

Wednesday's papers: Tough decisions, daycare infections, meteor showers ^[1]

Many papers report on the state of the coronavirus epidemic as the government prepares to ease or extend social restrictions.

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EXCERPTS

Finland's largest circulation daily, Helsingin Sanomat, is among the papers reporting that the government will meet later in the day to consider what to do about the restrictions it has imposed to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus.

As the paper notes, we have managed to reduce contact with others, keep our distance and wash our hands so frequently that the spread of the virus is now flattened. At present, each infected person in Finland is passing the virus on average to just one other person.

If that rate of infection falls below one, the number of new infections will start to fall.

Helsingin Sanomat reports that Turku University Professor **Kari Auranen**, a member of epidemic modelling group at the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) told a web seminar on Monday that taking into consideration that there is some immunity within the population, the rate of infection is now 0.8 to 0.9 in the Helsinki and Uusimaa Hospital District.

The paper speculates on three alternatives right now. The first is whether we can continue to "hide" from the virus until a vaccine is available. The second is if should we ease restrictions, let the virus run through the population, but in a manner that will not overwhelm the healthcare system.

The third is whether or not we should try to get back to our normal lives while action is taken to push down the infection rate further though comprehensive testing and infection chain tracing.

As Helsingin Sanomat points out, continuing the way we are right now is hardly at the top of the list of options. Alternatives, though, must be weighed in an atmosphere of uncertainty.

In recent days, the THL group modelling the progress of the epidemic has been hard at work crunching the numbers on what easing restrictions may mean to the spread of the virus.

Dr **Tuija Leino**, one of the group's members, pointed out some restrictions have been lifted in other countries where infection rates have fallen, and she expects the same to happen in Finland. However, she told the paper that the decision is up to the government, and she is taking no stand on the issue.

Leino declined however to tell Helsingin Sanomat what the groups findings have been.

"The marching order is for the results to go to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, and to the cabinet where decisions will be made," said Tuija Leino.

Daycare infections

The tabloid Iltalehti has news from a press conference Tuesday evening held by Helsinki Mayor **Jan Vapaavuori** where he said that cases of coronavirus infections have been diagnosed at 18 of the city's daycare centres.

There have been a total of 26 of these infections. Of those, 24 are members of staff and only two are children.

Helsinki has 336 public daycare centres that normally provide care for around 27,000 children.

At present, daycare centres are providing limited services.

The mayor said that at present it is believed that most of the infections were contracted outside the daycare centres.

According to the city's early education director, **Satu Järvenkallas**, routines at daycare centres have been adjusted to reduce contact among children to a minimum.

International studies have indicated that children infected with the novel corona virus rarely develop serious symptoms.

Helsinki University Hospital has reported very few cases of infection among under-16 year-olds. The hospital has not had a single child admitted for Covid-19 treatment.

No 5G conspiracy takers

Tampere's Aamulehti reports that unlike in some countries, Finland's 5G network towers have not become the target of conspiracy theory activists.

One of the more odd spin-offs of the coronavirus epidemic has been an online conspiracy theory claiming that the virus is spread by 5G mobile network signals.

As a result, there have been attacks reported on 5G towers in the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden.

Jukka-Pekka Juutinen, who heads the cyber security centre of the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency, told Aamulehti that there have been no similar incidents in Finland, but the agency has been monitoring the conspiracy online.

On Sunday a building housing telecommunications equipment at the foot of a telecommunications tower in Pohjanmaa suffered damage in a fire that police believe was a case of arson.

Police declined to speculate on any connection to the 5G virus theory, but did say that the facility was a "normal" telecommunications installation handling phone and data traffic.

Forests and gender

The farmers' union newspaper Maaseudun Tulevaisuus carries a review of a survey indicating that the image of a forest industry worker held by many young people in Finland continues to be a burly, bearded lumberjack swinging an axe.

Carried out by researchers at the Lappeenranta-Lahti University of Technology LUT and Helsinki University, the study interviewed over 400 Finns between the ages of 17-18 and found while many said they could consider a career in the forestry sector, few could name products it produced beyond pulp, paper, and furniture.

Attitudes among the young are important to industries in the field because they are facing a growing need for workers at the same time as fewer are entering the job market and competition for labour is increasing.

Researchers found that there is a significant gender divide in interest in working in the forest products industry, with exactly half of young men saying that they believe the sector could offer them an interesting job, while only 35 percent of women felt the same.

LUT Professor **Satu Pätäri** told Maaseudun Tulevaisuus that this imbalance may narrow know-how in the sector.

"It might not be possible to recognise new business opportunities if the pool of workers is so homogeneous," she noted.

Look up

The Swedish-language daily Hufvudstadsbladet tells its readers to look up tonight for a show, as the earth passes through the tail of the Comet Thatcher and the Lyrid meteor shower lights up the sky.

Drawing on a feature in the science publication Tieteen Kuvalehti, Hufvudstadsbladet notes that the meteor shower returns annually between 16 and 26 April, peaking tonight, 22 April.

The paper says that if the weather is clear, you should be able to see up to 20 meteors an hour streak across the night sky.

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