

Australia's infection rate shows slowdown

Jonathan Barrett
and Melanie Burton

Reuters/Sydney/Melbourne, Australia
Australia reported a sustained fall in the rate of new coronavirus infections on Tuesday, but officials urged people not to become complacent and stressed the need for further strict social distancing policies.

To ensure compliance, state authorities enacted sweeping powers to impose hefty fines and potential jail terms for anybody breaching rules that include a ban on public meetings of more than just two people.

Health Minister Greg Hunt reported there were about 4,400 coronavirus cases nationally, with the rate of growth in new infections slowing from 25 to 30 percent a week ago to an average of 9 percent over the past three days.

Of those, 50 people were in intensive care and 20 were on ventilators, Hunt said. The death toll stood at 19.

Based on the completion of more than 230,000 tests, the death rate for Australian cases was below 1 percent, significantly under the 10 percent being reported by some other countries and suggesting "early promising signs of the curve flattening," Hunt said.

"By having what we believe is the broadest and widest testing program in the world [...] at this stage our numbers indicate that we are at the global forefront, we have a good picture of where we're at," Hunt said in a televised media conference.

"In these most difficult times, with these most difficult of measures, that none of us had ever dreamt we would ever be involved in, you have risen to the occasion," he said. "To those Australians who are at home, to those Australians who are isolating or in quarantine, I want to say thank you."

Still, Hunt stressed that it was too early for Australians to breathe a sigh of relief and the new social distancing measures were crucial.

State officials had earlier warned that the slowing infection

rate might have more to do with fluctuations in testing numbers, given there was less access to doctors over the weekend.

"What we need to consider is the community-to-community transmission that we might not even know about," New South Wales (NSW) state Premier Gladys Berejiklian said in Sydney.

Public health orders enacted on Tuesday vary from state to state but generally include penalties of some kind for people flouting rules that include restricting public gatherings to just two people and the closure of outside gyms and parks.

People will still be able to leave their homes for valid reasons such as to visit a doctor, buy food and exercise while adhering to the social distancing rules.

NSW, the country's most populous state, is responsible for a little under half of the national infections and most of the death toll of 19. It introduced fines of up to A\$11,000 (US\$6,779) in NSW and the potential of a six-month prison term for anybody found breaching the rules.

In Western Australia state, people who ignore self-isolating orders could be fitted with an electronic tracking device.

Authorities said on Tuesday they wanted to increase testing, especially in places of COVID-19 clusters such as Sydney's Bondi area, which drew attention earlier this month after people ignored social distancing rules and flocked to the beach.

Like all affected countries, Australia's financial and jobs markets have been roiled by COVID-19, prompting the government to unveil several stimulus packages.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said in a tweet on Tuesday that 113,000 businesses had registered interest in a new A\$130 billion six-month wage subsidy.

The "job keeper" allowance brought the country's coronavirus-related stimulus so far to A\$320 billion, or about 15 percent of Australia's gross domestic product, as economists forecast its first recession in almost three decades.

Global lockdown tightens as virus deaths mount

United States death toll passes 3,000

Mariette Le Roux
and Peter Hutchison

Agence France-Presse/Paris/New York, United States

Lockdowns aimed at halting the march of the coronavirus pandemic have extended worldwide as the United States outbreak continued to accelerate with the death toll there passing 3,000.

Despite slivers of hope in stricken Italy, tough measures that have confined two-fifths of the globe's population to their homes are being broadened.

Moscow and Lagos joined the roll call of cities around the world with empty streets, while Virginia and Maryland became the latest US states to announce stay-at-home orders, followed quickly by Washington, DC.

A US military medical ship steamed into New York, where it will relieve pressure on the city's badly stretched health system. A field hospital set up in Central Park was due to go online later Tuesday.

The scale and speed of the US pandemic continued to expand, with the death toll topping 3,000 out of 163,000 known infections — the highest case count for any single country.

US President Donald Trump sought to reassure Americans that authorities were ramping up distribution of desperately needed equipment like ventilators and personal protective gear.

But he also offered a stark warning, saying "challenging times are ahead for the next 30 days" as he acknowledged a potential nationwide stay-at-home order.

"We're sort of putting it all on the line," Trump said, likening the efforts against coronavirus to a "war."

The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases around the world rose above 784,000, with 413,000 of those in Europe, which also has the lion's share of the deaths, according to an AFP tally.

World leaders — several of whom have been stricken or forced into isolation — are still grappling for ways to deal with a crisis that is generating economic and social shockwaves unseen since World War II.



Reuters/Jeenah Moon

Small break: A healthcare worker sits on a bench near Central park in the Manhattan borough of New York City, United States, on Monday.

Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed "closer cooperation" and addressed plunging oil prices in a Monday call, the Kremlin said.

