

US, UK brace for soaring death tolls as pandemic bears down (Update)

April 6 2020, by Lori Hinnant and Danica Kirka



Police officers patrol outside a hospital where it is believed that Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson is undergoing tests after suffering from coronavirus symptoms, in London, Monday, April 6, 2020. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been admitted to a hospital with the coronavirus. Johnson's office says he is being admitted for tests because he still has symptoms 10 days after testing positive for the virus. (AP Photo/Frank Augstein)

The U.S. and Britain braced for what could be one of their bleakest

weeks in memory Monday as the human and financial toll of the coronavirus outbreak mounted. But new deaths and infections appeared to be slowing in Italy, Spain and France, suggesting that lockdowns and social distancing are working.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who was infected last month, was hospitalized in what his office described as a precaution because of persistent symptoms. The 55-year-old Johnson, who had a fever for days, is the first known head of government to fall ill with the disease.

"I'm in good spirits and keeping in touch with my team, as we work together to fight this virus and keep everyone safe," he tweeted Monday.

World markets rose after much of Europe saw glimmers of hope—deaths and new infections appeared to be slowing in much of the three hardest-hit countries, as well as in the Netherlands and Germany.

Leaders cautioned, however, that any gains could easily be reversed if people did not continue to adhere to strict social distancing measures and national lockdowns. Markets were up about 3% in Paris and Frankfurt, and Tokyo jumped more than 4%.

In Washington, U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams offered a stark warning about the surge of coronavirus deaths the nation is facing.

"This is going to be our Pearl Harbor moment, our 9/11 moment," he told "Fox News Sunday."



Media wait outside a hospital where it is believed that Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson is undergoing tests after suffering from coronavirus symptoms, in London, Monday, April 6, 2020. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been admitted to a hospital with the coronavirus. Johnson's office says he is being admitted for tests because he still has symptoms 10 days after testing positive for the virus. (AP Photo/Frank Augstein)

More than 9,600 people have died of the virus in the United States, and it leads the world in confirmed infections at more than 337,000.

In New York City, the U.S. epicenter of the pandemic, daily confirmed deaths dropped slightly, along with intensive care admissions and the number of patients who needed breathing tubes. But New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo warned it was "too early to tell" whether the good news would hold.

President Donald Trump suggested the hard weeks ahead could foretell the turning of a corner.

"We're starting to see light at the end of the tunnel," Trump claimed at an White House briefing.

Louisiana health officials reported 68 more coronavirus-related deaths, the state's biggest jump since the outbreak began. In all, the state where New Orleans hosts millions of tourists yearly has about 480 reported deaths and over 13,000 infections.



A view of St Thomas' Hospital in Westminster where it is believed but not confirmed that Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson is undergoing tests after suffering from coronavirus symptoms, in London, Monday, April 6, 2020. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been admitted to a hospital with the

coronavirus. Johnson's office says he is being admitted for tests because he still has symptoms 10 days after testing positive for the virus. (AP Photo/Frank Augstein)

A report from a federal watchdog agency found that three out of four U.S. hospitals surveyed are already treating patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19.

Italy still has, by far, the world's highest coronavirus death toll—almost 16,000—but the pressure on northern Italy's intensive care units has eased so much that Lombardy is no longer airlifting patients to other regions.

Yet elderly Italians like Enrico Giacomoni were still dying alone even after being put on a breathing machine. The octogenarian's family had to rely on a single daily update from a busy doctor.

"He wasn't expecting this," said his son, Roberto. "He was there hoping things would get better, and all I could do was tell him, 'Papa, be strong. You'll see, this will pass.'"

"But his eyes were sad, in the sense that he obviously knew," he added.



A lone taxi cab drives over a typically gridlocked highway with the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, in the skyline behind it in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Monday, April 6, 2020. Dubai, one of seven sheikdoms in the United Arab Emirates, is now under a 24-hour lockdown over the new coronavirus pandemic. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)

In Spain, deaths and new infections dropped again Monday. The health ministry reported 637 new deaths, the lowest toll in 13 days, for a total of over 13,000 dead. New recorded infections were also the lowest in two weeks.

Emergency rooms in the hard-hit Madrid region of 6.6 million were returning almost to normal a week after scenes of patients sleeping on floors and in chairs.

Patients awaiting treatment in Madrid-area ERs went down Monday to 390 cases, one-tenth of the arrivals last week, the regional government said. The number of people being treated for coronavirus in intensive care stabilized at about 1,500 for five straight days.

Transport, Mobility and Urban Affairs Minister José Luis Ábalos said the figures show Spain is entering "a new phase of the battle."

"This new phase does not mean we can let down our guard. We are assessing the measures that we will need to adopt," Ábalos said.



Cyclists watch the colorful sky waiting for the sunrise in Munich, Germany, Monday, April 6, 2020. Due to the coronavirus German police patrol to prevent gatherings of more than two people in public places. (AP Photo/Matthias Schrader)

Yet Britain's outbreak was headed in the opposite direction as the country reported more than 600 deaths Sunday, surpassing Italy's daily increase for the second day in a row.

In a rare televised address, Queen Elizabeth II appealed to Britons to rise to the occasion, while acknowledging they face enormous disruptions, grief and financial difficulties. In the midst of the speech Sunday night, Johnson was admitted to the hospital.

"I hope in the years to come, everyone will be able to take pride in how they responded to this challenge," the 93-year-old monarch said. "And those who come after us will say that the Britons of this generation were as strong as any."

Lacking enough for protective gear against the virus, British doctors and nurses were wearing goggles from school science classes, holding their breath when close to patients, and repeatedly reusing single-use masks, Dr. Rinesh Parmar, head of Doctors' Association UK, told Sky News.



