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U.S. coronavirus death toll rises; New York, Los Angeles region confirm new cases



Inside C2

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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New York cheers arrival of hospital ship as coronavirus cases soar



The USNS Comfort passes Manhattan as it enters New York Harbor during the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in New York City, U.S., March 30, 2020. REUTERS/Mike Segar

NEW YORK (Reuters) - People cheered the U.S. Navy hospital ship Comfort as it sailed into New York on Monday, a beacon of the national effort to stanch the coronavirus outbreak at its U.S. epicenter as the number of cases soared.

Painted a gleaming white and adorned with giant red crosses, the 1,000-bed converted oil tanker sailed past the Statue of Liberty, accompanied by a flotilla of support ships and helicopters before docking at a Midtown Manhattan pier.

People gathered on both the New York and New Jersey sides of the Hudson River to cheer the ship's arrival shortly before midday. Some bystanders chanted, "Trump, Trump, Trump," as the huge vessel neared the pier where it docked.

The Comfort will treat non-coronavirus patients, including those who require surgery and critical care, the Navy said.

"It's a wartime atmosphere and we all have to pull together," said New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, who was among the dignitaries to greet the ship's arrival. He said preparations for the ship, including dredging, took eight days, much less than the two weeks initially expected.

Hospitals in the city have been overrun with patients

suffering from COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the virus. New York state accounts for almost half the country's more than 152,000 cases and more than 40% of its more than 2,800 deaths, according to a Reuters tally.

The United States has the most cases in the world.(Graphic: tmsnrt.rs/2w7hX9T)

To ease the pressure, construction of a 68-bed field hospital began on Sunday in Central Park, and the white tents being set up evoked a wartime feel in an island of green typically used by New Yorkers to exercise, picnic and enjoy the first signs of spring.

The makeshift facility, provided by Mount Sinai Health System and non-profit organization Samaritan's Purse, is expected to be ready to accept patients on Tuesday but will not take walk-ins, and admissions and transfers will be managed by Mount Sinai, de Blasio said.

New York state Governor Andrew Cuomo, one of the most prominent public figures of the coronavirus crisis, told a news conference later that the state might have to step in to close playgrounds in the country's most populous city.

The USNS Comfort passes Manhattan as it enters New York Harbor during the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in New York City, U.S., March 30, 2020. REU-

TERS/Mike Segar
He said official efforts to reduce the numbers of people in those public spaces had not been successful.

Cuomo and de Blasio are among a growing chorus of officials who have voiced frustration at President Donald Trump's handling of the crisis and shortage of ventilators and personal protective equipment needed to fight the virus in hospitals.

"I am not engaging the president in politics," Cuomo, a Democrat, said of Trump, a Republican. "My only goal is to engage the president in partnership."

De Blasio said the death toll in his city would rise if Washington did not provide more assistance soon. "Sunday is D-Day, we need help by Sunday," he told CNN. The mayor, also a Democrat, later thanked Trump for dispatching the Comfort.

CHILLING NUMBERS
U.S. health officials are urging Americans to follow stay-at-home orders and other measures to contain the spread of the virus, which originated in China and has infected about three-quarters of a million people around the world.

"If we do things together well - almost perfectly - we could get in the range of 100,000 to 200,000 fatalities," Dr. Deborah Birx, coordinator of the White House's coronavirus task force, told NBC's "Today" show.

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The U.S. weighs the grim math of death vs. the economy

SAN FRANCISCO/WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Hollstadt Consulting CEO Molly Jungbauer has had to let go 30 of the 150 employees at her St. Paul, Minnesota firm to weather the drop in revenue from travel industry clients because of the coronavirus.

She's worried about her daughter, who lives in New York and has the disease. But she also worries that shutting the economy with open-ended stay-at-home orders could have an "irreversible" impact.

So she was relieved to hear Minnesota Governor Tim Walz's plan last week: clamp down on commerce and social activity now but then reopen the state for business by May 4. "It is nice to know that we have somewhat of an end date," she said.

Coronavirus shut-downs could lop 25% or more from U.S. output, some economists forecast, throwing tens of millions of Americans out of work. The U.S. government and the Fed are mounting what could be a \$6 trillion economic rescue.

And elected U.S. politicians entrusted with public welfare are making calculations centered around the question: How many possibly preventable deaths are acceptable, as weighed against millions of jobs lost and trillions of dollars of economic output foregone?

Declaring the cure can't be worse than the disease, President Donald Trump has said that by April 12, he wanted churches all over the country to be "packed" with Easter celebrants. On Sunday, Trump backed away from that goal by extending social distancing guidelines to April 30.

