

Global death toll tops 200,000 as some virus lockdowns eased

April 25 2020, by Sara Burnett and Kate Brumback



A bicyclist wears face protection against the new coronavirus while pedaling through Larimer Square early Saturday, April 25, 2020, in downtown Denver. (AP Photo/David Zalubowski)

As the global death toll from the coronavirus surpassed 200,000 on Saturday, countries took cautious steps toward easing lockdowns

imposed amid the pandemic, but fears of a surge in infections made even some outbreak-wounded businesses reluctant to reopen.

The states of Georgia, Oklahoma and Alaska started loosening restrictions on businesses despite warnings from experts that such steps might be premature.

Shawn Gingrich, CEO and founder of Lion's Den Fitness, decided after the Georgia governor's announcement that his Atlanta gym would remain closed for now.

"We've sacrificed so much already," Gingrich said. "I feel like if we do this too soon, we'll see a spike in cases and we're back to square one."

Others were eager to get back to business, with precautions. Russ Anderson, who owns a tattoo studio in south Georgia, said he "couldn't get up out of my chair quick enough" when restrictions were lifted. His main shop served 50 or 60 customers Friday when it reopened, with customers and tattoo artists wearing masks, he said.

The worldwide death toll was at 201,907 as of Saturday afternoon, according to a tally compiled by John Hopkins University from government figures. The actual death toll is believed to be far higher.

India reopened neighborhood stores that many of the country's 1.3 billion people rely on for everything from beverages to mobile phone data cards. But the loosening didn't apply to hundreds of quarantined towns and other places hit hardest by the outbreak that has killed at least 775 people in the country where many poor live in slums too crowded for social distancing.



Medical staff administer COVID-19 tests to the public at the Iowa Events Center parking lot in Des Moines on Saturday, April 25, 2020. The tests were done by appointment only. (Bryon Houlgrave /The Des Moines Register via AP)

Shopping malls also stayed closed nationwide. Still, owners of small stores, being allowed to open again brought relief.

"This is a good decision," said Amit Sharma, an architect. "We have to open a few things and let the economy start moving. The [poor people](#) should have some source of income. This virus is going to be a long-term problem."

India also allowed manufacturing and farming to resume in rural areas last week to ease the economic plight of millions left jobless by the March 24 lockdown. The restrictions have allowed people out of their homes only to buy food, medicine or other essentials.

Elsewhere in Asia, authorities reported no new deaths Saturday for the 10th straight day in China, where the virus originated. South Korea reported just 10 fresh cases, the eighth day in a row its daily increase was under 20. There were no new deaths for the second straight day.



In this Thursday, April 23, 2020 photo, Kenia Anzarado, right, and Mae Catalan, left, works on finishing and packing face masks at the Georgia Expo in Suwanee,

Ga. The company has pivoted from sewing curtains to sewing cloth face masks. As business restrictions ease companies are preparing to open, but one key ingredient to safety is nearly impossible to find, personal protective equipment. (Curtis Compton/Atlanta Journal-Constitution via AP)

Underscoring the unknowns about the virus, the World Health Organization said "there is currently no evidence" that people who have recovered from COVID-19 cannot fall sick again.

Some countries extended or tightened restrictions, confirming a pattern of caution.

Sri Lanka had partially lifted a monthlong daytime curfew in more than two thirds of the country. But it reimposed a 24-hour lockdown countrywide until Monday after a surge of 46 new infections, its highest increase in a day.

Norway extended until at least Sept. 1 its ban on events with more than 500 participants.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez announced that Spaniards will be allowed to leave their homes for short walks and exercise starting May 2 after seven weeks of strict home confinement, though he said "maximum caution will be our guideline."



A woman wearing a face mask and gloves protection against coronavirus walks past a closed shop in Madrid, Spain, Spain, Saturday, April 25, 2020, as the lockdown to combat the spread of coronavirus continues. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)

"We must be very prudent because there is no manual, no roadmap to follow," he said.

Kids in Spain will get their first fresh air in weeks when a ban on letting them outside is relaxed starting Sunday. After 44 days indoors, they'll be allowed out for adult-supervised one-hour excursions no farther than 1 kilometer (0.6 miles) from home. They will not be permitted to play with others, and some nervous parents shopped online for child-size masks for them.

