VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. Via remote, I'm Jim Bertel.

Two new studies offer hop of a potential vaccine for the novel coronavirus.

A trial in China involving more than 500 people showed most had developed widespread antibody immune responses. A separate trial in Britain found that an Oxford University vaccine induced strong antibody and T cell immune responses against the coronavirus.

World Health Organization health emergencies chief Dr. Michael Ryan says he is encouraged by the vaccine's development.

"This vaccine was given to a thousand healthy adults between the ages of 18 and 55 and certainly did not appear to have any serious adverse events other than the expected, in some cases, chills, muscle aches, headaches. And the vaccine did generate neutralizing antibody, I think, in (all partici)pants.

But Ryan cautions against setting expectations too high.

"There is a long way to go. These are phase-one studies. We now need to move into larger-scale real-world trials, but it is good to see more data and more products moving into this very important phase ...."

In the United States, the city of Chicago reimposed some coronavirus restrictions on Monday. And the state of Florida reported more than 10,000 new cases for the sixth day in a row as the pandemic showed few signs of abating.

In a rare ray of hope, New York state report(ed) fewest hospitalizations from the coronavirus in four months. This as New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio saw his city enter Phase 4 of reopening Monday.

"We see sports coming back, baseball back this week, professional baseball, Major League baseball. That's going to be incredible, media production starting again, a big part of the life of the city, a big part of people's livelihoods. Some wonderful outdoor activities op(ening up again, bo)tanical gardens ...."

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As metrics for the U.S. have grown worse including a rising number of cases, deaths in hospitalizations along with rates of positive test results, U.S. President Donald Trump is [exprecting] expressing optimism as negotiations continue on the next massive virus relief bill. AP's Sagar Meghani reports.

This would be the fifth aid package.

"I think we've made a lot of progress on that. And the discussions are going on."

President summoned GOP leaders to the Oval Office for an update on what's expected to be a trillion dollar bill. The first round of relief is close to running out and there are new divisions between Republicans and the White House, which is criticizing more money for virus testing and trying to add things like a payroll tax cut, which many GOP senators oppose.

Democrats, meantime, have momentum going into negotiations after the House passed a $3 trillion relief bill.

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

Elsewhere, the World Health Organization is raising alarms at the spread of COVID-19 in Africa. It's warning that South Africa's surging numbers could be a "prec(ursor" for out)breaks across the continent.

Until recently, Africa has remained relatively unscathed by the pandemic compared to the surging numbers seen in other parts of the world.

Brazil's Health Ministry says the coronavirus death toll has passed 80,000 in the country.

The South American country of 212 million people has confirmed 2.1 million in infections. Experts say under-testing means the real numbers are probably much higher.

European Union chief Charles Michel says he believes the deal is within reach for a huge coronavirus rescue package on the fourth day of a summit.

EU leaders met again behind closed-doors to hear the latest proposal to try to unblock a multibillion-euro bundle of loans and direct aid to drag Europe out of the recession caused by the pandemic.

Syrian state media says the country's air defenses intercepted Israeli missiles over the capital Monday during an attack in which a warn monitor says hit several positions of regime forces and Iran-backed militias.

A military spokesman in Israel says its army does not comment on foreign reports.

The White House says U.S. President Donald Trump spoke with French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday about ways to deescalate the situation in Libya.

Earlier, ... approved a possible deployment of troops outside its borders after President Abdel Fattah al-Sissi spoke of potential military operations in Libya.

This follows a phone conversation between the Egyptian leader and President Trump. The two reportedly agreed to maintain a cease-fire in Libya and avoid an escalation there.

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