More testing is critical, Trump advisor Stephen Moore told Reuters.

"Once you have testing you can open up the economy," he said. South Korea has tested a much bigger portion of its



FILE PHOTO: People gather at the entrance for the New York State Department of Labor offices, which closed to the public due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak in the Brooklyn borough of New York City, U.S., March 20, 2020. REUTERS/Andrew Kelly/File

citizens than the United States has, allowing it to reduce infections and without stopping its economy. The U.S. has ramped up its capacity in recent weeks, though some states are making bigger inroads than others.

Also key, Moore said, is understanding if new cases are rising as fast in the Midwest as on the coasts, and if more people can, like the hundreds of thousands of workers at FedEx still on the job, practice social distancing and still work.

"You kind of have to look at the businesses that are running," Moore said.

BUCKLE UP, MINNESOTA
U.S. state and local officials are doing their own calculus.

"We will not put a dollar figure on human lives," New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said. Almost half of the 130,000 U.S. cases to date have appeared in New York, where some hospitals are over-

whelmed with critically-ill patients.

Stay home!

BUSINESS

Work safe!

Urban Centers Nationwide Brace For Catastrophic Virus Outbreak



Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

In Chicago, the Army Corps of Engineers was preparing to erect 2,500 patient quarters throughout three of the cavernous halls at McCormick Place, the largest convention center in North America.

In Detroit, a major hospital system was readying a letter for patients and their families outlining how scarce ventilators would be allocated, saying those with the best chance of survival would get priority.

And in Albany, Ga., a hospital executive was straining to send patients to other hospitals as the number of deaths doubled in a matter of days at the largest medical center in the southwestern part of the state.

Deborah Birx, the White House's coronavirus response coordinator, said this week that the task force was anticipating challenges in parts of the country where the numbers had yet to rise as steeply as they have in the outbreak's existing epicenters, namely New York and New Orleans, as well as Washington state, which reported the country's first death from covid-19 last month. She pointed in particular to Illinois' Cook County, which includes Chicago, as well as Wayne County in Michigan, which

includes Detroit.



Many major urban centers are bracing for additional coronavirus cases.

The danger is already being felt on the ground, where the rapid spread of infection in major metropolitan centers is driving up the numbers in Illinois and Michigan, which by Friday had reported 3,026 cases and 3,657 cases, respectively.

Chicago: "It's not like there's a wall around Chicago," said Allison Arwady, Chicago's public health commissioner. "A lot of the patients we serve come from surrounding parts of the state, even other states."

Faced with data showing the virus could quickly engulf the city and its surrounding suburbs, which had nearly 2,000 cases by the end of the week, officials were already taking steps to provide "mass care" reaching beyond traditional hospitals while also exploring "fatality management" that might include mobile morgues, Arwady said.



Boston: "We've looked in every corner, found every vent that we have, but very much are watching carefully, will we have enough vent technology to care for these patients," said Ann L. Prestipino, incident commander for the covid-19 emergency at Boston's Massachusetts General Hospital, which had 45 people on ventilators Friday, 26 of them for confirmed or suspected coronavirus cases. Boston's mayor, Marty Walsh (D), said the city was planning for the "inevitability of overflow."

Detroit: Detroit, with more than 1,000 confirmed cases, was already reaching that point. Jenny Atas, a physician and regional medical director coordinating with 33 hospitals and 85 emergency medical services agencies, said hospitals in Wayne County were at capacity, as the virus reached its "tentacles to outlying counties." "Underscoring the precarious situation in Detroit, the Henry Ford Health System drafted a grim letter to patients and their families explaining the hospital's calculations if it doesn't have enough equipment to treat everyone. "Some patients will be extremely sick and very unlikely to survive their illnesses even with critical treatment," the letter explained. "Treating these patients would take away resources for patients who might survive." Among those who would not be eligible were those suffering severe heart, lung, kidney or liver failure, as well as those with terminal cancer. They would get palliative care, the letter said.



Medical personnel prepare to screen people arriving Saturday at a special coronavirus testing site in Boston. The drive-thru testing site is only open to qualified first responders who meet the state criteria for testing. Boston, Detroit, Atlanta and Chicago are among the urban centers bracing for a catastrophic outbreak of coronavirus. (Photo/ Michael Dwyer/ AP)

New Orleans: A spokesman for the New Orleans Police Department said 63 officers are either sick or quarantined — about 5 percent of the force. The city, which reached 1,298 cases by midday Saturday and has the highest covid-19 death rate per capita in the country, could run out of ventilators by early April, said Louisiana's governor, John Bel Edwards.

