VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. Reporting via remote, I'm David Byrd.

President Donald Trump says the United States is "at the top of the hill" of new coronavirus-related infections. Without providing any evidence for his statement, the president said he was confident the U.S. economy would bounce back.

"I'm not sure a lot of people (will) ever be the same, but I think our country from an economic standpoint will end up being stronger than ever. We have tremendous stimulus, we have tremendous stimulus plans. We have things in the works that are going to really, I think, fire the country. I think that what's going to happen is we're gonna have a big bounce rather than a small bounce."

Trump made the comments during a White House briefing Thursday. The president also said there would be no universal testing of Americans for the virus.

His comments came as the number of deaths in the United States from COVID-19 passed 16,000.

The coronavirus pandemic continues battering the American workforce. AP Washington correspondent Sagar Meghani reports.

In just three weeks, roughly one in ten workers have lost their jobs, with 16.8 million people filing for jobless benefits. It's a staggering fall and PNC Financial Services' ??? says it will get worse.

"This will be the worst month ever for job losses. We'll likely see the unemployment rate move above 10 percent in the near term."

With the economy grinding to a near halt, Morgan Stanley says non-grocery retail business was down 97 percent in the last week of March compared to a year earlier, airline passenger screenings are down 95 percent and hotel revenue 80 percent.

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

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British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Thursday left intensive care where he had spent the three previous days for treatment against coronavirus.

His Downing Street office said the prime minister was moved from intensive care back to the ward where he would receive close monitoring during the early phase of his recovery.

Meanwhile, Britons are getting ready for the possibility of several more weeks in lockdown. AP correspondent Karen Chammas reports.

Johnson's stand-in, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab will chair a meeting of the government's COBRA crisis committee to discuss whether to extend a three-week lockdown. The restrictions end on Monday.

There is little prospect of the government's stay-home order and business closures being lifted. Restrictions could be strengthened if people flock to parks and outdoor spaces over what is forecast to be a warm, sunny Easter weekend.

Karen Chammas, London.

A nationwide cease-fire in response to the global coronavirus outbreak went into effect in Yemen on Thursday. Reuters correspondent Edward Baran reports.

A Saudi-led coalition fighting against Yemen's Houthi movement announced overnight it would halt military operations for two weeks - the movement in support of U.N. efforts to end the conflict that has killed more than 100,000 people.

The Houthi leadership has yet to announce whether the Iran-aligned movement, which controls Sana'a and most major urban centers in Yemen, would follow suit. If so, it would be a major breakthrough in peace efforts, the first since 2018.

The coalition said its move aimed to facilitate talks for a permanent truce, motivated in part to avoid a potential outbreak of the new coronavirus, though so far no cases have been reported in Yemen.

The conflict, widely seen in the region as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran, has been in military stalemate for years.

France's competition authority ruled on Thursday that Google must pay French publishing companies and news agencies for re-using their content.

As Emer McCarthy reports, it applies to such things as snippets from articles in the search engine's results.

The ruling applies to snippets from news reports that would appear in search results.

The tech giant announced last year that they would stop doing so for French users to comply with a new European copyright law.

The competition authority said in a statement, that, quote "Google's practices caused a serious and immediate harm to the press sector."

The tech giant said it would comply with the verdict, which followed a complaint by unions representing French press publishers.

That's Reuters Emer McCarthy.

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