

As lockdowns ease some countries report new infection peaks

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People visit Dolores Park during the coronavirus outbreak in San Francisco, Sunday, May 3, 2020. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)

Rome: While millions of people took advantage of easing coronavirus lockdowns to enjoy the outdoors some of the worlds most populous countries reported worrisome new peaks in infections Sunday including India which saw its biggest single day jump yet.

Second in population only to China India reported more than 2600 new infections. In Russia new cases exceeded 10000 for the first time. The confirmed total death toll in Britain climbed near that of Italy, the epicenter of Europe's outbreak even though the UK population is younger than Italy's and Britain had more time to prepare.

The United States continues to see tens of thousands of new infections each day with more than 1400 additional deaths reported Saturday.

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At a virtual town hall Sunday night President Donald Trump acknowledged some Americans are worried about getting sick while others are concerned about losing jobs.

Though the administrations handling of the pandemic particularly the ability to conduct widespread testing has come under criticism the president defended the response and said the nation was ready to begin reopening.

"We have to get it back open safely but as quickly as possible" Trump said.

China which reported only two new cases saw a surge in visitors to tourist spots newly reopened ahead of a five day holiday that runs through Tuesday. Nearly 17 million people visited Beijing parks on the first two days of the holiday and Shanghai's main tourist spots welcomed more than 1 million visitors according to Chinese media. Many spots limited daily visitors to 30 of capacity.

On the eve of Italy's first steps toward easing restrictions the Health Ministry reported 174 deaths in the 24 hour period ending Sunday evening _ the lowest day to day number since the national lockdown began on March 10 Parks and public gardens were set to reopen on Monday.

In Britain Prime Minister Boris Johnson is under pressure to reveal how the country will lift its lockdown. The restrictions are due to last through Thursday but with hundreds of deaths still being reported daily its unclear how the country can safely loosen the restrictions.

The 55-year-old Johnson who spent three nights in intensive care while being treated for COVID19 told The Sun

newspaper that he knew his doctors were preparing for the worst. It was a tough old moment I won't deny it he said They had a strategy to deal with a death of Stalin type scenario if he succumbed to the virus.

Another potentially troubling sign emerged in Afghanistan's capital of Kabul where a third of 500 people tested randomly were positive.

In the US New Jersey reopened state parks though several had to turn people away after reaching a 50 limit in their parking lots Margie Roebuck and her husband were among the first on the sand at Island Beach State Park.

Forty-six days in the house was enough she said.

Speaking on Fox News Sunday, White House coronavirus coordinator Deborah Birx expressed concern about protests by armed and mostly maskless crowds demanding an end to stay-at-home orders and a full reboot of the economy Trump has encouraged people to liberate their states.

It's devastatingly worrisome to me personally because if they go home and infect their grandmother or their grandfather they will feel guilty for the rest of our lives she said So we need to protect each other at the same time we're voicing our discontent.

If restrictions are lifted too soon the virus could come back in small waves in various places around the country he said Dr Tom Inglesby director of the Center for Health Security of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Nothing has changed in the underlying dynamics of this virus he said on NBC's Meet the Press.

Meanwhile the divide in the United States between those who want lockdowns to end and those who want to move more cautiously extended to Congress.

The Republican-majority Senate will reopen Monday in Washington The Democrat-controlled House of Representatives is staying shuttered Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's decision to convene 100 senators gives Trump a Republican the imagery he wants of America getting back to work despite the risks.

Elsewhere Russia's latest tally of infections was nearly double the new cases reported a week ago. More than half of Russia's new cases were in Moscow where concern is rising about whether the capital's medical facilities will be overwhelmed.

Indian air force helicopters showered flower petals on hospitals in several cities to thank doctors nurses and police at the forefront of the battle against the pandemic.

The country's confirmed cases neared 40,000 as the lockdown of its 1.3 billion people was extended two more weeks but with some measures relaxed, and the official death toll reached 1,323.

And in Mexico City where authorities expect infections to peak next week workers will turn the Hernandez Rodriguez Formula 1 racecourse into a temporary hospital for COVID-19 patients. The paddocks and suites along the front straightaway will have eight hospital modules with 24 beds each The pits will be used as offices for consultations.

Governments have reported 35 million infections and more than 247,000 deaths including more than 67,000 dead in the United States according to a count by Johns Hopkins University. Deliberately concealed outbreaks low testing rates and the severe strain the disease has placed on health care systems mean the true scale of the pandemic is undoubtedly

much greater.

- AP