



NEW DELHI (Reuters) -- India said on Thursday that Chinese troops had stood in the way of regular Indian patrols along their disputed border in flare-ups at two locations this month and called for stability on the front line. The two countries have in recent years taken steps to build confidence between their militaries while expanding commercial ties. But the border remains an unresolved issue over which they went to war in 1962 and tensions erupt sometimes. Troops briefly skirmished nearly the eastern Indian state of Sikkim earlier this month and have also been locked in a weeks-long face-off in the Galwan region in the western Himalayas. Indian soldiers had stuck to their side of the Line of Actual Control that divides the two armies, foreign ministry spokesman Anurag Srivastava said, blaming China for the latest row. China's state-controlled Global Times said Indian troops had been trespassing on Chinese territory and even trying to erect illegal defense facilities since the beginning of May. China has bolstered border controls in response to Indian provocations in the Galwan Valley, it said.

BOSTON (AFP) -- Two studies on monkeys published offer hope that humans can develop protective immunity to the novel coronavirus. The studies, published in the journal Science, looked at a prototype vaccine and whether infection with SARS-CoV-2 provides immunity against re-exposure. Both questions are critical as researchers tackle the virus, which has infected nearly five million people around the world and caused more than 325,000 deaths. The studies were carried out on rhesus macaque monkeys to see whether they develop protective virus immunity from natural infection or from a vaccine. "The global COVID-19 pandemic has made the development of a vaccine a top biomedical priority, but very little is currently known about protective immunity to the SARS-CoV-2 virus," said senior author Dan Barouch, director of the Center for Virology and Vaccine Research at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston.

MUMBAI (Reuters) -- India registered some 6,000 new cases of the novel coronavirus on Friday, the country's biggest jump in 24 hours, as New Delhi eases a nationwide lockdown and airlines prepare to resume some domestic flights. The country of 1.3 billion people reported a total of over 118,000 confirmed cases on Friday, a roughly 5% increase from Thursday's figures. Included in the total are 3,583 deaths. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has extended a lockdown, begun on March 25, to May 31, but relaxed rules in areas with lower numbers of cases and allowed state governments to issue their own guidelines on some matters. Russia on Friday reported 150 new fatalities from the novel coronavirus in the past 24 hours, a record daily rise, taking the country's official nationwide death toll from the virus to 3,249. The country's coronavirus crisis response centre reported 8,894 new coronavirus cases, bringing the total number of infections to 326,448.

KUALA LUMPUR (Reuters) -- Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin will be home quarantined for 14 days after an officer who attended a meeting with him this week tested positive for the new coronavirus, the prime minister's office said in a statement on Friday. Muhyiddin has tested negative but "all members of the meeting have been instructed to undergo screening and 14 days' home quarantine", the statement added. In Singapore, coronavirus cases topped 30,000 on Friday as the city-state reports hundreds of new infections in cramped migrant worker dormitories every day. The lowly paid workers represented the vast majority of the 612 new cases reported on Friday, a daily infection rate that is one of the highest in Asia, taking Singapore's total cases to 30,426. The death toll remains 22. Singapore closed schools and most workplaces in April as part of measures to curb infections. This week, the government published plans for some businesses to resume at the beginning of June, given the low rate of infections outside the worker dormitories.

JOHANNESBURG (Reuters) -- South Africa could see up to 50,000 coronavirus deaths and as many as 3 million infections by the end of the year as the southern hemisphere winter leads to a higher rate of infection, scientific models showed. The country already has the highest number of infections and deaths on the continent, with more than 18,000 identified cases and 339 deaths, but a national lockdown entering its ninth week had slowed infections. However scientists and modelers hired by the health ministry to study the spread of the disease said the country could see between 35,000 and 50,000 coronavirus deaths by November. "We haven't really crushed the curve," said one of the experts, Harry Moultrie, in a presentation shown on television. "We also have some significant concerns that because of the focus on COVID-19, this may compromise other areas like HIV and TB." The models, which consider best and worst scenarios, see as many as 3 million possible coronavirus cases by November, while demand for hospital beds is seen peaking at 45,000, around ten times the current intensive care bed availability.

To Stem Violent Riots: China Plans New Security Law in Hong Kong



Pro-West lawmaker Wu Chi-wai scuffles with police during a march against new security laws, near China's Liaison Office, in Hong Kong, May 22, 2020.

