VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm Marissa Melton.

Coronavirus cases are impacting life from coast to coast in the United States. AP's Ed Donahue reports.

All bars and restaurants in at least eight states are required to close at least part of the day.

Santa Clara County in California has been the epicenter of cases of the coronavirus in the San Francisco Bay area.

Dr. Sara Cody is the local health officer.

"These new orders direct all individuals to shelter at their place of residence and maintain social distancing of at least six feet from any other person when outside their residence."

In Ohio, Governor Mike DeWine points out Tuesday is presidential primary election day.

"It is clear that tomorrow's in-person voting does not conform and cannot conform with these CDC guidelines."

DeWine wants to push the Ohio primary back to June.

I'm Ed Donahue.

With fears of the coronavirus pandemic sweeping the United States, [pre dem...] Democratic presidential candidates, Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders, are staging virtual rallies today, a day ahead of the presidential nominating primary elections. In those four states, Biden is expected to win handily.

They held a face-to-face debate Sunday night in a television studio without an audience. During the debate, Biden promised to pick a woman as a vice presidential candidate. Sanders said he would in all likelihood pick a progressive woman as a running mate.

Russia's constitutional court on Monday approved a law on constitutional amendments that could allow Russian President Vladimir Putin to remain in power for another 16 years. The law must still be approved in a national referendum that's scheduled for April 22.

The court's approval came just two days after Putin signed the law.

You can follow that story and all the coronavirus news plus U.S. politics at our website voanews.com. This is VOA news.

Several African governments have closed borders, restricted flights and implemented strict quarantines meant to curb the spread of the [coro...] coronavirus. For VOA, Simon Marks reports on COVID-19's economic impact on Africa.

The United Nations says it now estimates Africa's GDP rate will fall from 3.2 percent to 1.8 percent this year.

Vera Songwe is Secretary-General of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

"This is going to deal a very severe blow to growth even though the numbers of cases on the continent are quite small. If you look at that Africa does not seem to be directly affected. But then when you go to the economics, and I think that is where the big story is for Africa. We are being severely affected."

Over the weekend, Kenya shut its border to foreigners, while Ghana banned entry to anyone who had visited a country with the coronavirus in the last two weeks.

South Africa, which is already in a recession, has declared a national state of emergency and banned travel to and from China, Europe and the U.S.

Simon Marks, for VOA news, Addis Ababa.

Israeli opposition leader Benny Gantz received an official mandate Monday to try to form Israel's next government. Reuters' Emer McCarthy has that story.

After nearly a year of political gridlock, Benny Gantz, the chief rival of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has received the official go-ahead to try and form that country's next government. And he's calling on Netanyahu to join him in a unity administration.

Sixty-one of parliament's 120 legislators now support Gantz, a sharp blow to Netanyahu who had previously declared himself the winner of the March 2 election.

Israel has held three inconclusive elections in less than a year and Netanyahu faces a criminal indictment on corruption charges, which he denies.

That's [Rutter...] Reuters' Emer McCarthy reporting.

The International Organization for Migration reports that tens of thousands of refugees cross into war-torn Yemen each year in hopes of reaching Saudi Arabia and finding work. For VOA, Lisa Schlein reports.

The United Nations considers Yemen the world's worst humanitarian catastrophe.

Despite this disastrous situation, migrants from the Horn of Africa remain undeterred in their determination to reach Yemen and then to Saudi Arabia and a hoped-for better life.

Last year, the International Organization for Migration reports more than 138,000 people crossed the Gulf of Aden to Yemen.

It says an agreement last year between Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia that allows 100,000 Ethiopian workers to travel legally to Saudi Arabia for work has been successful and the agency calls for it to be extended.

Lisa Schlein, for VOA news, Geneva.

I'm Marissa Melton. You're listening to VOA news.