VOA NEWS

March 31, 2020

This is VOA news. Via remote, I'm Marissa Melton.

U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday said the one-month extension of social distancing guidelines he has ordered could save 1 million lives in the country.

"We will have a great victory," the president told reporters. "We have no other choice."

Top U.S. public health officials are warning that even if the measures are rigidly followed, the number of COVID-19 deaths in the country will likely be between 100,000 and 200,000.

The president told reporters at the daily White House coronavirus task force briefing that 1 million people across the nation have now been tested for the novel coronavirus.

The number of known U.S. cases has topped 160,000. That's the most in any country. More than 2,800 deaths in the country have been attributed to COVID-19. A one-day record of 486 deaths for the country was recorded on Monday, according to media reports.

The World Health Organization chief called on the world's top economic powers to use their resources to address worldwide shortages of protective equipment and medical supplies as the pandemic continues.

During his daily briefing from WHO headquarters in Geneva, Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus urged the Group of 20 top economic nations to work with companies to increase production of medical protective products and other medical goods.

Tedros said while he understands why countries may be restricting the movement of people from place to place in an effort to limit the spread of the coronavirus, he urged governments to allow essential goods to move across borders to areas where they are needed most.

He said the pandemic is a reminder of how vulnerable, connected and dependent the world's people are on one another.

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Wall Street opened the new trading week on a high note Monday with big gains by all three major indexes even while there's little good news on the coronavirus pandemic.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 691 points. That's a 3% gain. The S&P 500 was also 3% higher while the NASDAQ was up 4%.

Major European indexes were also higher on Monday - 1% in London and Paris and 2% in Frankfurt. Asian markets fell 1%.

The United Nations top envoy for Syria warned on Monday that the coronavirus could be a new "calamity" for the war-torn country and that a nationwide cease-fire must be implemented immediately.

Special Envoy Geir Pedersen told the U.N. Security Council in a virtual meeting that the pandemic "demands a complete shift in mindset" to see the virus as the major threat against all Syrians.

Syria has officially confirmed 10 cases of the respiratory illness caused by the new coronavirus and one death. There is no data available on how widely or whether the government is testing people.

Pedersen said there is a high risk that authorities will be unable to contain the pandemic due to high levels of population movements and overcrowding in displaced persons camps and detention facilities. There is also a severe shortage of health professionals and the [nest...] necessary medical equipment and supplies.

U.N. humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock told council members that given the virus's trajectory in other countries, Syria's 10 reported cases are only "the tip of the iceberg."

Russia tightened controls aimed at combating the spread of the coronavirus on Monday, with Moscow introducing temporary quarantine measures and the Kremlin moving to extend the lockdown nationwide.

The new restrictions came as President Vladimir Putin discussed the coronavirus, among other issues, with President Donald Trump in a phone call that the Kremlin insisted was at Washington's request.

The conversation came as Putin made clear he recognized the growing threat of the [co...] COVID-19 outbreak. He appeared for his second televised national address on the issue Monday afternoon with a new sense of urgency.

The new tone came as a government task force said suspected cases of COVID-19 had swelled past the 1,800 mark with nine deaths - numbers that continued to place Russia far lower than other global coronavirus hotspots. Kremlin allies and critics alike now acknowledge that may be due to underreporting.

And officials in Afghanistan said Monday at least 21 security forces have died in the latest Taliban attacks and a planned prisoner swap with the insurgent group has been delayed again.

The deadliest violence occurred in northern Takhar province where Taliban fighters assaulted several government outposts.

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