

htworld

## VIRUS TRACKER

16,527,254  
GLOBAL CASES653,974  
GLOBAL DEATHS

## WORST-HIT NATIONS (BY CASES)

	1 US	2 BRAZIL	3 INDIA*	4 RUSSIA	5 S AFRICA
CASES	4,392,833	2,423,798	1,480,710	818,120	445,433
DEATHS	149,973	87,131	33,419	13,354	6,769

(AS OF 10:30 PM IST) SOURCE: WORLDOMETER \* COMPILED BY HT

## Covid worst global health emergency: WHO

**REVIEW** Committee to meet later this week to discuss the disease's emergency status, six months after it was declared

## HT Correspondent and Agencies

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GENEVA: Covid-19 "continues to accelerate" with a doubling of cases over the last six weeks, World Health Organization director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Monday, describing the pandemic as the worst health emergency faced by the UN agency.

More than 16 million cases have now been reported, with more than 640,000 deaths.

WHO's emergency committee will convene on Thursday, a procedural requirement six months after the agency's declaration of a public health emergency of international concern, made on January 30 for the coronavirus outbreak. The panel will advise Tedros on the way forward.

Only with strict adherence to health measures, from wearing masks to avoiding crowds, would the world manage to beat the pandemic, Tedros said at a virtual news briefing in Geneva. "Where these measures are followed, cases go down. Where they are not, cases go up," he said, praising Canada, China, Germany and South Korea for controlling outbreaks.

Vietnam is evacuating 80,000 people, mostly local tourists, from the central tourism hotspot of Danang after three residents

tested positive for the coronavirus over the weekend, the government said on Monday.

The Southeast Asian country is back on high alert after authorities on Saturday confirmed the first community infections since April, and another three cases on Sunday, all in or around Danang.

The UK has said it will pause reporting on coronavirus deaths while it reviews how they are counted. Last week, the government said deaths in England were attributed to coronavirus if the deceased had had the disease at any time. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland would only record deaths as virus-related if the patient had a positive test within the preceding 28 days.

Citing his own obesity, Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday launched a campaign to encourage Britons to exercise as new evidence showed that overweight people being infected by coronavirus are more likely to die or develop severe illness.

The drive includes doctors prescribing cycling or running to patients, dedicated cycle lanes and pedestrianisation of more areas in cities across the UK, ban on junk food advertisements on television and online before 9pm, and cigarette pack-like calorie warnings on food items.

"Since I recovered from coronavirus, I've been steadily build-

ing up my fitness. I am at least a stone down. But when I went into ICU, when I was really ill, I was way overweight," Johnson said.

In Singapore, scientists have developed a method to improve the speed of obtaining Covid-19 laboratory test results in 36 minutes or by up to four times.

The new method, developed by scientists at the Nanyang Technological University's (NTU) Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, has demonstrated a way to improve "the speed, handling time and cost of Covid-19 laboratory tests", the university said. The test, which can be done with portable equipment, could also be deployed in the community as a screening tool, it said.

Muslim pilgrims have started arriving in Mecca for a drastically scaled-down hajj, which begins on Wednesday. It normally draws around 2.5 million people. This year, Saudi Arabia's hajj ministry has said between 1,000 and 10,000 people already residing in the kingdom will be allowed to perform the pilgrimage. Two-thirds of those pilgrims will be from among foreign residents in Saudi Arabia and one-third will be Saudi citizens.

China reported the largest number of domestic infections in more than four months. Of the 61 infections reported on Monday, 57 were local cases.



Workers disinfect Hagia Sophia after a prayer at the iconic Istanbul structure, which was changed from a cathedral to a mosque. AFP

## US NSA is +ve; biggest vaccine trial begins

## Yashwant Raj and Agencies

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WASHINGTON: US National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien has tested positive for Covid-19, making him the most senior Trump administration member to be hit by the virus.

The White House said on Monday O'Brien had displayed "mild symptoms and has been self-isolating and working from a secure location off site."

It added: "There is no risk of exposure to the President or the Vice President. The work of the National Security Council continues uninterrupted." O'Brien typically works from a West Wing office just a short distance from President Donald Trump's.

He had travelled to Paris in mid-July for a meeting with counterparts from the UK, France, Germany and Italy.

Two White House staffers had tested positive earlier: Trump's

personal valet and the head of Vice-President Mike Pence's communications team.

## MODERNA VACCINE STUDY GETS UNDERWAY

The world's biggest Covid-19 vaccine study got underway on Monday with the first of 30,000 planned volunteers helping to test shots created by the U.S. government - one of several candidates in the final stretch of the global vaccine race.

There's still no guarantee that the experimental vaccine, developed by the National Institutes of Health and Moderna Inc, will really protect. The needed proof: Volunteers won't know if they're getting the real shot or a dummy version. After two doses, scientists will closely track which group experiences more infections as they go about their daily routines, especially in areas where the virus is still spreading unchecked.

## PET CAT IS UK'S FIRST COVID-19 CASE IN ANIMALS

LONDON: The Covid-19 virus has been detected in a pet cat for the first time in UK, the country's chief veterinary officer revealed on Monday.

But Christine Middlemiss added that there is no evidence of the pet transmitting the virus to owners or other animals.

The infection was confirmed following tests at the Animal and Plant Health Agency laboratory in Weybridge on July 22.

All available evidence suggests that the cat contracted the coronavirus from its owners who had previously tested positive. The cat and its owners have since made a full recovery and there was no transmission to other animals or people in the household.

"This is a very rare event with infected animals detected to date only showing mild clinical signs and recovering within a few days. There is no evidence to suggest that pets directly transmit the virus to humans," Middlemiss said.

Yvonne Doyle of Public Health England added: "This is the first case of a domestic cat testing positive in the UK but should not be a cause for alarm. The investigation into this case suggests that the infection was spread from humans to animal." HTc