"I really want to get outside, and Ema does as well," said Madrid resident Eva Novilo, speaking of her 7-year-old daughter. But Novilo predicted "difficult situations" if they see her friends and have to stay apart. "I don't know if we will be able to maintain control."

Belgium sketched out plans for a progressive lockdown relaxation starting May 4 with the resumption of nonessential treatment in hospitals and the reopening of textile and sewing shops to make face masks.



People wave and chant from their windows with the Italian flags draped on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of Italy's Liberation Day, in Rome, Saturday, April 25, 2020. Italy's annual commemoration of its liberation from Nazi occupation is celebrated on April 25 but lockdown measures in the coronavirus-afflicted country mean no marches can be held this year and the National Association of Italian Partisans has invited all to sing "Bella Ciao", the anthem of

Italy's communist resistance, from their windows. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)

In Italy, where restrictions also will be eased May 4, authorities warned against abandoning social distancing practices as millions return to work. Free masks will be distributed to nursing homes, police, public officials and transportation workers. Workers painted blue circles on Rome's subway platforms to remind people to keep their distance when commuters return.

The country continues to have Europe's highest death toll, with 26,384 deaths. The 415 deaths registered in the 24-hour period that ended Saturday evening was the lowest toll since Italy registered 345 on March 17, but only five fewer than Friday.

With gatherings banned, Italians celebrated the 75th anniversary of their liberation from occupation forces in World War II, emerging on balconies or rooftops at the same time to sing a folk song linked to resistance fighters.



Two women ride bicycles past the Horse Guards Parade, during lockdown due to the coronavirus outbreak, in London, Saturday, April 25, 2020.(AP Photo/Alberto Pezzali)

Britain held off on changes to its lockdown as the virus-related death toll in hospitals topped 20,000. The figure doesn't include deaths in nursing homes, likely to be in the thousands.

In France, the government prepared to ease one of Europe's strictest lockdowns from May 11. The health minister detailed plans to scale up testing to help contain any new flare-ups.

Testing shortages also are a problem in Brazil, Latin America's largest nation, which is veering closer to becoming a pandemic hot spot.

Officials in Rio de Janeiro and four other major cities warned that their hospital systems are on the verge of collapse or already overwhelmed. In Manaus, the biggest city in the Amazon, officials said they have been forced to dig mass graves in a cemetery. Workers have been burying 100 corpses a day—triple the pre-virus average.



Applicants sit for the written examination during an insurance planner qualification exam in Seoul, South Korea, Saturday, April 25, 2020. The qualification exam was held while maintaining social distancing at the outdoor as part of precaution against the new coronavirus and also all applicants had to wear face masks and had their temperature checked. (AP Photo/Lee Jin-man)

Along with Georgia, Oklahoma allowed salons, spas and barbershops to

reopen, while Alaska cleared the way for restaurants to resume dine-in service and retail shops and other businesses to open their doors, all with limitations. Some Alaska municipalities chose to keep stricter rules.

Though limited in scope, and subject to social-distancing restrictions, the reopenings marked a symbolic milestone in the debate raging in the United States and beyond as to how quickly political leaders should lift economically devastating lockdown orders. A survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found Americans overwhelmingly support stay-at-home measures and other efforts to prevent the spread of the virus.

On Friday, President Donald Trump spoke optimistically of the economy but also asked people to continue social distancing and using face coverings. He also signed a \$484 billion bill to aid employers and hospitals. In the past five weeks, roughly 26 million people have filed for jobless aid, or about 1 in 6 U.S. workers.



