

Panama orders lockdown, Paraguay closes borders

March 25 2020

Panama became the latest Latin American country to declare a lockdown due to the novel coronavirus Tuesday, while Paraguay closed its borders until the end of the week.

The Galapagos Islands also recorded their first cases and Mexico upped its outbreak response as Latin American countries continued to roll out measures to contain the COVID-19 disease.

- Panama

President Laurentino Cortizo declared a total quarantine Tuesday to contain the rapid spread of the deadly novel [coronavirus](#) in the Central American country, which has seen 443 confirmed cases and eight deaths—the most in the region.

The measure will begin at 5:01 am (1000 GMT) Wednesday morning until further notice, Cortizo said on Twitter.

Citizens will still be allowed out of their homes for short periods for necessities, such as purchasing food and going to the bank.

- Paraguay

President Mario Abdo Benitez closed the country's borders until Sunday following a second death from COVID-19.

"People can only leave, not enter," said Interior Minister Euclides Acevedo, adding that Paraguayans and residents were exempt but would face quarantine in military barracks upon return.

Commercial airlines will not be allowed to land at Paraguayan airports during the timeframe.

- Colombia

Avianca, the second-largest airline in Latin America, said it was suspending all passenger operations.

The measure came after Colombia President Ivan Duque closed the country's airspace as the number of confirmed cases there rose to more than 300, with three dead.

Avianca's 10 freight planes will continue to operate.

- Mexico

Hugo Lopez-Gatell Ramirez, undersecretary of health prevention and promotion, said the country was entering "phase two" of its coronavirus approach, moving from containment to "mitigation."

President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's government has faced criticism in the press for its lax response to the outbreak.

Mexico—which has reported 367 confirmed cases—is one of the few countries in Latin America not to have closed its borders.

- Ecuador

Galapagos Islands government authorities said four people on the

Ecuadoran archipelago had tested positive for the virus.

All four had returned from the port of Guayaquil, the worst affected city in Ecuador with more than half of the country's 1,000 confirmed cases.

A week ago, the government ordered a total ban on visitors to the islands—which lie more than 900 kilometers (560 miles) west of Ecuador's coast—where measures were already in place to restrict the movement of people.

The infected individuals will undergo health protocols before being transferred to the mainland, the regional government said.

And President Lenin Moreno on Tuesday called out Ecuadorans who flouted isolation measures—including a daily curfew—saying their actions amounted to "terrorism."

"One or many lives are going to be lost due to your irresponsible actions," he said during a televised address.

- Brazil

The Sao Paulo stock exchange surged alongside world markets amidst renewed optimism regarding plans to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

The Ibovespa index closed up nearly 10 percent having fallen just over five percent on Monday.

"It's still too early to draw any conclusions, but we are seeing less volatility" than last week, said trading analyst Thiago Salomao of brokerage firm Rico Investimentos.

The Brazilian real also strengthened 1.1 percent, to 5.08 to the dollar.

Meanwhile, President Jair Bolsonaro lashed out at what he called "scorched-earth" quarantine policies meant to contain the virus in places such as Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, saying they risked wrecking the economy in a misguided effort to save lives.

- Chile

A wild puma was captured after it was found wandering around the deserted center of Santiago in search of food, Chilean authorities said.

The one-year-old, 35-kilogram (77-pound) feline came down from the nearby surrounding hills to take advantage of a nighttime curfew imposed due to the virus outbreak.

"This is the habitat they once had and that we've taken away from them," said Marcelo Giagnoni, the director of the agricultural and livestock service that took part in an operation to capture the puma alongside police and the [national zoo](#).

It was transferred to the Santiago zoo to undergo tests.

- Honduras

Hundreds of Hondurans took to the streets Tuesday, demanding they be provided with food before the government-mandated curfew to curb the spread of the coronavirus went into effect.

Protesters used rocks, sticks and bonfires to block traffic on a normally busy road in the capital of Tegucigalpa.

The government declared a "total national curfew" March 16 in an effort to stop the virus in the country, which has so far seen 30 cases.

-Peru

Police in Peru arrested some 16,000 people for violating isolation measures in the first week of the country's anti-virus ordinance, the presidency said Tuesday.

Posts on social media have shown people drinking together and playing football in violation of the isolation order—issued March 17 and lasting 15 days—that has turned Lima into a ghost town in an effort to slow the virus's spread in the country, which has seen 416 confirmed cases.

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