period when these measures are still in place,” cabinet minister Michael Gove told the BBC.

Canadian premier Justin Trudeau’s wife Sophie Gregoire-Trudeau has recovered from the novel coronavirus, she said Saturday. “I am feeling so much better and have received the all clear from my physician and Ottawa Public Health,” she wrote on her Facebook page. “From the bottom of my heart, I want to say thank you to everyone who reached out to me with their well wishes.” She had tested positive for the virus on March 12 after returning from Britain, with her husband subsequently going into self-quarantine as a precautionary measure.



A federal court in Rio de Janeiro on Saturday banned the government from disseminating propaganda against confinement measures aimed at controlling the coronavirus pandemic. On Thursday night, President Jair Bolsonaro shared a video on Facebook showing a caravan of vehicles celebrating the reopening of businesses and schools in the southern state of Santa Catarina.

Hundreds of cruise ship passengers were due to board flights for Germany on Sunday, after spending days stranded at sea off the West Australian coast in a stand-off with authorities.

Dozens of prisoners broke furniture and smashed windows during a riot in a Thai jail on Sunday sparked by fears of a coronavirus outbreak in the facility. During the violence some convicts escaped from the Buriram prison where 2,000 are held, the justice ministry said. Seven have been arrested.



France staged yesterday its largest evacuation of coronavirus patients to date from hospitals in the hard-hit east, increasing efforts to free up intensive care units as officials brace for even more serious cases in the coming days. Two specially modified TGV high-speed trains carried 36 patients from Mulhouse and Nancy toward hospitals along France’s western coast, where the outbreak has been limited so far.



Hand-washing truck



An NGO in Costa Rica transformed a van into a hand washing station, as part of an effort in conjunction with the local government to limit the spread of COVID-19 and promote sanitary measures.