

Countries facing pressure to loosen virus restrictions

April 13 2020, by Foster Klug



A worker wearing a protective face mask to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus sprays disinfectant as a vehicle prepares to enter to an office building carpark in Beijing, Monday, April 13, 2020. China on Monday reported over 100 new cases of coronavirus infection, dozens of them imported. Of the new domestic cases, several were recorded in the province of Heilongjiang bordering Russia and southern business hub of Guangzhou. (AP Photo/Andy Wong)

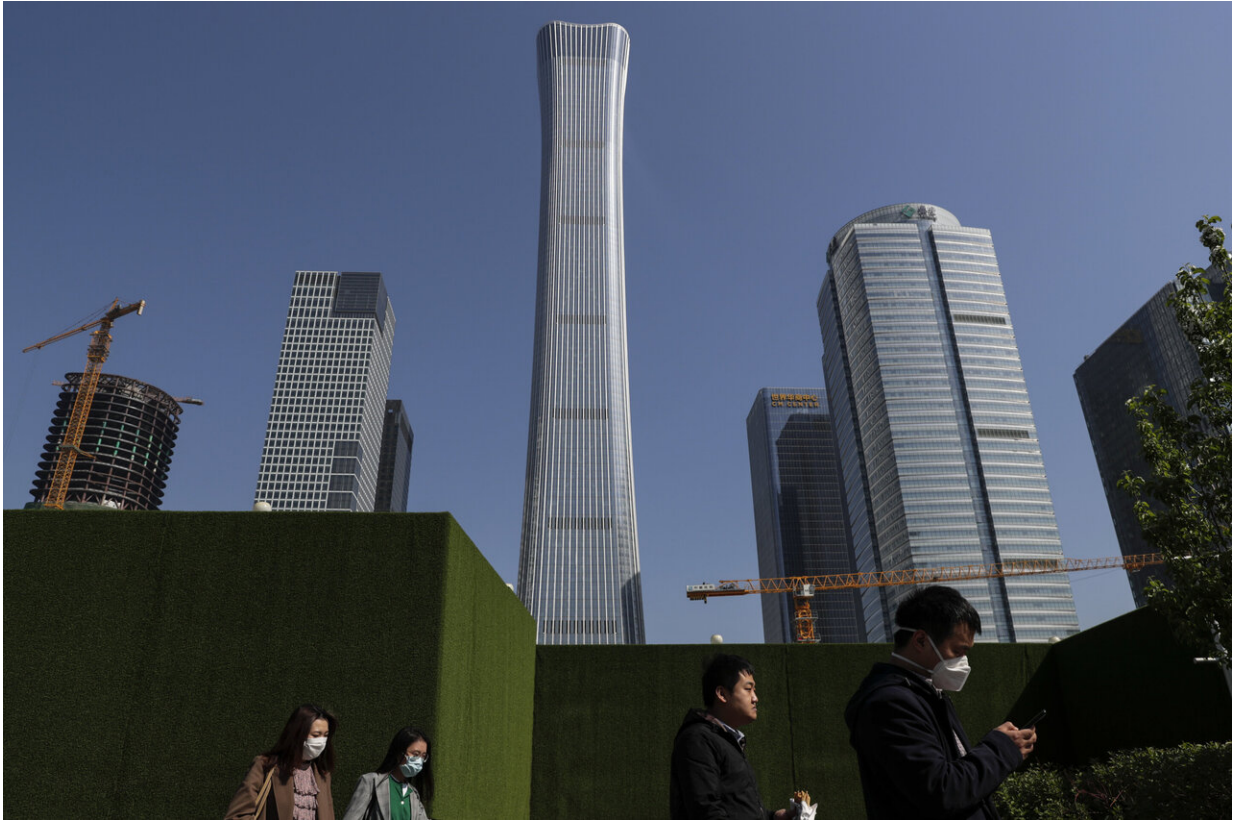
South Korean officials warned Monday that hard-earned progress fighting the coronavirus pandemic could be upset by new infections at bars and leisure spots, highlighting global tensions between governments desperate to maintain social distancing and citizens eager to resume their lives as economic pressure mounts and infections slow in some places.

Some European nations have started tentative moves to ease their shutdowns. Hard-hit Spain, which on Sunday reported its lowest daily growth in infections in three weeks, will allow workers in some nonessential industries to return to factories and construction sites Monday.

South Korea's caseload has slowed from early March, when it was reporting around 500 new cases a day, but officials have warned of a broader "quiet spread," pointing to transmissions at locations such as bars that may indicate eased attitudes toward [social distancing](#).

South Korean Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun said officials were discussing new public guidelines that would allow for people to engage in "certain levels of economic and social activity" while also maintaining distance to slow the spread of the virus.

Social distancing was still on full display for Easter Sunday celebrations around the globe, with many Christians marking the day isolated in their homes while pastors preached to empty pews. St. Peter's Square was barricaded to keep out crowds, while one Florida church drew a large turnout for a drive-in service in a parking lot.



People wearing protective face masks to help prevent the spread of the new coronavirus walk by the commercial buildings in the Central Business District in Beijing, Monday, April 13, 2020. China on Monday reported more than hundred new cases of coronavirus infection, dozens of them imported. Of the new domestic cases, several were recorded in the province of Heilongjiang bordering Russia and southern business hub of Guangzhou. (AP Photo/Andy Wong)

Pope Francis called for global solidarity to confront the "epochal challenge" of the pandemic. He urged [political leaders](#) to give hope and opportunity to the millions laid off from work.

President Donald Trump in his Easter message paid tribute to the medical professionals, first responders and other essential workers striving to combat the pandemic. Back on March 24, Trump had

broached the possibility that the U.S. could emerge from widespread lockdowns by this weekend.

