

New Zealand near eradication, but virus has grim global hold

May 29 2020, by Nick Perry



Blue Impulse of the Japan Air Self-Defense Force fly over the Tokyo Station to show support towards medical staff battling the COVID-19 pandemic Friday, May 29, 2020, in Tokyo. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has announced the lift of a coronavirus state of emergency from Tokyo and four other remaining areas, ending the restrictions nationwide as businesses begin to reopen. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

New Zealand on Friday had all but eradicated the coronavirus from its shores with just one person in the nation of 5 million known to be still infected, but developments elsewhere were generally grim, with India reporting another record increase in cases and Pakistan a record number of deaths.

In the U.S., the virus threw more than 2 million people out of work last week despite the gradual reopening of businesses, stoking fears the scourge is doing deep and potentially long-lasting damage to the world's largest economy.

The latest job-loss figures from the U.S. Labor Department bring to 41 million the running total of Americans who have filed for [unemployment benefits](#) since the [coronavirus](#) shutdowns took hold in mid-March.

In New Zealand, health authorities have not found any new virus cases for a week. Of the 1,504 people who were infected, 22 have died and all but one of the rest have now recovered. The nation's borders remain closed and staying virus-free when they eventually reopen poses a big challenge.

India registered another record daily increase of 7,466 cases just before its two-month lockdown ends Sunday. The government's new guidelines expected this weekend may extend the lockdown in the worst-hit areas while easing the rules to promote [economic activity](#) elsewhere.

Most cases in India are concentrated around its [largest cities](#), including Mumbai and New Delhi, but cases have been increasing in some of the poorest eastern states as [migrant workers](#) who lost jobs in the cities return to their native villages.



General manager Doug Davis wears a protective glove as he takes money from a moviegoer at a ticket booth at Mission Tiki drive-in theater in Montclair, Calif., Thursday, May 28, 2020. California moved to further relax its coronavirus restrictions and help the battered economy. Flea markets, swap meets and drive-in movie theaters can resume operations. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)

Pakistan on Friday reported 57 deaths, its highest single-day increase since the outbreak began. That increased the overall death toll to more than 1,300 and the number of cases to over 64,000.

In the Philippines, President Rodrigo Duterte decided to ease a lockdown in the capital to a more relaxed quarantine on Monday after more than two months of strictures enforced by the police and military. Infections spiked in Manila recently, and Duterte warned that the

pandemic is not over and the quarantine was in place around the country.

In the U.S., where the death toll is the highest in the world and has surpassed 101,000, there were some encouraging signs in the [economic data](#).

The overall number of Americans currently drawing jobless benefits dropped for the first time since the crisis began, from 25 million to 21 million. And first-time applications for unemployment benefits have fallen for eight straight weeks, as states gradually let stores, restaurants and other businesses reopen and the [auto industry](#) starts up factories again.



Moviegoers wear masks while watching a movie from a truck bed at Mission Tiki drive-in theater in Montclair, Calif., Thursday, May 28, 2020. California

moved to further relax its coronavirus restrictions and help the battered economy. Flea markets, swap meets and drive-in movie theaters can resume operations. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)

But the number of U.S. workers filing for unemployment benefits is still extraordinarily high by historical standards, and that suggests businesses are failing or permanently downsizing, not just laying off people until the crisis can pass, economists warn.

"That is the kind of economic destruction you cannot quickly put back in the bottle," said Adam Ozimek, chief economist at Upwork.

The U.S. unemployment rate was 14.7% in April, a level not seen since the Depression, and many economists expect it will be near 20% in May.

Other looming storm clouds: Economists say the sharp loss of tax revenue is likely to force public-sector layoffs. And cuts beyond the initially hit industries such as restaurants and stores are a sign of spreading, potentially lasting damage. Economists say double-digit unemployment could persist through 2021.



Newly dug, empty graves fill the Vila Formosa cemetery where many COVID-19 victims are being buried in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Thursday, May 28, 2020. (AP Photo/Andre Penner)



A man wearing a mask to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus pushes a stroller with empty cooking gas cylinders in the La Vega neighborhood of Caracas, Venezuela, Thursday, May 28, 2019. (AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos)



Blue Impulse of the Japan Air Self-Defense Force fly over medical workers of Self-Defense Forces Central Hospital in Tokyo, Friday, May 29, 2020, in Tokyo. A Japanese Air Self-Defense Force's aerobatics team performed a demonstration flight to express support and gratitude for medical workers. The six Blue Impulse aircraft flew for about 20 minutes over Tokyo to thank for doctors, nurses and other medical staff. (Kyodo News via AP)



Blue Impulse of the Japan Air Self-Defense Force flies past the moon as it shows support towards medical staff battling the COVID-19 pandemic Friday, May 29, 2020, in Tokyo. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has announced the lift of a coronavirus state of emergency from Tokyo and four other remaining areas, ending the restrictions nationwide as businesses begin to reopen. (AP Photo/Kiichiro Sato)



A young boy prepares to fly a kite on a public beach with the Burj al-Arab hotel behind him in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Friday, May 29, 2020. Dubai on Friday further loosed its restrictions imposed over the coronavirus pandemic, allowing people to sunbathe and swim at public beaches. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)

A number of European countries have strong safety-net programs that are underwriting the wages of millions of workers and keeping them on the payroll instead of adding them to the ranks of the unemployed. But the economic damage is mounting there, too.

Nissan is rolling back production in Spain in a move the government said could lead to 3,000 direct job cuts and thousands more losses at the automaker's suppliers. And French unemployment claims jumped 22%

in April, with 843,000 more people seeking work.

Worldwide, the virus has infected more than 5.8 million people and killed about 360,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. The true dimensions of the disaster are widely believed to be significantly greater, with experts saying many victims died without ever being tested.

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