VOA NEWS

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

U.S. President Donald Trump visited a section of border wall in Yuma, Arizona, today. Trump autographed a new section of the wall and credited it for stopping both illegal immigration and the coronavirus.

He said, "Our border has never been more secure." He added "This is the most powerful and comprehensive border wall structure anywhere in the world."

Mr. Trump said the wall plus emergency responders, in his words, "prevented a coronavirus catastrophe on the southern border, shutting down human smuggling and swiftly returning the crossers."

"Without these public health measures," he said, "the southern border would be a global epicenter of the viral transmission."

Arizona is among several hotspots in the country for the COVID-19 outbreak.

Ahead of Trump's visit, the Arizona department of health on Tuesday reported nearly 3,600 new coronavirus cases. Overall, the state has more than 54,000 confirmed coronavirus cases and has recorded more than 1,300 deaths. That's according to Johns Hopkins University research.

Before he left for Arizona, President Trump voiced new concerns about the country conducting too many tests for coronavirus.

He said [in] on Twitter "Cases are going up in the U.S. because we are testing far more than any other country, and ever expanding." He continued "With smaller testing we would show fewer cases!"

The U.S. is leading the world with 2.3 million confirmed coronavirus cases and more than 120,000 deaths.

American health experts have often said one key to controlling the outbreak is to test as many people as possible and if they are infected with COVID-19, they too trace others they may have come in contact with.

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A powerful 7.4 magnitude earthquake shook southern Mexico Tuesday, killing at least two people and damaging several buildings.

The quake was centered near the Pacific coast resort of Huatulco and was felt nearly 700 kilometers away in Mexico City. It caused buildings to sway and sent thousands of residents into the streets.

Much of the damage is minor, with broken windows and collapsed walls. But authorities say buildings collapsing did cause both of the deaths.

The state-run oil company Pemex said the quake caused a fire at its Salina Cruz refinery which was quickly put out.

At least 140 aftershocks have been felt.

Geologists say southern Mexico, where four tectonic plates merge, is particularly vulnerable to strong earthquakes. An 8.0 magnitude quake hit the area in 1985.

Pakistan Tuesday ordered India to cut its embassy staff in Islamabad by half, just hours after New Delhi announced a similar decision.

The reciprocal action comes amid heightened tensions between the nuclear-armed South Asian rival countries over their long-running Kashmir territorial dispute.

The latest diplomatic dispute began late last month when India expelled two Pakistani officials for "espionage," prompting Pakistan to do the same in response.

Bilateral tensions have deteriorated since last August when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government unilaterally stripped the Indian-ruled portion of Kashmir of its decades-old constitutional [semiauto..., autonomous tal...] semiautonomous status, rather.

[in] New Delhi also placed [the ma...] the Muslim-majority region under a strict security and communication lockdown to deter violent reaction against the move though some restrictions have been [partially erased] partially eased, rather.

The World Meteorological Organization said Tuesday it's seeking to investigate record high temperatures reported from inside the Arctic Circle June 20.

At a news conference in Geneva, WMO spokeswoman Clare Nullis told reporters the U.N. weather agency is seeking to verify the reported 38 degrees Celsius temperature in (the) Russian town of Verkhoyansk amid a prolonged Siberian heat wave and increased wildfire activity.

The WMO says it will confer with Russia's weather agency. If the temperature is confirmed, a team of investigators will then search the WMO's archives to ensure this is indeed a record.

Nullis said the Russian weather agency reports that the region of Eastern Siberia where the record was reported "has very, very cold extremes in winter but is also known for its extremes in summer."

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