Georgia: Craig Coopersmith, a critical care surgeon in Atlanta who is managing Emory Healthcare's coronavirus response across 15 intensive care units in six hospitals, said he was opening a new ICU just dedicated to the virus every few days. "The system is stretched," he said. Nearly 200 miles south of Atlanta, the virus is also overwhelming the rural community around Albany, Ga., a city of 73,000. The Phoebe Putney Health System there was under siege this week as the number of deaths jumped from 11 to 18 in about three days. Doctors and nurses, some bruised from face masks, were laboring 16- to 18-hour days, said Scott Steiner, the system's chief executive.

Los Angeles: Reinforcements were welcomed Friday in Los Angeles, where California Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) joined the mayor, Eric Garcetti (D), to mark the arrival of USNS Mercy, a 1,000-bed hospital ship deployed by the federal government. The ship will serve those battling illnesses other than coronavirus to relieve pressure on hospitals treating covid-19 patients. Los Angeles County health officials predict that hospitals could be overwhelmed within two weeks. At particular risk is the homeless

population, which numbers about 45,000 living on the street in the county. The city is turning 42 recreation centers into shelters. Statewide, Newsom has arranged for more than 4,000 hotel rooms to be used for the homeless from Oakland to San Diego, but many of the spots have yet to be filled.



Wisconsin: In Milwaukee, city officials were preparing to take over a convent to treat the homeless population showing symptoms of the virus. The city is quickly running out of beds, warned Mayor Tom Barrett (D), who said there were only about 4,000 available statewide. Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers (D) said the Army Corps of Engineers was scouting locations for overflow facilities but had not settled on any sites.

Colorado: Jared Polis, the Democratic governor of Colorado, said Friday he aimed to assemble 1,000 additional hospital beds by May, and another 5,000 by the summer. The state, which has 1,734 confirmed cases, is currently equipped with 900 ventilators and is estimated to need 7,000, the governor said.

In Denver, medical staff was already running low on protective equipment, said the mayor, Michael Hancock (D).

"If they get sick and can't go into work, we're in trouble," he warned.

"We have no idea which communities are going to be the next hot spots and how many there are going to be," said said Leana Wen, a former Baltimore health commissioner. "A few months ago we saw the images coming out of China and a couple weeks coming out of Italy. We had time to prepare for this. We saw what happens to other places. This bought us time, but we didn't use the time." (Courtesy washpost.com)

Editor's Choice



Park visitors watch commercial flights land at Reagan International Airport at Gravelly Point Park in Arlington, Virginia



The USNS Comfort passes the Statue of Liberty as it enters New York Harbor during the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in New York City, U.S., March 30, 2020. REUTERS/Andrew Kelly TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



FILE PHOTO: People queue inside a Sainsbury's supermarket in Watford as the spread of the coronavirus disease continues, Watford, Britain, March 19, 2020. REUTERS/Paul Childs/File Photo



Ice hockey - Vysheyskaya Liga - Minsk Zubry v U17, Minsk, Belarus, March 30, 2020. Fans react during the match despite the rest of major sports events were cancelled because of the outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). REUTERS/Vasily Fedosenko TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



The USNS Comfort passes the Statue of Liberty as it enters New York Harbor during the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in New York City, U.S., March 30, 2020. REUTERS/Mike Segar TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



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A portrait of President George Washington hangs as people give blood at a donation center inside the White House East Room replica at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum to help with a shortage of blood donations due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, in Yorba Linda, California, U.S., March 30, 2020. REUTERS/Patrick T. Fallon



A woman has her temperature checked, as the authorities try to limit the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Abuja

Rhetoric At High Levels Has Fueled Ill Will Nationally
FBI Warns Of Possible Surge In
Hate Crimes Against Asian Americans



Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Federal law enforcement has warned of an increase in hate crimes against Asian Americans as the coronavirus crisis continues to grow, according to a new FBI analysis obtained by ABC News. “The FBI assesses hate crime incidents against Asian Americans likely will surge across the United States, due to the spread of coronavirus disease ... endangering Asian American communities,” according to the intelligence report, which was compiled by the FBI’s Houston office and distributed to local law enforcement agencies across the country. “The FBI makes this assessment based on the assumption that a portion of the US public will associate COVID-19 with China and Asian American populations.” The contagion that has left much of the nation in near-lockdown and caused thousands of deaths globally began late last year in the region of Wuhan in eastern China. Since then, many Americans, including President Donald Trump and other political leaders and media commentators, have adopted the practice of calling the ailment the “China virus” or some other variant that makes reference to China or Wuhan, rather than “corona-

virus” or “COVID-19,” the terms used by federal health officials and in the FBI analysis. The rhetoric, critics say, has fueled ill will and has led some people to act out against Asian Americans.