BEIJING (Dispatches) -- China on Friday proposed national security law in Hong Kong as part of measures aimed at restoring calm to the semi-autonomous city after seven months of violent riots last year. The draft proposal, presented to China's parliament at the opening of its annual session on Friday morning, said the security law would "guard against, stop and punish any separatism, subversion of the national regime, terrorist group activities and such behaviors that seriously harm national security". The semi-autonomous Chinese territory was rocked by riots starting last June, when some citizens across the city began protesting against a proposed extradition bill. The proposal has since been withdrawn. The protesters often heavily vandalized shops and public property and attacked citizens believed to be pro-government. However, since the government imposed a ban on public meetings at the end of March to curb the coronavirus outbreak, Hong Kong has been relatively calm. The Chinese government says the United States and Britain have been fanning the flames of unrest in Hong Kong by supporting the protesters. Hong Kong has been governed under the "one-country, two-system" model since the city — a former British colony — was returned to China in 1997. Hong Kong's leader said in a statement on Friday that the local government would "fully cooperate" with Beijing over the national security,

and "complete the legislation as soon as possible to discharge its responsibility". Carrie Lam said she "firmly" believed the law was aimed at "effectively preventing and curbing actions that seriously endanger national security". During a daily briefing in Beijing on Friday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian defended the proposed legislation and expressed opposition to any kind of foreign interference in China's domestic affairs. The United States has also courted Taiwan in an attempt to counter China, which seeks Taipei's reunification ever since the island broke away from the mainland during a civil war in 1949. China claims full sovereignty over the island and almost all world countries recognize that sovereignty. The U.S., which has no formal diplomatic relations with Taipei by law, has extensive military ties with the island, selling it advanced military hardware. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said at the start of the annual meeting of China's parliament that his country would "resolutely oppose and deter any separatist activities seeking Taiwan independence". The Chinese government announced on Friday that it will increase its military budget by a slower 6.6 percent in 2020. During the opening session of its annual National People's Congress, the government said the budget would be set at \$178 billion for the year — the second highest in the world after the U.S.

Cyclone Kills Nearly 100 People in India, Bangladesh



A man cuts branches of an uprooted tree after Cyclone Amphan made its landfall, in Kolkata, India, May 21, 2020.

SATKHIRA, Bangladesh (AFP) -- India and Bangladesh began a massive cleanup Thursday after the fiercest cyclone since 1999 killed at least 95 people, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. Cyclone Amphan flattened houses, uprooted trees, blew off roofs and toppled electricity pylons, while a storm surge inundated coastal villages and wrecked shrimp farms vital to the local economy. The United Nations office in Bangladesh estimates 10 million people were affected, and some 500,000 people may have lost their homes. But the death toll was far lower than the many thousands killed in previous cyclones -- a result of improved weather forecasting and better response plans. The disaster has raised fears, however, that overcrowding in storm shelters will exacerbate the spread of coronavirus. India's West Bengal reported 72 deaths -- including 15 in the capital Kolkata -- with state premier Mamata Banerjee saying: "I haven't seen a disaster of this magnitude." "This is the worst cyclone to hit the state since the one in 1737 when thousands lost their lives," she is told reporters. Banerjee earlier described the cyclone's impact as "worse than coronavirus". Twenty-three people have died in Bangladesh, according to the official death toll. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi surveyed the damage in West Bengal and Odisha

states on Friday. Improved weather forecasting meant Bangladesh was able to move some 2.4 million people into shelters or out of the storm's direct path, while India evacuated some 650,000. At least 10 million people were without power on Thursday afternoon in the worst-hit districts of Bangladesh, said rural electricity board chief Moin Uddin. The storm leveled more than 55,000 homes -- most made of tin, mud and bamboo -- across Bangladesh, junior disaster management minister Enamur Rahman told AFP. Kolkata residents woke to flooded streets, with part of the city's yellow taxi fleet up to their bonnets in water in one neighbourhood and many areas without power. Bangladesh's Sundarbans forest chief Moin Uddin Khan told AFP the storm surge that smashed into the vast mangrove area -- which bore the brunt of the storm -- was "not as high as was feared earlier". He said Amphan's impact on wildlife, especially the forest's endangered Bengal tigers, was not yet known. The cyclone weakened as it moved north through Bangladesh but still unleashed heavy rain and fierce winds in Cox's Bazar, the district which houses about one million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar. The UN said the effect in the vast camps of flimsy shacks appeared to be "fairly minimal".

Pandemic Soars in Latin America, Russia, Subcontinent



Russia's Emergencies Ministry members spray disinfectant while sanitizing the Kievsky Railway Station in Moscow, May 18, 2020.

NEW DELHI (AP) -- The coronavirus pandemic accelerated across Latin America, Russia and the Indian subcontinent on Friday even as curves flattened and reopening was underway in much of Europe, Asia and the United States. Many governments say they have to shift their focus to saving jobs that are vanishing as quickly as the virus can spread. In the United States and China, the world's two largest economies, unemployment is soaring. The Federal Reserve chairman has estimated that up to one American in four could be jobless, while in China analysts estimate around a third of the urban workforce is unemployed.

