

Coronavirus: latest developments worldwide

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The list of countries hit by the coronavirus grows. Mecca suspends entry for pilgrims. Several countries close their schools, stock exchanges plunge.

Here are the latest developments in the coronavirus crisis.

50 countries hit

Some 82,560 people have been infected worldwide and 2,813 have died, according to the latest AFP toll from official sources Thursday at 1700 GMT.

The number of deaths in mainland China—excluding the semi-autonomous territories of Hong Kong and Macao—stands at 2,747, out of 78,497 cases. Over the previous 24 hours, 433 new infections have been recorded there.

In AFP's latest count, 66 people have died outside mainland China since the start of the epidemic, out of 4,063 people infected, with 863 new cases

But the fatality rate in China slowed, with 29 new deaths on Thursday, the smallest number for almost a month.

The coronavirus has appeared in ten new countries—Brazil, Denmark, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Norway, Northern Macedonia, Pakistan, Romania and The Netherlands—bringing the number of countries and territories hit to around 50.

South Korea has announced 1,766 infections—by far the largest outside China—and 13 deaths.

The number of infections in Italy, the hardest hit country in Europe, hits 528, with 14 deaths.

Iran announces a total of 26 deaths and more than 245 infections.

France's confirmed cases more than doubled in a day from 18 to 38.

Pilgrimages, war games suspended

Saudi Arabia temporarily suspends visas for visits to Islam's holiest sites for the "umrah" pilgrimage, an unprecedented move triggered by coronavirus fears.

Iranian authorities for their part announce domestic travel restrictions for people with confirmed or suspected cases of the novel coronavirus.

Israel refuses entry to its territory for dozens of foreign travellers arriving from Italy.

The US and South Korean militaries announce they are postponing scheduled joint exercises.

Greece cancels its carnival festivities planned for the weekend.

Schools closed

Japan closes schools for several weeks from Monday, while North Korea, which has recorded no infections, puts off the return to school.

The Iraqi authorities close schools and universities, cinemas and cafes until March 7.

Markets, sport disrupted

In the economic sector, stock markets around the world and oil prices continue to plunge, amid the surge in coronavirus infections.

French carrier Air France says it will take cost-cutting measures and freeze hiring.

The alpine skiing World Cup Finals scheduled for next month in Italy will take place without any fans on the slopes.

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