"I would love to have the country opened up and just raring to go by Easter," he said.

Instead the U.S. is new epicenter of the pandemic, with more than half a million cases and more than 22,000 deaths, the world's highest. About half the U.S. deaths have been in the New York metropolitan area, but hospitalizations are slowing in the state and other indicators suggest that lockdowns and social distancing are "flattening the curve" of infections.



People wearing protective face masks to help prevent the spread of the new coronavirus walk across a street as motorists clog in heavy traffic during the morning rush hour in Beijing, Monday, April 13, 2020. China on Monday

reported more than hundred new cases of coronavirus infection, dozens of them imported. Of the new domestic cases, several were recorded in the province of Heilongjiang bordering Russia and southern business hub of Guangzhou. (AP Photo/Andy Wong)

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. infectious disease expert, said the economy in parts of the country could gradually reopen as early as next month.

The Italian government said weekend police patrols resulted in more than 12,500 people being sanctioned and 150 facing criminal charges of violating lockdown measures. On the hopeful side, officials said Italy recorded the lowest number of virus deaths in three weeks, with 431 people dying in the past day to bring its total to over 19,800.

But while attention has focused on the U.S. and Southern Europe, new [coronavirus](#) hot spots have been emerging in Japan, Turkey and Britain, where the death toll passed 10,000.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the first major world leader to test positive for the virus, paid an emotional tribute to the country's National Health Service following his release from the hospital, saying its doctors and nurses had saved his life "no question." He especially thanked two nurses who stood by his bedside for 48 hours "when things could have gone either way."



A woman wearing a protective face mask to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus looks out of a window of a bus traveling from the outskirts of the capital city during the morning rush hour in Beijing, Monday, April 13, 2020. China on Monday reported over 100 new cases of coronavirus infection, dozens of them imported. Of the new domestic cases, several were recorded in the province of Heilongjiang bordering Russia and southern business hub of Guangzhou. (AP Photo/Andy Wong)

Japan, the world's third-biggest economy, has seen its number of new cases climb rapidly in recent days and now has 7,255 confirmed cases of the virus.

Japanese companies have been slow to switch to remote-working and people are still commuting, even after a state of emergency declaration

for seven prefectures, including Tokyo.

In an effort to encourage citizens to stay at home, the government released a one-minute video showing Abe cuddling his dog, reading a book, sipping from a cup and clicking a remote control at home.

Abe's message drew criticism that he didn't understand the plight of those who cannot rest at home. Many called him "an aristocrat."

In China, where the first coronavirus cases were detected late last year, a mask producer said it is rushing to fill orders from overseas while facing stricter quality inspections from Chinese regulators. Wuhan Zonsen, which makes masks and disinfection wipes, says \$50 million in orders from European countries and the United States will keep them at full production capacity until June.



Pedestrians listen to Mobile Vicar Pat Allerton from St Peter's in Notting Hill performing an open air Easter service in Portobello Road, during the coronavirus outbreak lockdown in London, Sunday, April 12, 2020. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death.(AP Photo/Frank Augstein)



A commuter wearing a mask as a precaution against the new coronavirus, waits for the subway in Caracas, Venezuela, Sunday, April 12, 2020, during a government-imposed quarantine to help stop the spread of the new coronavirus. (AP Photo/Matias Delacroix)



A priest blesses an elderly woman after offering her willow branches, an Orthodox Palm Sunday tradition, in Bucharest, Romania, Sunday, April 12, 2020. Priests accompanied by volunteers delivered the traditional willow branches to residents as people observed the interdiction to join religious celebrations in the week leading to the Orthodox Easter, imposed across Romania as authorities try to limit the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus infections. (AP Photo/Vadim Ghirda)



A driver wearing hazardous materials gear sits in a funerary car behind the hearse carrying the body of Dr. William Gutierrez, after arriving for his cremation at a cemetery in Bogota, Colombia, Sunday, April 12, 2020. Dr. Gutierrez, an anesthesiologist who was the head of the intensive care unit of the Olaya Polyclinical Center, died Saturday as a result of pneumonia produced by the new coronavirus, the Medical Federation of Colombia said. (AP Photo/Ivan Valencia)



Enrique, a 92 year old man is taken out of his home by medics to a waiting ambulance after he showed signs of possible coronavirus symptoms with serious breathing problems in Madrid, Spain, Sunday, April 12, 2020. Spain will allow workers in industry and construction to return to work after a two-week shutdown of economic activities other than health care and the food industry. That lockdown has threatened to send the country into recession. (AP Photo/Olmo Calvo)



Lauren Dufrat wears a mask and gloves as a coronavirus precaution as she puts out Easter eggs for her neighbors' children to find, Sunday, April 12, 2020, on Easter Sunday in Washington. (AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin)



Rev. William Schipper, pastor of Mary, Queen of the Rosary Parish, left, wears a mask and gloves out of concern for the coronavirus as he sprinkles holy water and blesses parishioners who remain in their vehicles in the parking lot of the church, on Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020, in Spencer, Mass. (AP Photo/Steven Senne)

Chinese customs have announced that ventilators, masks and other supplies being exported to fight the coronavirus will be subject to quality inspections following complaints that substandard goods were being sold abroad. Regulators in Australia, the Netherlands and other countries have complained that masks, virus test kits and other products were faulty or failed to meet quality standards.

Ye denied there are any quality issues with the masks they had shipped

to Netherlands.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for others, especially older people and the infirm, it can cause severe symptoms and lead to death.

More than 1.8 million infections have been reported and over 114,000 people have died worldwide, according to Johns Hopkins University. The U.S. has the highest numbers, with over 555,000 confirmed cases. The figures certainly understate the true size and toll of the pandemic, due to limited testing, uneven counting of the dead and some governments' desire to play down the extent of outbreaks.

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