President Donald Trump speaks during a coronavirus task force briefing at the White House, Sunday, April 5, 2020, in Washington. (AP Photo/Patrick Semansky)

Worldwide, more than 1.2 million people have been confirmed infected and over 70,000 have died, according to Johns Hopkins University. The true numbers are certainly much higher, because of limited testing, different ways nations count the dead and deliberate under-reporting by some governments.

The virus is spread by droplets from coughs or sneezes. For most people, the virus causes mild to moderate symptoms such as fever and cough. But for some, especially older adults and the infirm, it can cause pneumonia. Over 263,000 people have recovered worldwide.

There is no known treatment, but some drugs have shown promise and patients are rushing to join studies.

Illness has been compounded by shocking economic pain as all the world's largest economies have ground to a halt, with 10 million jobs lost in the United States in the last two weeks alone.



A healthcare worker at St. Paul's Hospital acknowledges applause and cheers from people outside the hospital, as a convoy of first responders with lights and sirens activated parade past to show support for the hospital staff, in Vancouver, British Columbia, Sunday, April 5, 2020. (Darryl Dyck/The Canadian Press via AP)

Two weeks ago, Sergio Chavira, a 33-year-old truck driver in New Mexico, was advertising on Craigslist for other drivers to help him haul crude oil. Now he hasn't driven his truck for a week.

"Everything is slowing down," Chavira said. "They give us less loads to haul every day."

Austria and the Czech Republic both began openly discussing how to ease some of the crippling restrictions. Austria's chancellor said the plan is to let small shops and garden centers reopen next week, limiting the number of customers inside, and the rest on May 1. The Czech government is proposing an end to the ban on travel abroad as of April 14 and the reopening of small stores.

In Asia, Japan's prime minister said he will declare a state of emergency for Tokyo and six other prefectures as early as Tuesday. Infections are soaring in the country that has the world's third-largest economy and its oldest population.



In this image taken from video of the TWITTER/@BorisJohnson, Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson speaks from self isolation which he has been in since contracting coronavirus, Friday April 3, 2020. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been admitted to a hospital with the coronavirus. Johnson's office says he is being admitted for tests because he still has symptoms 10 days after testing positive for the virus. (TWITTER/@BorisJohnson via AP)



Foreign tourists arrive at the Christchurch Airport terminal as they prepare to check in for a charter flight back to Germany via Vancouver from Christchurch, New Zealand, Monday, April 6, 2020. The German Embassy in Wellington last week said more than 12,000 German tourists had signed up for its repatriation program from New Zealand following the strict monthlong lockdown, which is aimed at preventing more coronavirus infections. 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/Mark Baker)



Foreign tourists wait to be checked by German Embassy staff at Christchurch Airport terminal as they prepare to check in for a charter flight back to Germany via Vancouver from Christchurch, New Zealand, Monday, April 6, 2020. The German Embassy in Wellington last week said more than 12,000 German tourists had signed up for its repatriation program from New Zealand following the strict monthlong lockdown, which is aimed at preventing more coronavirus infections. 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/Mark Baker)



Electric screens about precautions against the COVID-19 illness are seen in a subway train in Seoul, South Korea, Monday, April 6, 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/Ahn Young-joon)



In this photo taken Friday, April 3, 2020 medical workers prepare to test a person, centre, for COVID-19 in a mobile testing unit in Yeoville, Johannesburg's. South Africa, one of the world's most unequal countries with a large population vulnerable to the new coronavirus, may have an advantage in the coronavirus outbreak, honed during years battling HIV and tuberculosis: the know-how and infrastructure to conduct mass testing. (AP Photo/Shiraz Mohamed)



Two construction workers examine a drainage system with the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, in the skyline behind them in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Monday, April 6, 2020. Dubai, one of seven sheikdoms in the United Arab Emirates, is now under a 24-hour lockdown over the new coronavirus pandemic. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)



In this photo taken Sunday, April 5, 2020, laboratory technician Irene Ooko prepares nasal swabs to be tested for the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19, at the Pathologists Lancet Kenya laboratory in Nairobi, Kenya. The company, which is offering tests to patients with a doctor's referral, was previously having to send samples to South Africa for testing but is now completing the testing in-house in Kenya. (AP Photo/Brian Inganga)



In this photo taken Sunday, April 5, 2020, laboratory technicians work on testing patient samples for the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19, at the Pathologists Lancet Kenya laboratory in Nairobi, Kenya. The company, which is offering tests to patients with a doctor's referral, was previously having to send samples to South Africa for testing but is now completing the testing in-house in Kenya. (AP Photo/Brian Inganga)



In this photo taken Sunday, April 5, 2020, laboratory technicians handle microcentrifuge tubes containing patient samples to be tested for the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19, at the Pathologists Lancet Kenya laboratory in Nairobi, Kenya. The company, which is offering tests to patients with a doctor's referral, was previously having to send samples to South Africa for testing but is now completing the testing in-house in Kenya. (AP Photo/Brian Inganga)



In this photo taken Sunday, April 5, 2020, laboratory technicians, seen behind a blue-tinted window, work on testing patient samples for the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19, at the Pathologists Lancet Kenya laboratory in Nairobi, Kenya. The company, which is offering tests to patients with a doctor's referral, was previously having to send samples to South Africa for testing but is now completing the testing in-house in Kenya. (AP Photo/Brian Inganga)

The disease emerged in China late last year, and every week seems to bring an unwelcome surprise to those trying to fight it. A tiger at the Bronx Zoo has tested positive in what is believed to be the first known infection in an animal in the U.S. or a tiger anywhere.

The zoo's' director, Jim Breheny, said he hoped the finding can contribute to the global fight against the virus.

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