Putin's government was getting to grips with its own outbreak, with the Russian strongman urging residents of Moscow to respect a lockdown that has closed all nonessential shops, and left Red Square deserted.

Anna, a 36-year-old web designer, said the lockdown would be hard for her and her five-year-old daughter. "But I don't want Arina to get sick," she told AFP on her way to buy bread. "So of course we will observe the quarantine."

After weeks of a national lockdown in Italy, signs were emerging that drastic action could be slowing the spread of the disease.

Even though the country's death toll grew by 812 in 24 hours to 11,591, the number of infec-

tions climbed just 4.1 percent.

"The data are better but our work continues," said Giulio Gallera, the chief medical officer of Lombardy, Italy's worst-hit region.

Spain announced another 812 virus deaths in 24 hours, taking it past China, where the disease first emerged in December.

Even with the US health system stretched, Trump said he was ordering some excess medical equipment be sent to Italy, France and Spain.

The lockdowns are causing hardship across the world but particularly in impoverished cities in Africa and Asia.

Africa's biggest city, Lagos, joined the global stay-at-home from Monday, with Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari ordering a two-week lockdown for its 20 million people. The measures also apply to the capital Abuja.

"Two weeks is too long. I don't

know how we will cope," said student Abdul Rahim, 25, as he helped his sister sell food from a market stall.

Impoverished Zimbabwe also began enforcing a three-week lockdown.

"They need to be fed, but there is nothing to eat," vegetable vendor Irene Ruwisi said in the township of Mbare, pointing at her four grandchildren. "How do they expect us to survive?"

The shutdown has already put millions out of work and forced governments to rush through huge stimulus plans.

Experts in Germany, Europe's economic powerhouse, said the virus would shrink output there this year by up to 5.4 percent.

The World Bank warned the economic fallout from the pandemic could cause Chinese growth to shudder to a halt, and thrust millions of East Asians into poverty.



Reuters/Loren Elliott

No entry with virus: A sign with instructions about the coronavirus is set up following the implementation of stricter physical-distancing and self-isolation rules to limit the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Sydney, Australia, on Tuesday.

Saudi-led coalition air strikes hit Yemen capital

Agence France-Presse

Riyadh

The Saudi-led military coalition on Monday carried out multiple air strikes on Yemen's rebel-held capital Sanaa in retaliation for missile strikes on Riyadh.

Residents in Sanaa reported multiple explosions after the bombing raids began, in a new escalation despite United Nations calls for a cease-fire to protect Yemeni civilians from the coronavirus pandemic.

The military operation targeted the "storage, assembly and installation sites" of ballistic missiles and drones across territory held by the Huthi rebels, the coalition said in a statement released by the official Saudi Press

Agency.

The Huthi-run Al-Masirah television reported at least 19 air strikes on a number of targets in Sanaa, including military bases and a military academy.

The operation comes after Saudi air defenses intercepted Huthi ballistic missiles over Riyadh and the border city of Jizan late Saturday.

The attacks left two civilians wounded in Riyadh, which is under a 15-hour per day curfew to limit the spread of coronavirus, according to Saudi state media.

It was the first major assault on Saudi Arabia since the Huthi rebels offered last September to halt attacks on the kingdom after devastating twin strikes on Saudi oil installations.

Fighting has also escalated be-

tween the Huthis and Riyadh-backed Yemeni troops around the strategic northern districts of Al-Jawf and Marib.

The rebels stormed a key governmental military camp in Al-Jawf after heavy clashes on Monday, according to Yemeni military sources.

The escalation comes despite a show of support on Thursday by all of Yemen's warring parties for a UN call for a ceasefire as the Arab world's poorest country remains vulnerable to the coronavirus pandemic.

Saudi Arabia, the Yemeni government and the Huthi rebels had all welcomed an appeal from UN Secretary-General António Guterres for an "immediate global cease-fire" to help avert disas-

ter for vulnerable people in conflict zones.

On Sunday, UN special envoy Martin Griffiths reiterated the call for an immediate cessation of hostilities to help avert the "potentially disastrous consequences" of the coronavirus outbreak.

Yemen's broken healthcare system has so far recorded no case of the COVID-19 illness, but aid groups have warned that when it does hit, the impact will be catastrophic.

The country is already gripped by what the UN calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Saudi Arabia is also scrambling to limit the spread of the disease at home. The kingdom's health ministry has reported 1,453 coronavirus infections and eight deaths from the illness so far.

Coronavirus epidemic 'far from over' in Asia: WHO official

Reuters

Beijing

The coronavirus epidemic is "far from over" in the Asia-Pacific region, and current measures to curb the spread of the virus are buying time for countries to prepare for large-scale community transmissions, a World Health Organization official said on Tuesday.

Even with all the measures, the risk of transmission in the region will not go away as long as the pandemic continues, said Takeshi Kasai, WHO regional director for the Western Pacific.

