VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm David Byrd.

Vice President Mike Pence says the United States has developed a plan to get more than 3,000 people off a cruise ship that has been anchored off the coast of California after some passengers and crew tested positive for the coronavirus. AP's Julie Walker reports.

Karen Dever from New Jersey got on the ship with her husband for a celebratory cruise. Now she wonders when she will ever get off. She says President Trump's comments about keeping them there are just plain wrong.

"I'm an America. I should be allowed into my country."

Vice President Pence says they are making arrangement to dock the ship and test all the passengers.

"...bring the ship into a non-commercial port. All passengers and crew will be tested for the coronavirus and quarantined as appropriate. Those that require additional medical attention will also receive it."

I'm Julie Walker.

Italy's government has drafted plans to quarantine the entire Lombardy region around Milan as well as 11 provinces until April 3.

Meanwhile, Pope Francis has canceled his regular appearances in public to avoid crowds gathering to see him. Francesca Lynagh of Reuters has more.

The Vatican said that on Sunday the 83-year-old pontiff will not address crowds from a window overlooking St. Peter's Square, and for the time being will opt for video streaming instead.

Italy is the worst-hit European country with the death toll of nearly 200.

The leader of the country's co-ruling Democratic Party, Nicola Zingaretti, confirmed on Saturday that he, too, had contracted the virus.

On Saturday, France, Germany and the Netherlands all reported a rise in the number of cases while Malta, Slovakia and Serbia confirmed their first infections.

That's Francesca Lynagh of Reuters.

And this is VOA news.

Rescue workers continued trying to reach several people trapped when a hotel being used as a coronavirus quarantine center collapsed in Quanzhou, China.

The ministry of emergency management said that about 43 people had been rescued as of Saturday night. But others still remain trapped.

Video from the site showed rescue workers scrambling over piles of twisted metal and rubble and taking injured people to ambulances.

The cause of the collapse is not known. The hotel reportedly opened in 2018.

Quanzhou is about 1,000 kilometers from Wuhan, the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak in China.

Tear gas and smoke bombs clouded a Greek-Turkish land border on Saturday in a fresh flare-up of tensions over migrants seeking access to European Union territory. Reuters' Olivia Chang reports.

A Reuters correspondent in the area said the projectiles were coming from Turkish territory and being fired to its Greek police near the border crossing. Some tear gas was also being fired by Greek police.

Thousands of migrants have been trying to get into Greece, an EU member state, after Turkey said last week it would no longer try to keep them as agreed in 2016 with the EU in return for billions of euros in aid.

Greek officials say authorities have stopped more than a thousand attempts to cross the border in the last 24 hours.

Heavy machinery was moved to the border crossing area on the Greek side on Saturday morning and a bulldozer was seen digging embankments.

That's Olivia Chang of Reuters.

The race for the Democratic presidential nomination is down to two and former Vice President Joe Biden and Senator Bernie Sanders have been on the campaign trail in the Midwest. AP's Ben Thomas has more.

"Thank you, Dearborn."

Bernie Sanders liked the make-up of the crowd that cheered up for his rally in Dearborn, Michigan.

"I get inspired because I talk to groups like this. I look around this room, and I see people coming from so many different backgrounds. It is beautiful. This is what America looks like at its best."

Meanwhile, Joe Biden was campaigning in St. Louis.

"You know, Senator Sanders likes to say he'll need a record turnout to defeat Donald Trump. He's right. And we're the campaign that's going to do that record turnout."

Missouri and Michigan both hold primaries on Tuesday.

I'm Ben Thomas.

Lebanon's prime minister said Saturday the government will suspend payment of $1.2 bill in loans, marking the first time the crisis-hit country's default[ed] on its sovereign debt.

The $1.2 billion euro bond was scheduled to mature on Monday.

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