But the virus is roaring through countries ill-equipped to handle the pandemic, which many scientists fear will seed the embers of a second global wave. India saw its biggest single-day spike since the pandemic began, and Pakistan and Russia recorded their highest death tolls. Most new Indian cases are in Bihar, where thousands returned home from jobs in the cities. For over a month, some walked among crowds for hundreds of miles. Latin America's two most populous nations -- Mexico and Brazil -- have reported record counts of new cases and deaths almost daily this week, fueling criticism of their presidents,

who have slow-walked shutdowns in attempts to limit economic damage. Cases were rising and intensive-care units were also swamped in Peru, Chile and Ecuador -- countries lauded for imposing early and aggressive business shutdowns and quarantines. Brazil reported more than 20,000 deaths and 300,000 confirmed cases Thursday night -- the third worst-hit country in the world by official counts. Experts consider both numbers undercounts due to widespread lack of testing. President Jair Bolsonaro has scoffed at the seriousness of the virus and actively campaigned against state governors' attempts to limit movement and commerce. Mexico is now reporting more than 400 deaths a day, and new infections still haven't peaked. Russian health officials registered 150 deaths in 24 hours, for a total of 3,249. The total confirmed number of cases exceeded 326,000 on Friday. China announced it would give local governments 2 trillion yuan (\$280 billion) to help undo the damage from shutdowns imposed to curb the spread of the virus that first appeared in the city of Wuhan in late 2019 and has now infected at least 5.1 million people worldwide, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Will Coronavirus Deeply Change Living Patterns?



One World Trade Center and the lower Manhattan skyline are seen shortly after sunset during the outbreak of the coronavirus disease in New York City, May 20, 2020.

LONDON (Reuters) -- Like earlier pandemics, the coronavirus is the dark side of a highly productive, urbanized, interconnected and increasingly prosperous world. Yet urbanization has persisted, in spite of all the problems it creates, including pollution, disease and high living costs. Now some commentators have begun to wonder if coronavirus and lockdowns employed to suppress it will mean profound changes in transportation and living patterns. Will the popularity of megacities diminish? Will public transport systems be redesigned? Will supply chains move closer to home? And will international leisure travel shrink? The answer is mostly no. Cities

and transport systems are shaped by social and economic influences that will mostly force a return to the pre-pandemic status quo. "Crises usually accelerate real trends in society and technology, they don't create or refute them. Don't expect revolutionary changes. Work from home is here faster. Globalism isn't going anywhere," chess champion Gary Kasparov predicts. As with plague, influenza and other communicable diseases, coronavirus is a social disease which has travelled furthest and fastest along the transport routes carrying people and freight. "In medieval times, ship transport was by far the most efficient and rapid way of transporting goods and disseminating disease at a distance," historian Ole Benedictow wrote.

In his 2004 study "The Black Death 1346-1353", Benedictow points out that epidemics first invaded seaports, cities and commercial hubs along the coasts of the Mediterranean and the western coasts of Europe or situated on large navigable rivers. They would spread to local towns, and then further into the countryside by horse and carriage or by pack horses, eventually blanketing entire regions. Today's large, densely populated cities with mass transit systems, international connections and population groups with the most intensive face-to-face interactions for work, leisure and travel have proved ideal for transmission. In the early 21st century, the passenger airliner has replaced the ship, while mass transit and private cars have replaced the horse and carriage. But the coronavirus is spreading through the transport system in just the same way, exploiting business meetings, conferences, family get-togethers, holidays and social functions. Influenza and plague often spared isolated communities in parts of Africa during the 1918 influenza and Iceland during the Black Death. So sparsely populated, less connected areas with more reliance on private transport may escape the worst of the coronavirus.

EU, Russia Blast U.S. Plan to Quit Another Treaty

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) -- Ten European Union countries on Friday expressed regret at U.S. plans to withdraw from an international treaty allowing observation flights over more than 30 countries and vowed to uphold the pact, as NATO allies met to discuss developments. President Donald Trump said Thursday that alleged Russian violations make it untenable for the United States to stay in the Open Skies Treaty. The treaty came into force in 2002. It was meant to promote trust between the U.S. and Russia by allowing signatories to conduct reconnaissance flights over each other's territories to collect information about military forces and activities. In a joint statement, the foreign ministries of Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain and Sweden said the pact "is a crucial element of the confidence-building framework that was created over the past decades in order to improve transparency and security across the Euro-Atlantic area." "We will continue to implement the Open Skies Treaty, which has a clear added value for our conventional arms control architecture and cooperative security. We reaffirm that this treaty remains functioning and useful," the 10 said, even though they share U.S. concerns about Russia's respect of the pact. Earlier, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said his counterparts in Britain, France, and Poland have repeatedly made this clear to Washing-

ton, and that Germany "will work intensively in this time with our like-minded partners for the U.S. to reconsider its decision." Last year, Trump pulled the U.S. -- by far the biggest and most influential of the 30 NATO member countries -- out of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty that it agreed in 1987 with the Soviet Union, blaming Moscow for developing a missile that does not comply with it. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko criticized the latest U.S. move. "The withdrawal of the U.S. from this treaty as yet another blow to the system of military security in Europe, which is already weakened by the previous moves by the administration," Grushko told state news agency Tass. Russia will continue to observe an international treaty that allows spy planes access to other countries' air space even if the U.S. pulls out, he added. China, which is not a party to the treaty, expressed "deep regret" over the U.S. move, calling it a "display of the United States' entrenched Cold War mentality". The withdrawal "will have a negative impact on the international arms control and disarmament process," foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said at a regular press briefing in Beijing today. The treaty has been signed by countries across Europe, the former Soviet Union and the United States and Canada.