VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. Via remote, I'm Diane Roberts.

British-Swedish pharmaceutical giant Astra-Zeneca has paused its large-scale COVID-19 vaccine global trial after a volunteer participant who received the experimental drug became ill.

The company issued a statement saying the pause [is] in testing is a "routine action."

The vaccine is being tested in large-scale Phase 2 and Phase 3 trials in several countries, including Britain, Brazil and the United States.

[the] one of the U.S.'s top health officials says suspension of a coronavirus vaccine study should be assuring to the American people. AP's Sagar Meghani reports.

Astra-Zeneca has halted its final-stage testing after a volunteer fell ill.

"When we say we are going to focus first on safety and make no compromises, here is Exhibit A ...."

National Institutes of Health Director Francis Collins tells a Senate panel it's proof no corners will be cut as vaccines are developed and tested.

The suspension comes amid worries President Trump will pressure federal regulators to approve a vaccine before it's proven safe and ready.

Collins says he can speak for fellow scientists that's not how we'd work.

"Science and science alone will be the way in which this decision is made, otherwise I'll have no part of it."

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

The governor of Brazil's Sâo Paulo state said Wednesday Phase 3 clinical trials of a potential COVID-19 vaccine developed by China's Sinovac Biotech Ltd. have shown promising results and it may be available to Brazilians as early as December.

Some 9,000 Brazilian volunteers are participating in the Sinovac vaccine trials in 12 cities in Brazil.

At the start of next year, Phase 3 trials of Russia's "Sputnik-V" COVID-19 vaccine will also be conducted on 10,000 volunteers in Brazil in partnership with the state of Paraná's Technology Institute.

In Washington, this is VOA news.

Wednesday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called for an inquiry into the investigators who brought corruption charges against him in a move critics say is an attempt to distract from his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Amid a surge in coronavirus cases, opposition lawmakers have also accused Netanyahu of trying to discredit Israel's criminal justice system while he is on trial for bribery, fraud and breach of trust. He denies any wrongdoing.

U.S. President Donald Trump acknowledged in February he knew how deadly and contagious the coronavirus was but did not convey that information to the American people because he did not want to create a panic, according to interviews for a new book.

The recorded interviews obtained by CNN and based on a new book titled *Rage* by journalist Bob Woodward came out just weeks before the November 3 presidential election and as Trump's efforts to battle COVID-19 have come under intense criticism as being too little too late.

Speaking to reporters, President Trump says his remark was meant to calm the nation.

"...the last thing we can show is panic or excitement or fear or anything else. We had to take care of the, we had to take care of the situation we were given."

U.S. President Donald Trump spoke with Oman's leader, Sultan Haitham bin Tariq al-Said, Wednesday about ways to enhance regional security and strengthen economic ties between the two countries, the White House said in a statement.

Mr. Trump thanked the Omani leader for his statements of support following a U.S.-brokered agreement by the United Arab Emirates and Israel to normalize relations, the White House said.

Oman has been mentioned by Israeli officials as another country that could follow the UAE lead in normalizing ties with Israel, but there was no mention of that in the White House statement.

European Commission Vice President Maros Sefcovic will travel to London Thursday to meet British counterpart Michael Gove after [the UK proposed a legislation in which it said it would ignore parts of the UK-proposed], pardon, the UK proposed a legislation in which it said it would ignore parts of the Withdrawal Agreement, according to a spokesman for the commission.

[the quote,] quote, "The EU seeks clarifications from the UK on the full and timely implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement," according to a spokesman.

Strong winds and high temperatures fed nearly 100 extreme wildfires across the U.S. West Wednesday, severely damaging at least two small towns in Oregon where the governor declared an emergency for, quote, "unprecedented" blazes.

The governor, governor said the wildfires have all but destroyed five small towns and a record number of deaths is feared.

Firefighters in California, Washington and Oregon retreated from uncontrolled fires that forced tens of thousands to evacuate their homes and hundreds of thousands to lose power in the three states.

Via remote, I'm Diane Roberts, VOA news.