Trump has defended his language, explaining that it’s simply a way of reminding people from where the virus emanated. He has also denied the term is racist or that the term maligns people of Asian heritage. “It did come from China,” Trump said at a White House briefing Tuesday. “It is a very accurate term.” Two days later the president said, “We have to protect our Asian Americans,” echoing a tweet from earlier in the week in which he said the coronavirus was “NOT their fault in any way, shape, or form.” At a White House briefing Thursday the president could not point to any

specific measures he was taking to protect the Asian American community. The analysis noted there has already been a surge in reports of hate crimes and lists a series of incidents from Los Angeles to New York to Texas. Medical workers protests outside Elmhurst Hospital Center, in the Queens borough of New York City, on March 26, 2020.



Medical workers outside Elmhurst Hospital Center, in the Queens borough of New York City, on March 26, 2020. The hospital reported 13 COVID-19 patients died in a 24-hour span.Angela Weiss/AFP via Getty Images
Statistics show that the Asian population in the U.S. grew by 72% between 2000 and 2015, making it the fastest-growing ethnic group in the country, according to the Pew Research Center. Gregg Orton, national director of the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans, told ABC News the intelligence document “is an indication of how serious the problem is. We need to stop dismissing this. It’s easy to dismiss racism when it doesn’t impact you.”



Orton said he and his colleagues expect a continue uptick in incidents and he stressed how the matter is not minor. “This is people’s safety and it’s affecting their lives,” he said. “Maybe it is China’s fault or the [Chinese] government’s fault,” Orton said of the spread of the virus throughout and then out of

China. “There will be a time and place for that conversation. But right now we’re in the thick of this and we have to be mindful of the language we’re using.” (Courtesy abcnews.go.com)

Related

Trump Uses Term For COVID-19 That Advocacy Groups Say Is Connected To Anti-Asian Bias

President Donald Trump attempted to focus blame for the spread of the novel coronavirus onto China this week by using a name for the virus that advocacy groups say has been associated with dozens of bias incidents against Asian Americans. The president in a tweet on Monday started calling COVID-19 the “China Virus,” repeating the term on Twitter and to reporters over the next two days. He said he started using the phrase to counter Chinese misinformation that the U.S. military initially spread the virus, a conspiracy theory not borne out by evidence. “China was putting out information, which was false, that our military gave this to them, that was false,” Trump said at a press conference on Tuesday. “And rather than having an argument, I said I have to call it where it came from. It did come from China. It is a very accurate term.”



The World Health Organization, though, said in 2015 that geographic locations “should be avoided” when naming infectious diseases, in order to avoid “stigmatizing certain communities or economic sectors.” Disease names can “provoke a backlash against members of particular religious or ethnic communities,” a WHO official noted at the time, and the organization noted amid the current pandemic that certain names “can have unintended consequences in terms of creating unnecessary fear for some populations.” Asian American groups in the United States said that term “Chinese virus” -- and others like it -- has been associated with some of the reported incidents of discrimination against Asian Americans nationwide connected to COVID-19. There have been physical assaults reported in New York, vandalism in California, and many more incidents of name-calling and similar discrimination, according to the civil rights coalition Asian Americans Advancing Justice, which created a website where Asian Americans could report bias incidents related to COVID-19. (Courtesy https://abcnews.go.com/)



投機濫造口罩博3周回本

全國每日產能逾1.16億個 行業亂象叢生

新冠肺炎疫情爆發後，“奇貨”口罩成防疫市場“印鈔機”，促使大量公司及資金投身其中，令中國口罩產量至上月底達至每天1.16億個，且勢頭不斷。僅福建一省，產量由上月底1,000萬個，不足20日再倍增至2,119萬個。然而，記者深入調查發現，產業亂象叢生，刻下全球許多國家及地區雖口罩仍緊缺，但當疫情明顯好轉時，巨大的產能過剩恐將大量中小企業淘汰出局和上下游產業鏈虧損慘重，為內地經濟帶來麻煩。

■香港文匯報記者 李昌鴻 深圳報道

新冠疫情正在席捲全球逾100個國家及地區，全球近20億人口也急缺口罩。作為製造業第一大國，中國在農曆新年後復工已逾1個多月，口罩產量大增。目前，內地涉及口罩生產的上市公司至少近百家。據企業數據提供商啟信寶的資料顯示，2月20日至3月12日，短短20多天地內經營範圍新增“口罩”的企業達到1.2萬家，個個積極生產口罩或者引入口罩生產線。