The new coronavirus first surfaced in central China in late 2019. Infections have now exceeded 770,000 cases worldwide, with the United States, Italy and Spain overtaking mainland China in confirmed cases.

"Let me be clear. The epidemic is far from over in Asia and the Pacific. This is going to be a long-term battle and we cannot let down our guard," Kasai told a virtual media briefing.

"We need every country to keep preparing for large-scale community transmission."

Countries with limited resources are a priority, such as Pacific Island nations, he said, as



AFP/Mohd Rasfan

All out: A member of the Hazardous Materials Unit sprays disinfectant in a residential area of Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday during the Movement Control Order, limiting the activities of people in Malaysia as a preventive measure against the spread of the novel coronavirus.

they have to ship samples to other countries for diagnoses, and transportation restrictions are making that more difficult.

Kasai warned that for countries that are seeing a tapering off of cases, they should not let down their guard, or the virus may come

surging back.

The WHO does not expect any country to be safe, as the coronavirus will eventually get everywhere, said WHO technical advisor Matthew Griffith.

"Whereas countries and areas in this region have shown how to flat-

ten the curve, outbreaks continue to pop up in new places and importation remains a concern," Griffith said at the briefing, citing cases in Singapore and South Korea from people who traveled abroad.

The focus of the epidemic is now on Europe, but that will likely shift to other regions, Griffith said.

Meanwhile, Myanmar reported its first coronavirus death on Tuesday, a 69-year-old man who also had cancer and died in a hospital in the commercial capital of Yangon, a government spokeswoman said.

He had sought medical treatment in Australia and stopped in Singapore on his way home, according to the health ministry.

"The patient passed away at 7:25 a.m.," said Khin Khin Gyi, a spokeswoman for the country's Health Ministry.

Myanmar has confirmed 14 cases of the virus, mostly in people who have traveled overseas.

But the ministry on Sunday warned the country was at very high risk of a "major outbreak" after tens of thousands of migrants working in neighboring Thailand rushed home before the border closed.

The country has a weak healthcare system after decades of neglect under the former ruling military junta.

CIMB NIAGA

AMENDMENT THE INVITATION OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SHAREHOLDERS ("Meeting") PT BANK CIMB NIAGA Tbk ("Company")

Referring to the Meeting Invitation of the Company dated 11 March 2020 ("Meeting Invitation") and Revision of Meeting Invitation of the Company dated 13 March 2020 ("Revision of Meeting Invitation"), both have been published in the same newspaper, Indonesia Stock Exchange's website and Company's website, as well as with regard to the Procedures or Protocol of Prevention or Reduction of the Spreading of Corona Virus/COVID-19, therefore the Board of Directors of the Company convey the following "amendment":

Previously written:

- Venue : The Financial Hall, Graha CIMB Niaga 2nd Floor, Jl. Jend. Sudirman Kav. 58, Jakarta Selatan

To be:

- Venue : Graha CIMB Niaga, Jl. Jend. Sudirman Kav. 58, Jakarta Selatan – 12190, Meeting Room I (15th Floor), Meeting Room II (14th Floor), and Meeting Room III (M Floor)

Day/Date and Time of the implementation as well as the Agenda of the Meeting remain the same as informed in the Meeting Invitation and Revision of Meeting Invitation of the Company. In addition, in order to ensure the health and comfort of the Shareholders as well as the prevention or reduction of the spreading of Corona Virus/COVID-19,

1. The Company has adjusted the Meeting Rules of Conduct of the Company that can be seen in details in the Company's website and can be downloaded from the following link: <http://investor.cimbniaga.co.id/gcg/agm.html>

2. For Shareholders who are unable to attend or choose not to attend the Meeting may authorize the proxy (to attend and cast a vote on each Meeting's agenda), to an Independent Party provided by the Company (Independent Attorney), by completing the Power of Attorney Form that has been uploaded in the Company's website and can be downloaded from the following link: <http://investor.cimbniaga.co.id/gcg/agm.html>. The completed Power of Attorney along with the copy of Identity Card or other identification card from the principal must be received by the Company at the latest 3 (three) days before the Meeting without prejudicing the Company's policy, through the Securities Administration Bureau (Biro Administrasi Efek – "BAE") PT Bima Registra, which has registered office at Satrio Tower, 9th Floor A2, Jalan Prof. Dr. Satrio Blok C4, Kuningan Setiabudi – Jakarta Selatan 12950 – Indonesia; Phone: (+6221) 25984818, Fax: (+6221) 25984819, E-mail: rups@bimaregistra.co.id, Website: www.bimaregistra.co.id.

Should there is any further queries on the above matters, the Corporate Secretary of the Company can be contacted during working hours according to the information on e-mail address and telephone/ facsimile number as stated hereunder.

Jakarta, 1 April 2020

Board of Directors

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