

Doctors plead for supplies, while nations seek to slow virus

March 24 2020, by Adam Geller and Chris Blake



People practice social distancing as they sit on chairs spread apart in a waiting area for take-away food orders at a shopping mall in hopes of preventing the spread of the coronavirus in Bangkok, Thailand, Tuesday, March 24, 2020. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)

Doctors and nurses pleaded for supplies such as masks and ventilators

that are critical in their battle to treat a surging number of coronavirus patients, while governments on Tuesday continued to roll out measures that have put more than one-fifth of the world's population under some form of lockdown.

High in the Himalayan mountains, Nepal became the latest country to compel its citizens to stay at home, joining large parts of Europe, Southeast Asia and the entire West Coast of the United States. By shuttering businesses, clearing streets and keeping people away from one another, authorities hope they can slow the spread of the pandemic and keep their health care systems from becoming overwhelmed.

In Britain, which on Monday imposed its most draconian peacetime restrictions on businesses and gatherings, [health workers](#) begged for more gear, saying they felt like "cannon fodder." In France, doctors scrounged masks from construction workers and factory floors.

"There's a wild race to get surgical masks," François Blanchecott, a biologist on the front lines of testing, told France Inter radio. "We're asking mayors' offices, industries, any enterprises that might have a store of masks."

The race to find equipment came as the World Health Organization warned that the outbreak was accelerating and called on countries to take strong, coordinated action.



Medical staff members arrive for a duty shift at Dongsan Hospital in Daegu, South Korea, Tuesday, March 24, 2020. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.(Han Jong-chan/Yonhap via AP)

"We are not helpless bystanders," said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO chief, noting that it took 67 days to reach 100,000 cases worldwide but just four days to go from 200,000 to 300,000. "We can change the trajectory of this pandemic."

Stocks continued to fall on Wall Street even after the Federal Reserve said it will lend to small and large businesses and local governments to help them through the crisis, while partisan divisions stalled efforts to

pass a colossal aid package in Congress. Asian stock markets reacted more positively Tuesday, with benchmarks in Japan and South Korea posting significant gains.

The move toward lockdowns has been influenced by the apparent success of such measures in China, where the virus was first found late last year in the city of Wuhan. China barred people from leaving or entering the city on Jan. 23 and in succeeding days expanded what at the time were unprecedented measures to most of Hubei province and its tens of millions of residents.



A Buddhist monk wearing a face mask is checked his temperature by a Korea Red Cross official to donate blood due to the shortage of blood donators amid the rapid spread of the new coronavirus at the Jogyesa temple in Seoul, Tuesday, March 24, 2020. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or

moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. (AP Photo/Ahn Young-joon)

On Tuesday, after more than a week in which the government said the vast majority of new virus cases were imported from abroad rather than community spread, authorities said the restrictions in Hubei would end and people who were cleared would be able to leave the province after midnight.

Authorities said Wuhan will remain locked down until April 8.

The scramble to marshal [public health](#) and political resources intensified in New York, where a statewide lockdown took effect Monday amid worries the city of 8.4 million is becoming one of the world's biggest hot spots. More than 12,000 people have tested positive in the city and almost 100 have died.

The mayor warned that the city's hospitals are just 10 days away from shortages in basic supplies, while the state's governor announced plans to convert a New York City convention center into a hospital.



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"This is going to get much worse before it gets better," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said.

In Italy, declines in both new cases and deaths for a second consecutive day provided a faint glimmer of hope. Officials said Monday that the virus had claimed just over 600 more lives, down from 793 two days earlier.

The outbreak has killed more than 6,000 Italians, the highest death toll of any country, and pushed the health system to the [breaking point](#) there and in Spain.

The risk to doctors, nurses and others on the front lines has become plain: Italy has seen at least 18 doctors with the coronavirus die. Spain reported that more than 3,900 health care workers have become infected.

