VOA NEWS

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

Things are moving along, U.S. President Donald Trump said today after meeting with heads of some of the nation's biggest retailers on the coronavirus response. The president said Monday in the White House Rose Garden that "all parts of the country are either in good shape or getting better, in all cases, getting better."

The administration is unveiling a plan to make enough coronavirus tests available that U.S. states can each sample at least 2.6 percent of their populations each month. Officials said areas hit hard by the virus would be able to test more than that.

Monday's news conference was meant to be a step toward reopening the nation's economy after weeks of isolation and quarantine.

Mr. Trump expressed confidence about this new stage, saying "testing is not going to be a problem at all." In fact, he said, other nations have been calling to get advice on testing from the United States.

At the same news conference, Mr. Trump said China could have stopped the coronavirus outbreak before it spread worldwide. He said his administration is doing some serious investigations into that assumption. He said, "We are not happy with China. We believe it could have been stopped at the source. It could have been stopped quickly."

The leaders [in the] of the U.S. states of Colorado, Mississippi, Montana and Tennessee allowed some businesses to resume operations on Monday after period of shutdown due to the coronavirus pandemic. They join Georgia, Oklahoma, Alaska and South Carolina in the push to put people back to work and allow residents to get back to some semblance of their pre-coronavirus lives.

Health experts are warning against reopening too early. Many state governors have said measures will be in place to protect the people's safety.

There are about 980,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the country with 55,000 deaths.

New York state has been hit the hardest, with about 30 percent of all U.S. cases and deaths. Governor Andrew Cuomo said Sunday the lockdown order expires May 15.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is urging the world's governments to respect human rights during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Michelle Bachelet said in a statement Monday that human rights should not be violated, in her words, "under the guise of exceptional or emergency measures."

Bachelet said emergency powers "should be used to cope effectively with the pandemic - nothing more, nothing less" and "should not be a weapon [governts] governments can wield to quash dissent, control the population and even perpetuate their time in power."

The high commissioner's office has issued new policy guidance on the emergency measures because she said, "There have been numerous reports from different regions that police and other security forces have been using excessive, and at times lethal force to make people abide by lockdowns and curfews."

Almost all the countries in the world are under some kind of restrictive lockdown in an effort to halt the spread of the coronavirus. Nearly three million people around the world have been infected with the virus, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center. More than 206,000 people have died.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has endorsed former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination.

In a pre-recorded video statement released early Monday, she described Biden as "the personification of hope and courage." She cited his experience passing health care reform and the bank bailout in 2009 to argue that he is well positioned to lead the country amid a global pandemic.

Pelosi chose to stay neutral during the Democratic primary process, repeatedly cautioning the party to keep its eye on the ultimate prize of defeating Republican President Donald Trump in November.

All of [ri...] Biden's rivals in the party have suspended their campaigns or endorsed him, making his coronation as the Democratic nominee this summer a near certainty.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who returned to work on Monday [after contracting COVID-19] after recovering from COVID-19, said it was too early to relax Britain's restrictions.

Johnson spoke outside his Downing Street office, saying while he understands the impatience and anxiety people feel, relaxing restrictions right now would risk a "new wave of death and disease," in his words, that would further hurt the economy.

Johnson was the first world leader to contract COVID-19 and spent several days in an intensive care unit in London hospital fighting for disease.

Britain has recorded 4,310 new cases since this past Sunday and 360 fatalities. That brings the total number of COVID-19 deaths in Great Britain to 21,092. That's the lowest daily deaths tolls in a month for Britain but it makes Britain the fifth country in the world to surpass 20,000 deaths.

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