

NY death toll surpasses 10,000; new hot spots slow to emerge

April 13 2020, by Eric Tucker, Aritz Parra and Joseph Wilson



Members of Hevra Kadisha, an organization which prepares bodies of deceased Jews for burial according to Jewish tradition, lower the body of Israel's ex-Chief Rabbi Eliahu Bakshi-Doron who died from coronavirus, during his funeral in Jerusalem, Monday, April 13, 2020. (AP Photo/Oded Balilty)

New York's coronavirus death toll topped 10,000 on Monday even as the

absence of fresh hot spots in the U.S. or elsewhere in the world yielded a ray of optimism in global efforts against the disease, though a return to normal was unlikely anytime soon.

Officials around the world worried that halting quarantine and social distancing measures could easily undo the hard-earned progress. Still, there were signs that countries were looking in that direction. Spain permitted some workers to return to their jobs, a hard-hit region of Italy loosened its lockdown restrictions and grim predictions of a virus that would move with equal ferocity from New York to other parts of America had not yet materialized.

New York state's 671 new deaths on Sunday marked the first time in a week that the daily toll dipped below 700. Almost 2,000 people were newly hospitalized with the virus Sunday, though once discharges and deaths are accounted for, the number of people hospitalized has flattened to just under 19,000.

"This virus is very good at what it does. It is a killer," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Monday during a state Capitol news briefing.

As the coronavirus throws millions out of work and devastates economies worldwide, governments are struggling with the delicate balance between keeping people safe from a highly contagious disease and making sure they can still make a living or have enough to eat.



Recently dug graves sit empty at the San Vicente cemetery in Cordoba, Argentina, Monday, April 13, 2020. Six to seven times more graves than normal are being dug in Cordoba, as a precaution amid the deadly, new coronavirus health emergency, according to Press Secretary of the Union of Municipal Workers and Employees of Córdoba, Damián Bizzi. (AP Photo/Nicolas Aguilera)

Workers in some nonessential industries returned to their jobs Monday in Spain, one of the hardest hit countries in the pandemic. In South Korea, officials warned that hard-earned progress fighting the virus could be eroded by new infections as restrictions ease.

The decisions are complicated because each nation is on its own [coronavirus](#) arc, with places like Britain, Japan and parts of the United

States still seeing increasing daily levels of deaths or infections; France and New York hoping they are stabilizing, albeit at a high plateau of deaths; and nations like Italy and Spain seeing declines in the rates of increase.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said his government must balance its response to the virus crisis that "threatens to destroy lives and at the same time destroy the economic and social fabric of our country."



A person wearing a protective face mask walks by the Robert Indiana sculpture "LOVE" at John F. Kennedy Plaza, commonly known as Love Park, in Philadelphia, Monday, April 13, 2020. (AP Photo/Matt Rourke)

Seeking to restart manufacturing, Spain's government is allowing workers to return to some factory and construction jobs. The country on Monday reported its lowest daily growth in infections in three weeks. Retail stores and services remain closed, and office workers are strongly encouraged to keep working from home. A prohibition on people leaving home for anything other than groceries and medicine will remain in effect for at least two weeks.

But Health Minister Salvador Illa said Monday that the government will move carefully on allowing others to end their self-isolation. He said officials will proceed with "the utmost caution and prudence ... and always based on scientific evidence."

"We're in no position to be setting dates" about when isolation might end. "We can't get ahead of ourselves."



Two volunteers ring the bell of a church in Madrid to support those that are working on the COVID-19 virus outbreak and in honour of the victims, Monday, April 13, 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/Bernat Armangue)

Some health experts and politicians argue that it's premature to ease the lockdown in a nation that has suffered almost 17,500 deaths and reported more than 169,000 infections, second only to the United States' 557,000 infections.

Italy's day-to-day increase in new COVID-19 cases was one of the lowest in weeks, bolstering a generally downward trend. That brought Italy's known cases to nearly 160,000. The day-to-day death toll, 566, however, was up, from the 431 new deaths registered on Sunday.

In Veneto, one of the country's most infected regions, officials are loosening some restrictions on movement as they enter a phase the governor, Luca Zaia, termed "lockdown light."

Zaia is expanding the 200-meter from home radius for physical fitness and allowing open-air markets in a new ordinance that takes effect Tuesday. At the same time, the ordinance makes masks or other face coverings mandatory outside the home—not just in supermarkets or on public transportation, as was previously the case.



Homeless people get in line to receive food baskets from private donors, Monday, April 13, 2020 downtown Johannesburg. Because of South Africa's imposed lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19, many are not able to work. 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/Jerome Delay)

In Madrid, José Pardinás took a mask being handed out by police as he walked to work at a moving company that was re-starting operations after a three-week halt.