For most people, the [coronavirus](#) causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever or coughing. But for some older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. Over 100,000 people have recovered, mostly in China.



President Donald Trump listens as Vice President Mike Pence speaks about the coronavirus in the James Brady Briefing Room, Monday, March 23, 2020, in Washington. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

In Britain, Prime Minister Boris Johnson called the virus the "biggest threat this country has faced for decades" as he ordered people to stay home and directed shops that don't sell essential goods to shut down. He warned that police would be authorized to break up public gatherings of more than two people.

In the U.S., President Donald Trump said he believes the American economy, which has been virtually shut down, could be reopened in weeks, not months.

Amid complaints of hospitals running low on masks, gloves and other critical gear, Trump signed an executive order making it a crime to stockpile supplies needed by medical workers. Attorney General William Barr said investigators will go after those hoarding goods on "an industrial scale" and price gouging.

China is now sending planeloads of protective gear and doctors to Europe, as the crisis continues to ease there.



Coronavirus patients from Italy arrive at Leipzig/Halle Airport by a Lockheed C-130 Hercules military plane belonging to the Italian Air Force, in Schkeuditz, Germany, early Tuesday, March 24, 2020. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness, especially in older adults and people with existing health problems. (Zentralbild/dpa/dpa via AP)

On Capitol Hill, a nearly \$2 trillion plan that would prop up businesses and send checks to American households has stalled. Democrats argued that it was tilted toward corporations rather than workers and health care providers.

Meanwhile, industries big and small kept shutting down. Boeing announced it was suspending production in the Seattle area, where it has two mammoth aircraft plants employing about 42,000 people.

Japan's prime minister and the head of the International Olympic

Committee were to hold talks Tuesday as they consider postponing this summer's games in Tokyo.

More than 381,000 people worldwide have been infected and over 16,500 have died from the virus, according to a running tally kept by Johns Hopkins University. More than 1.5 billion people around the globe have been instructed to stay in their homes.



Jessica Fender, center, and Kerry Maloney, left, shy away from a woman asking for money after they felt she got too close, as the two exercise social distancing due to the new coronavirus outbreak, on a deserted Bourbon Street, normally busy with tourists and revelers, in New Orleans, Monday, March 23, 2020. Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards issued a shelter-in-place order for Louisiana which took effect today. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)



Benjamin Uphoff, a goalkeeper of the second division club Karlsruher SC, skips rope in his apartment in Karlsruhe, Germany. Due to the cancelation of training amid the spread of the coronavirus, Uphoff has to stay at home for the time being. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (Uli Deck/dpa via AP)



A member of the non-profit Cambodian Children's Fund sprays disinfectant to help curb the spread of the new coronavirus in the slum neighborhood of Stung Meanchey in southern Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on Tuesday, March 24, 2020. (AP Photo/Heng Sinith)



People buy foods and other supplies at a local market in Naypyitaw, Myanmar Tuesday, March 24, 2020. Myanmar has announced its first two confirmed cases of COVID-19, one in the nation's biggest city, Yangon, and the other in the western state of Chin. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Aung Shine Oo)



A woman holds a basketball on the closed grounds of a school in Honolulu, Monday, March 23, 2020. State schools remained closed because of the spreading coronavirus. (AP Photo/Caleb Jones)



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After just a few weeks, the U.S. has more than 46,000 cases and over 580 deaths. Indiana, Michigan, Oregon, Washington state and West Virginia joined states including California, Illinois and New York in asking or ordering residents to stay home and keep businesses closed—directives that cover more than one-third of the U.S. population.

Louisiana's governor urged residents to comply with his stay-at-home order, with New Orleans officials even removing basketball hoops from playgrounds and parks because people were still playing.

"The virus is here, and everybody needs to act as if they already have it," Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards said.

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Citation: Doctors plead for supplies, while nations seek to slow virus (2020, March 24) retrieved 9 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-03-doctors-nations-virus.html>

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