VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm David Byrd.

The Trump administration is warning Americans not to travel overseas because of the global coronavirus pandemic. AP's Ed Donahue has more.

The upgraded alert urges Americans not to travel abroad under any circumstances and return home immediately if they are already abroad unless they are planning to stay for an indefinite period.

The previous alert advised reconsidering all international travel, which is called a "level three" alert. This alert is "level four" and is unprecedented, usually reserved for specific countries involved in conflict, natural disasters or where Americans face specific threats.

These alerts are not mandatory. The only way to ban Americans from going abroad would be to invalidate their passports.

Ed Donahue, Washington.

U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has introduced emergency legislation to stem the economic fallout of the coronavirus pandemic.

As AP's Sagar Meghani reports, the more than $1 trillion package would help offset some of the losses brought on by the virus.

The Senate is under enormous pressure to finish a relief package pitched by the White House that could exceed a trillion dollars. Half would go straight to families and individuals - direct deposited checks that Treasury chief Steven Mnuchin tells Fox Business Network would amount to $3,000 for a family of four.

The rest of the package would prop up businesses and keep employees on the payroll.

Some economists say the country's probably already in a recession.

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

The coronavirus is starting to have an impact on the U.S. job market. The Labor Department said Thursday the number of new claims for unemployment benefits soared to 70,000 last week.

Both the one [reek] week rise and the total number of applications were far above the past year when the jobless rate was three and a half percent.

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Italy passed a grim milestone Thursday reaching more than 3,400 deaths from the coronavirus. That's more than in China where the outbreak originated.

[Italy said] Italy passed that milestone on the same day that Wuhan, the original epicenter, recorded no new infections.

As ??? reports, Italy's health system is pushed to the breaking point.

Footage shot inside Oglio Po Hospital in Cremona, Italy, on Thursday shows the strain at the frontline of the battle - a hospital normally only containing 50 beds now housing 120 and that's still not enough.

The sound of ventilators feeding oxygen into lungs are heard as patients lie immobile on their beds. Some are able to sit up and signal to nursing staff behind masks. Others lie on their fronts connected to machines, unable to breathe any other way.

With cases still rising, the government is considering further restrictions on the limited amount of outdoor movement currently permitted.

That's ??? of Reuters.

As the outbreak of COVID-19 worsens in Britain, Londoners are being urged to stay off public transportation and stop mixing with one another. AP's Karen Chammas reports.

London with population of 19 million people is at the center of the British outbreak and holds the third of its compound cases.

Transit operator Transport for London said it would close up to 40 London Underground stations, with reduced services remaining open to allow key workers to make essential journeys.

Britons have been urged to work from home and avoid bars, shops and restaurants to slow the spread of the virus. But these public spaces have not yet been ordered to close.

However, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced the closure of schools nationwide to try and slow the spread of the virus.

"... we think now that we must apply, downward pressure, further downward pressure on that upward curve by closing the schools."

Karen Chammas, London.

Hospitals with a shortage of medical supplies for treating the coronavirus are finding new a source - TV shows. AP entertainment correspondent Margie Szaroleta reports.

The Fox medical series, The Resident, has donated masks, gloves and gowns from its set to a hospital in Atlanta near where the show films.

Dr. Karen Law of Grady Memorial Hospital says on Instagram she told the residents "a magical shipment of masks is unlikely to arrive," and yet it did.

The ABC show "The Good Doctor" films in Vancouver and plans to donate its gear to hospitals there.

Actor Daniel Dae Kim from "The Good Doctor" says he has tested positive for the coronavirus. He says on Instagram he had an itchy throat and body aches and he felt better in a couple of days.

I'm Margie Szaroleta.

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