1個月開廠高薪搶維修

銷售口罩生產線的趙先生告訴香港文匯報記者：“口罩成本6、7毛錢（人民幣，下同），批發價是1.6元，一個能夠賺1元，一條生產線一天能夠賺近4萬元，五條生產線投資不到300萬元，一天就可賺20萬元，20多天就可收回成本。”
口罩上下游產業鏈正受到國內外大量資金瘋狂的炒作。記者從一位服務東南亞貨物出口的物流公司經理劉耀榮處獲悉，因看好口罩市場的巨大需求，他與多位合作夥伴2月上旬在深圳龍崗投資400萬元購置4條口罩生產線。其中一個股東原本是做機械自動化的，他們請專業人士幫忙設計口罩生產線圖紙，然後找公司按圖紙製造，經過多番努力和調試，工廠2月下旬開始生產，並且也拿到醫療資質許可證備案。目前，該廠一天生產20萬個口罩，由13人運營這一生產線。

大灣區出現上千家工廠

據他了解，在大灣區大大小小的口罩工廠有上千家。不過，公司生產線經常出現卡頓，導致高薪請維修人員修理調試，既要付上萬的費用，

又影響生產進度。

他感歎生產口罩遇到很多挑戰，如其重要材料過濾層熔噴布1噸已飆升超過40萬元，以前僅2萬元，暴漲20倍。即使這樣，他們許多民營中小企業在內地仍然買不到這一原料，只得從印度、沙特和阿聯酋等國進口。

他又透露，工廠的口罩現在除供應國內外，有一部分出口美國，他們會以2.5元的批發價銷售給中間商，由中間商出口歐美國家。

據劉耀榮所知，因看好這次機遇，全國每天約新增50條至100條口罩生產線，產量日增數百萬片，而那些跨界從事汽車、家電、石油、機械等眾多行業的公司產量也十分巨大。其實，大量上市公司原本不是這一行業，經大量公告和投資者炒作後方知口罩市場是群雄混戰。

有機無原料逼虧售離場

一些不懂行的人也聞風而至盲目投資。深圳一位蔡姓先生告訴記者，看到身邊很多朋友都投資生產口罩，於是自己也找人花80萬元購買一條口罩機生產線，結果好不容易調試好可以生產，但作為外行的他根本沒有渠道買熔噴布、無紡布等原料，機器只能放在那裡“睡覺”。結果，他只能無奈地便宜轉售口罩工廠，虧了20多萬元。

不少業界人士認為，全行業已有大量風險隱藏其中，目前歐美需求量大，中國在滿足自身要求後還有大量可以出口。未來幾個月一旦全球疫情好轉，中國疫情接近尾聲，全國暴增的產能將導致龐大過剩危機，許多後進入實力不濟的企業將面臨倒閉風險，估計他們賤賣的設備也沒人接手，到時將損失慘重。



口罩機現貨有得炒 轉手賺百萬

香港文匯報訊（記者 李昌鴻）現有“印鈔機”之稱的口罩機生產線，受到大量需求推動而價格暴漲，一台全自動口罩機生產線約在120萬元（人民幣，下同）至180萬元，短短一個多月暴漲6倍。
記者在某大型知名網站上看到一家銷售口罩機生產線的廣告，隨即致電負責銷售的趙先生。他表示，他們現機報價為90萬元，而遲10天交貨則便宜近半，為55萬元。該生產線3人至4人操作，1分鐘產出100個口罩。
他又推銷機器故障率低，並提供1年免費維修服務。

25萬成本價160萬賣出

另據業內人士了解，現成口罩生產線仍是搶手貨，搶到手就是賺到。有中介通過關係從廠家以60萬元拿到一台成本價約25萬元的口罩機，轉手以160萬元出售，瞬間賺100萬元，從成本價至轉售

價，價格暴漲6倍之多。

巨額的利潤導致大量的中介和買家介入口罩機市場，現時可謂龍蛇混雜，包括大量上市公司也開始涉足生產口罩機。近日，上市公司金太陽在回覆深交所的關注函表示，其在手訂單共計114套，訂單金額5,044萬元（不含稅）。其中，已銷售25套，銷售金額1,065萬元（不含稅）。該信息透露金太陽一台口罩生產線逾44萬元。

上市公司轉行參與牟利

據悉，金太陽是自2月加入市場，開始研發生產口罩機，目前共計口罩機原材料配件採購費用1,738萬元、配件機加工費用600餘萬元，其2,300多萬的投入成本換來1.2倍的利潤。
另外，上市公司科大智能杭州新余宏智能裝備公司1月底啟動口罩機研製，目前已獲26台訂單，口罩機市場的大混戰可見一斑。