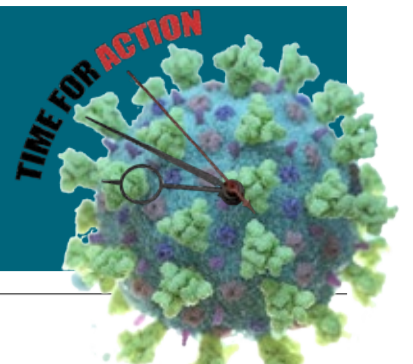
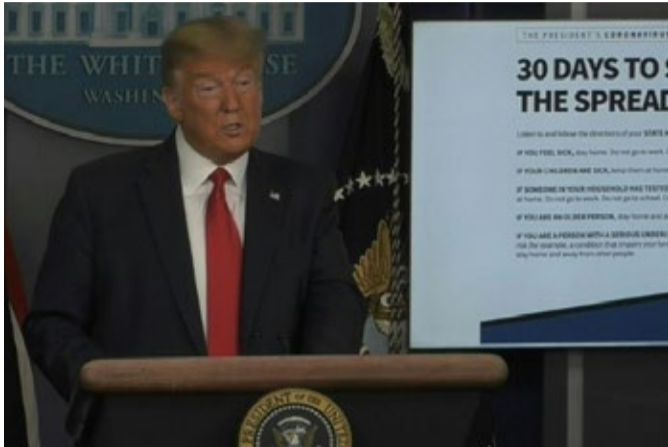


WORLD



US headed for 'very, very painful two weeks'



US President Donald Trump addresses a daily coronavirus briefing at the White House

AFP | Washington

President Donald Trump on Tuesday warned of a "very painful" two weeks as the United States wrestles with a coronavirus surge that the White House warns could kill as many as 240,000 Americans.

"This is going to be a very painful, a very, very painful two weeks," Trump told a press conference at the White House.

Trump described the pandemic as "a plague."

"I want every American to be prepared for the hard days that lie ahead," he said.

Top health experts said that the decision to maintain strict social distancing was the only way to stop the easily transmitted virus, even if this has caused massive disruption to the economy with three quarters of Americans under some form of lockdown.

"There's no magic vaccine or therapy. It's just behaviors, each of our behaviors translating into something that changes the course of this viral pandemic over the next 30 days," Deborah Birx, coronavirus response coordinator at the White House, said.

Birx displayed a chart at the press conference charting a range of 100,000 to 240,000 deaths in the United States, when current efforts at mitigation are taken into account.

Infectious diseases specialist Anthony Fauci told the press conference that "mitigation is actually working" and that authorities are "doing everything we can to get it (the death toll) significantly below that."

Trump's clear statement contrasted with numerous

Projections that at least 100,000 people will have been killed by the coronavirus in the United States, even if social distancing measures are carried out, appear to have prompted a major shift in Trump's outlook

recent times when he made the argument himself that the pandemic was comparable to the annual spread of flu.

He appeared to favor this thinking while questioning the need to shut down the US economy through social distancing measures and travel bans.

On March 9, for example, Trump noted that tens of thousands of Americans die from the flu annually.

"Nothing is shut down, life & the economy go on," he tweeted. "At this moment there are 546 confirmed cases of CoronaVirus, with 22 deaths. Think about that!"

Just a week ago, Trump told Fox News in an interview that despite deaths of about 36,000 people a year on average from flu, "we've never closed down the country for the flu."

"So you say to yourself, 'What is this all about?'"

On Tuesday, he said that with no social distancing, the projections ran as high as 2.2 million deaths.

"If we did nothing, if we just carried on with our life," he said, "you would have seen people dying on airplanes, you would have seen people dying in hotel lobbies. You would have seen death all over."

Use malaria drugs only for virus emergencies

AFP | Paris

Anti-malarial drugs chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine should only be used to treat COVID-19 in clinical trials or in case of "national emergency", the European Medicine Agency warned yesterday.

Around the world, countries are expanding access to the two compounds, which are used to treat malaria and are known to have anti-viral properties.

The medicines have shown early promise against the COVID-19 illness in early studies in France and China.

But the EMA cautioned that the drugs should not be used to treat COVID-19 cases unless absolutely necessary.

"It is very important that patients and healthcare professionals only use chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine for their authorised uses or as part of clinical trials or national emergency-use programmes for the treatment of COVID-19," it said.

Both drugs have a number of potentially serious side effects, especially when taken in high



Around the world, countries are expanding access to the two compounds, which are used to treat malaria and are known to have anti-viral properties

doses or administered in tandem with other medications.