"The company hasn't given us any protective equipment. I'm quite nervous about contracting the virus because my family can't afford more time without an income," Pardinás said.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan, meanwhile, issued a global plea to the world's richer countries and international financial institutions to provide debt-relief for poor countries, where forced lockdowns are crippling already troubled economies and causing widespread hunger for the poor.

Khan last week relaxed his country's lockdown to allow the construction industry, which employs the vast majority of Pakistan's daily wage earners, to re-open.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who has urged a cautious approach to any loosening of restrictions, planned to hold a video conference with regional governors Wednesday, after the governor of the state with the most infections called for a "road map" to return to normality.



Public hospital workers shout to demand protective gear and training as they protest outside a public hospital in Mexico City, Monday, April 13, 2020. Doctors, nurses and other personnel have demonstrated at a number of public hospitals around the country as the new coronavirus sickens medical personnel. (AP Photo/Fernando Llano)

Armin Laschet, governor of North Rhine-Westphalia, said "the willingness for restrictions also needs the prospect of normalization." His government came up with a plan for gradually easing the restrictions imposed on March 22, when public gatherings were limited to only two people.

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

South Korea's caseload has slowed from early March, when it was reporting around 500 new daily cases, but officials have warned of a broader "quiet spread" at locations such as bars, which are still open. President Moon Jae-in vowed Monday to focus on saving jobs and protecting the economy amid a sharp increase in the number of people seeking unemployment benefits.



People participate in the nightly applause for healthcare workers in Antwerp, Belgium, Monday, April 13, 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/Virginia Mayo)



Members of the Red Rock Search and Rescue help set up a coronavirus isolation and quarantine complex for homeless Monday, April 13, 2020, in Las Vegas. The facility, scheduled to open Monday evening, was built to house homeless with suspected or confirmed cases of coronavirus that don't require hospitalization. (AP Photo/John Locher)



Commuters wearing face masks to protect against coronavirus at Atocha train station in Madrid, Spain, Monday, April 13, 2020. Confronting both a public health emergency and long-term economic injury, Spain is cautiously re-starting some business activity to emerge from the nationwide near-total freeze that helped slow the country's grim coronavirus outbreak. 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/Bernat Armangue)



A newly painted mural shows a youth wearing a face mask, during a government ordered lockdown to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus in Bogota, Colombia, Monday, April 13, 2020. (AP Photo/Fernando Vergara)



Masked commuters flag down a bus in Asuncion, Paraguay, Monday, April 13, 2020. While the government extended the quarantine to April 21 to help contain the spread of the new coronavirus, some workers like those in construction and food industries are authorized to work. (AP Photo/Jorge Saenz)



Public hospital health workers protest outside a hospital to demand protective gear and training in Mexico City, Monday, April 13, 2020. Doctors, nurses and other personnel have demonstrated at a number of public hospitals around the country as the new coronavirus sickens medical personnel. (AP Photo/Fernando Llano)



A woman on a bicycle passes a coronavirus graffiti by street artist 'Uzey' showing a nurse as Superwoman, the lettering reads "for the real heroes" on a wall in Hamm, Germany, on Easter Monday, April 13, 2020. (AP Photo/Martin Meissner)



A volunteer disinfests the Karachi Press Club building in an effort to contain the outbreak of the coronavirus, in Karachi, Pakistan, Monday, April 13, 2020. (AP Photo/Fareed Khan)



Health officials, wearing protective face masks and suits as a preventive measure against the spread of the coronavirus, perform local region dances during an impromptu ceremony to send off people after spending a two-week mandatory quarantine at a university dormitory, in Burdur, southwestern Turkey, Monday April 13, 2020. One hundred fifty one Turkish citizens that travelled back from Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, were sent to their homes in 32 different cities, after they were placed under quarantine on March 29. Six people who are positive with Covid-19 are treated at the local hospital. (Mesut Madan/DHA via AP)

South Korea's vice health minister, Kim Gang-lip, said a quick return to normality was "virtually impossible" considering the threat of new infections.

"A premature easing (of social distancing) would come at an irrevocable cost, so we should approach the issue very carefully, and invest deep thought into when and how to transition," Kim said.

The pandemic's new epicenter is now the United States, which has seen more than 22,000 deaths, the world's highest. About half have been in the New York metropolitan area, but hospitalizations are slowing in the state, and other indicators suggest lockdowns and social distancing are working.

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

In Britain, the death toll passed 10,600. 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 after leaving the hospital on Sunday. Johnson, who spent three nights in intensive care, especially thanked two nurses who stood by his bedside for 48 hours "when things could have gone either way."

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