VOA NEWS

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

U.S. President Donald Trump on Sunday hailed a federal government emergency authorization for use of convalescent blood plasma that he declared would "save countless lives" of coronavirus patients.

Trump and his health secretary, Alex Azar, held a briefing at which they noted a 35 percent decrease in mortality among patients younger than 80 who were not on a respirator.

Azar, the secretary of Health and Human Services, called the results "a major advance in the treatment of patients."

Convalescent blood plasma comes from patients who have recovered from the coronavirus. It is rich in antibodies and has been used to treat tens of thousands of COVID-19 patients in the United States.

Just before the president's comment, the Food and Drug Administration announced it has authorized - but technically not fully approved - the use of blood plasma containing antibodies from patients who have recovered from COVID-19.

The coronavirus pandemic has killed nearly 177,000 people in the United States and infected about 5.7 million. That's more than any other country.

Former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko has [ta...] tested positive for the coronavirus. She is in serious condition and has a fever, according to her party's spokeswoman.

Tymoshenko is the first high-profile Ukrainian politician known to have contracted COVID-19. [she serves two terms as prime] She served two terms as prime minister before her defeat in the presidential election of 2010.

Her condition is described as serious.

Ukraine has experienced a sharp rise in infections this week, with a new 24-hour total of more than 2,300 cases reported on Saturday. Overall, Ukraine has more than 100,000 cases of coronavirus.

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Tens of thousands of people rallied in the Belarus capital Sunday and called for President Alexander Lukashenko to resign after disputed election results, a postelection crackdown and a heavy military presence in the city.

Protesters, [merry] many wearing and waving the opposition's colors of red and white, chanted "freedom" and "we will not forget, we will not forgive" as they marched through the city center of Minsk.

State media reported about 20,000 protesters took part. But opposition-leaning media put the estimate at nearly 100,000 protesters.

The demonstrations began after the August 9 election, in which Lukashenko claimed 80 percent of the vote. The results drew claims of fraud by opposition parties.

China has launched the first of four "most advanced" warships it's building for Pakistan amid deepening defense and economic ties between the two allied nations. The development comes as both the countries are locked in border tensions with their mutual neighbor India.

The Pakistan Navy said Sunday that a Chinese state-owned shipyard in Shanghai [held a] held the launching ceremony for the frigate with top officials from the service in attendance.

(The) statement did not mention the cost of military vessels, but reported estimates are more than $350 million each. The Chinese builder is expected to deliver all four units to Pakistan by 2021.

Firefighters battling history-making wildfires in Northern California say the weather is not in their favor as they struggle to bring more than 600 separate blazes under control. In addition to the flames, firefighters are battling hot weather, unpredictable winds and possible lightning strikes that make the situation worse.

President Trump has declared a major disaster area for Northern California. That makes the state eligible for federal funds to help those who've lost their homes and properties.

State officials say the fires are the second-largest clusters of wildfires in recorded California history and this is for a state that has an annual wildfire season.

Experts blame the latest fires on storms that brought lots of lightning but no rain and extreme high temperatures in the California dessert last week did nothing to help.

Two strong storms are churning in the Gulf of Mexico and could affect the United States Monday.

The National Hurricane Center has posted hurricane warnings for parts [of] of Louisiana as Hurricane Marco closes in on the U.S. Gulf Coast.

A second storm, Tropical Storm Laura, has already left at least five people dead in Haiti and knocked out power and fresh water to more than 100,000 people in the Dominican Republic.

Laura could build into a hurricane some time Tuesday. If it does become a hurricane, [resear...] researchers say it will be the first time since [rec... rep...] record-keeping started that two [hurrihanes] hurricanes developed in the Gulf at the same time.

Marissa Melton, VOA news.