Dody's Hair Creation owner and operator Dody Morrison wears personal protective equipment during a haircut service for Evelyn Wilson, Friday, April 24, 2020, at her salon in Ketchikan, Alaska. Both Wilson and Morrison conversed with each other from behind masks. (Dustin Safranek/Ketchikan Daily News via AP)



Mourners shovel dirt onto the grave of a Guinean man, who died of COVID-19 and who the family did not wish to identify by name, during a funeral at the cemetery of Evere, Belgium, Friday, April 24, 2020. Shops and restaurants in Belgium remain closed and weddings and funerals are limited in number during a partial lockdown to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. (AP Photo/Virginia Mayo)



Mounted police officers are seen along a deserted Mall, during lockdown due to the Coronavirus outbreak in London, Saturday, April 25, 2020.(AP Photo/Alberto Pezzali)



People buy vegetables and fruits in the warehouse of farmer Pierre Rigault, in Groslay, north of Paris, during nationwide confinement measures to counter the Covid-19, Saturday, April 25, 2020. Since the ban on open-air markets, fruits and vegetables producers have been promoting direct sales to consumers and have seen a rise in activity since a March 17 confinement in France to limit the spread of the new coronavirus. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)



A man walks on Millennium Bridge wearing a protective mask, as the lockdown due to the coronavirus outbreak continues, in London, Saturday, April 25, 2020.(AP Photo/Alberto Pezzali)



A man waves the Italian flag as he chants from his window on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of Italy's Liberation Day, in Rome, Saturday, April 25, 2020. Italy's annual commemoration of its liberation from Nazi occupation is celebrated on April 25 but lockdown measures in the coronavirus-afflicted country mean no marches can be held this year and the National Association of Italian Partisans has invited all to sing "Bella Ciao", the anthem of Italy's communist resistance, from their windows. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)



A woman wears a mask to protect against the spread of the coronavirus walks his dog at the empty Rivoli street along the Tuileries Garden in Paris, Saturday, April 25, 2020. France continues to be under an extended stay-at-home order until May 11 in an attempt to slow the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. (AP Photo/Michel Euler)



Somalis protest against the killing Friday night of at least one civilian during the overnight curfew, which is intended to curb the spread of the new coronavirus, on a street in the capital Mogadishu, Somalia Saturday, April 25, 2020. A police officer in Somalia's capital has been arrested in the fatal shooting of at least one civilian while enforcing coronavirus restrictions, a fellow police officer said, sparking protests that continued Saturday with crowds of angry young men burning tires and demanding justice. (AP Photo/Farah Abdi Warsameh)



Maryland Senate President Bill Ferguson, left, talks to people after he gave them bags of food during a donation drive by World Central Kitchen in the parking lot of the Camden Yards Sports Complex, Saturday, April 25, 2020, in Baltimore. World Central Kitchen conducted its food relief operation during the coronavirus pandemic to help relieve food insecurity faced by Baltimore's vulnerable communities, at the request of Governor Larry Hogan. (AP Photo/Julio Cortez)



A child with his mother from Makoko Slum, carries their food parcel distributed by the Nigerian Red Cross, provided for those under coronavirus related movement restrictions, in Lagos, Nigeria, Saturday, April 25, 2020. (AP Photo/Sunday Alamba)



Health care workers wearing scrubs and face masks watch as protesters hold an "Open Texas" rally at the Texas State Capitol, Saturday, April 25, 2020, in Austin, Texas. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Texas is under stay-at-home orders except for essential workers and businesses. (AP Photo/Eric Gay)



People demonstrate against stay-at-home orders due to coronavirus concerns at the State House, Saturday, April 25, 2020, in Providence, R.I. (AP Photo/Michael Dwyer)



A woman holds a sign during a demonstration against stay-at-home orders due to coronavirus as nurses stand in counter-protest on the State House steps, Saturday, April 25, 2020, in Providence, R.I. (AP Photo/Michael Dwyer)

Trump also said his widely criticized comments suggesting people can ingest or inject disinfectant to fight COVID-19 were an attempt at sarcasm.

In Texas, where retailers are allowed to sell items for curbside pickup, Allison Scott said most customers of her women's clothing store in a Dallas shopping mall seem to feel more comfortable ordering online. Scott thinks it's still too risky to allow people to shop in person, and she can't see people wanting to.

"I want to be open more than anything but I don't think that society is ready to come out either," she said.

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Citation: Global death toll tops 200,000 as some virus lockdowns eased (2020, April 25)
retrieved 24 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-04-global-death-toll-tops-virus.html>

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