

WHO says pandemic 'not even close' to over as toll passes 500,000

June 29 2020, by Robin Millard With Afp Bureaus



The World Health Organization has warned that six months on, the coronavirus pandemic is "actually speeding up"

The coronavirus pandemic is "not even close to being over", the WHO warned Monday, as the global death toll passed half a million and cases

surge in Latin America and the United States.

In another grim milestone, the number of infections recorded worldwide rose to more than 10 million, according to an AFP tally, while some authorities reimposed lockdown measures that have crippled the global economy.

"We all want this to be over. We all want to get on with our lives," World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

"But the hard reality is this is not even close to being over," he said, adding that "although many countries have made some progress, globally the pandemic is actually speeding up."

The virus emerged six months ago in China, where the WHO will send a team next week in connection with the search for its origin, Tedros said.

COVID-19 is still rampaging across the US, which has recorded more than 125,000 deaths and 2.5 million cases—both around a quarter of the global totals.

As numerous US states are forced to reimpose restrictions on restaurants and bars, President Donald Trump has come under growing pressure to set an example by wearing a mask.

Trump's health secretary has warned the "window is closing" for the country to gain control of the situation, but the president has largely turned away from the crisis, spending much of Sunday at his golf club in Virginia.

However, he may not be able to avoid masks forever—the Florida city of Jacksonville, where Trump's Republicans are due to hold their national convention in August, declared face masks mandatory on

Monday.



US President Donald Trump is under growing pressure to set an example by wearing a face mask

'Immense pain'

The second hardest-hit country Brazil registered 259,105 infections in the seven days through Sunday—the country's highest of any week during the pandemic.

The latest figures came as protesters in cities across Brazil—and as far away as Stockholm, London and Barcelona—held demonstrations

against President Jair Bolsonaro, who has said the virus is akin to a "little flu" and railed against stay-at-home measures.

"Brazil is suffering immense pain, a hidden pain that throbs in the face of the incredible numbers of deaths caused by COVID-19," the organisers of a protest in the capital Brasilia said.

While bars were forced to close in Los Angeles, Ireland's pubs began pouring pints for the first time in 15 weeks, as Europe—still the hardest-hit continent—continues to open up after seeing numbers of new cases fall.



One of thousands of protesters demonstrating across Brazil against the pandemic response of President Jair Bolsonaro

"Guinness is good for you," quipped Mark O'Mahony—the first to order a pint with his breakfast at a Dublin pub. "Without it, it hasn't been much good really for 15 weeks."

In nearby Britain, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said his country had gone through a "profound shock" as he prepared to unveil a large stimulus programme.

His government still plans to reopen pubs, restaurants and hairdressers across England on July 4, even as it warns it may have to shut down the city of Leicester because of a spike in cases.

Meanwhile, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron called for a "strong" and "efficient" recovery fund for the European Union.

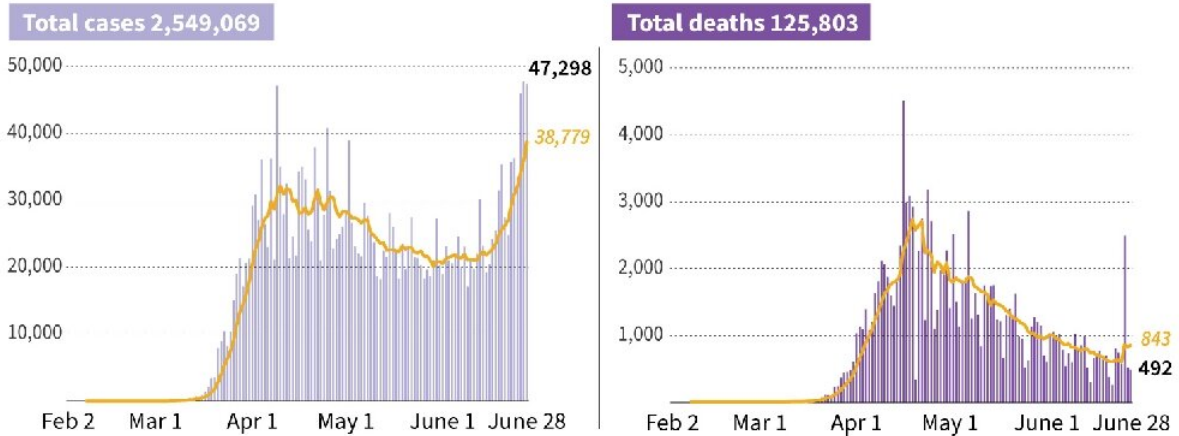
In Merkel's Germany, which has been praised for how it has tackled its COVID-19 outbreak, the North Rhine-Westphalia state extended a lockdown on a district hit hard by a slaughterhouse outbreak.

In neighbouring Switzerland, organisers said that 2021's Geneva International Motor Show was cancelled, after already scrapping this year's event.

COVID-19 in the United States

New cases and deaths per day with *rolling 7-day average*

— Average



Source: Johns Hopkins University, AFP tally

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New cases and deaths per day from coronavirus in the United States

Reimposed restrictions

Kazakhstan's president ordered the return of lockdown measures on Monday after hospitals warned they were running out of beds, while Serbia made masks mandatory in closed spaces after its cases spiked.

China has imposed a strict lockdown on nearly half a million people in a province surrounding Beijing to contain a fresh cluster.

The Middle East's most affected country Iran reported 162 more deaths on Monday, its highest single-day toll yet, a day after it also made mask-wearing mandatory for inside gatherings.

Many of the south and west US states where the virus is most rampant are where state leaders had pushed for early reopenings.

While opposition Democrats have urged Trump to reissue an emergency declaration on [coronavirus](#), White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said Monday the president had "no interest" in doing so.



A relative digs the grave of a coronavirus victim in Peru, as Latin America is hit hard in the pandemic



India is gradually easing a nationwide lockdown despite setting a daily record of 18,500 new cases and 385 deaths on Saturday

"The president's always said there will be embers, but he's always said that the cure cannot be worse than the problem," she told Fox News.

New York's iconic Broadway theatre district will stay closed through the end of the year, its trade association said Monday.

India, which is gradually easing a nationwide lockdown, registered a daily record of 18,500 new cases and 385 new deaths on Saturday.

Alka, one of the country's million accredited social health activists, or ASHAs, said it was difficult for the unprotected and poorly paid all-

women workers to get people to heed their advice.

"People are struggling to feed their families," she said. "What can we do?"

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