"They must not be used without a prescription and without supervision by a doctor; prescriptions should not be given outside their authorised uses except in the setting of a clinical trial or nationally agreed protocols," the EMA said in a statement.

There are also fears of shortages particularly of chloroquine, the less risky of the two medicines that is also used to treat arthritis. Several countries are conducting clinical trials for the drugs as part of their campaigns to quell the COVID-19 pandemic.

Putin working remotely after meeting infected doctor: Kremlin

AFP | Moscow

Russian leader Vladimir Putin has decided to handle his duties remotely, the Kremlin said yesterday, after the head of the country's main coronavirus hospital tested positive following a meeting with the president.

Denis Protsenko, who met with Putin last week as the Russian leader visited the Kommunarka hospital in Moscow, said Tuesday he had been infected with the coronavirus but was feeling well.

"The president prefers these days to work remotely," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists, shortly before Putin was due to hold a



Russian President Vladimir Putin is handling his duties remotely, the Kremlin has said

cabinet meeting by video-conference.

"We are taking all precautionary measures," he said, adding that Putin was at the presidential residence in Novo-Ogaryovo outside Moscow.

Putin donned a bright yellow hazmat suit for the visit last Tuesday to the hospital. He was also seen talking to Protsenko without any protective

gear but the Kremlin said there is no reason for concern about the president's health. "All of those who were with the president at Kommunarka are being tested daily for the coronavirus," Peskov added, after saying on Tuesday that "everything is fine" with Putin. Asked if Putin continued to shake hands with those he is meeting, Peskov said: "Of course everyone is now social distancing."

Almost 70 percent of Russia's 147 million population has been ordered into strict confinement over the pandemic, following a first announcement by the mayor of Moscow on Sunday.

Global

Covid-19 Cases: **893,995**

Deaths: **45,050**

Recovered: **189,470**

Active cases: **659,475**

Closed cases: **234,520**

Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	New deaths	Total Deaths
USA	191,133	+80	4,133
Italy	110,574	+727	13,155
Spain	102,136	+589	9,053
China	81,554	+7	3,312
Germany	74,508	+46	821
France	52,128		3,523
Iran	47,593	+138	3,036
UK	29,474	+563	2,352
Switzerland	17,137	+28	461
Belgium	13,964	+123	828
Netherlands	13,614	+134	1,173
Turkey	13,531		214
Austria	10,553	+18	146
S. Korea	9,887	+3	165
Canada	8,612		101
Portugal	8,251	+27	187
Sweden	4,947	+59	239
Denmark	3,092	+14	104
Indonesia	1,677	+21	157
India	1,637	+10	45
Dom. Rep	1,284	+6	57
Mexico	1,215	+1	29
Serbia	1,060	+5	28
Estonia	779	+1	5
Morocco	638	+1	37
Hungary	525	+4	20
Lebanon	479	+2	14
Moldova	423	+1	5
Bulgaria	422	+1	9
Cyprus	320	+1	9
Senegal	190	+1	1
Honduras	172	+3	10

Figures as of closing

Aussie Lamborghini driver blames speeding on corona

AFP | Sydney

An Australian allegedly caught driving a Lamborghini at nearly twice the speed limit in Sydney claimed he was rushing to hospital to be tested for coronavirus, police said yesterday.

The man was undergoing mandatory self-isolation after being pulled over for allegedly driving 160 kilometres (100 miles) per hour in a 90 km/h zone on Monday.

He was fined for speeding and had his licence suspended.

Police urged Australians who suspect they may have COVID-19 to call their nearest medical service first.



Representative picture

"Drivers shouldn't break the road rules under any circumstances," Assistant Commissioner Michael Corboy said.

"If you think you may have symptoms of COVID-19 and want to seek help from a doctor or hospital, call ahead of time to book an appointment.

"If you are experiencing a medical emergency, contact triple zero."

Police said the 35-year-old man had been tested for coronavirus and was now undergoing mandatory self-isolation.

It was unclear whether or not he had tested positive.

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases	Serious, Critical	Tot cases/1m pop
Bahrain	569		4		337	228	3	333
Saudi Arabia	1,720	+157	16	+6	264	1,440	31	49
UAE	664		6		61	597	2	67
Kuwait	317	+28			80	237	13	74
Oman	210	+18	1		34	175	3	41
Jordan	274		5		30	239	5	27
Iraq	694		50		170	474		17
Egypt	710		46		157	507		7