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U.S. manufacturing contracts; private payrolls post first drop since 2017



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New York City public schools to remain closed for rest of school year: mayor



File Photo: A view of the Manhattan skyline as seen from the Linden Hill Cemetery during the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the Brooklyn borough of New York City, New York, U.S., April 6, 2020. REUTERS/Brendan Mcdermid

(Reuters) - New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said on Saturday public schools will remain closed for the rest of the school year as the city battles the outbreak of the novel coronavirus. "Having to tell you that we cannot bring our schools back for the remainder of this school year is painful, but I can also tell you it is the right thing to do," he told a news conference.

De Blasio had ordered public schools shut beginning March 16 to curb the spread of the disease, with an initial goal of reopening by April 20. But the mayor said it soon became clear that date goal was unrealistic as the city emerged as a major U.S. coronavirus hot spot.

Apple, Google plan software to slow virus, joining global debate on tracking

(Reuters) - Apple Inc (AAPL.O) and Alphabet Inc's (GOOGL.O) Google said on Friday that they will work together to create contact tracing technology that aims to slow the spread of the coronavirus by allowing users to opt into logging other phones they have been near.

The rare collaboration between the two Silicon Valley companies, whose operating systems power 99% of the world's smartphones, could accelerate usage of apps that aim to get potentially infected individuals into testing or quarantine more quickly and reliably than existing systems in much of the world. Such tracing will play a vital role in managing the virus once lockdown orders end, health experts say.

The planned technology also throws the weight of the tech leaders into a global conflict between privacy advocates who favor a decentralized system to trace contacts and governments in Europe and Asia pushing centralized approaches that have technical weaknesses and potentially let governments know with whom people associate.

"With Apple and Google, you get all the public health functions you need with a decentralized and privacy-friendly app," said Michael Veale, University College London legal lecturer involved in European contact tracing system DP3T. Centralized solutions such as those proposed in Britain and Germany would no longer work under the new technology, he said.

To be effective, the Silicon Valley system would require millions of people to opt in the system, trusting the technology companies' safeguards, as well as smooth oversight by public health systems.

The companies said they started developing the technology two weeks ago to streamline technical differences between Apple's iPhones and Google's Android that had stymied the interoperation of some existing contact tracing apps.

Under the plan, users' phones with the technology will emit unique Bluetooth signals. Phones within about six feet can record anonymous information about encounters.

People who test positive for the virus can opt to send an encrypted list of phones they came near to Apple and Google, which will trigger alerts to potentially exposed users to seek more information. Public health authorities would need to sign off that an individual has tested positive before they can send on the data.

The logs will be scrambled to keep infected individuals' data anonymous, even to Apple, Google and contact tracing app makers, the companies said. Apple and Google said their contact tracing system will not track GPS location.

"To their credit, Apple and Google have announced an approach that appears to mitigate the worst privacy and centralization risks," Jennifer Granick, surveillance and cybersecurity counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union, said.

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WHO says looking into reports of some COVID patients testing positive again

GENEVA (Reuters) - The World Health Organization (WHO) said on Saturday that it was looking into reports of some COVID-19 patients testing positive again after initially testing negative for the disease while being considered for discharge.

South Korean officials on Friday reported 91 patients thought cleared of the new coronavirus had tested positive again. Jeong Eun-kyeong, director of the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told a briefing that the virus may have been “reactivated” rather than the patients being re-infected.

The Geneva-based WHO, asked about the report from Seoul, told Reuters in a brief statement: “We are aware of these reports of individuals who have tested negative for COVID-19 using PCR (polymerase chain reaction) testing and then after some days testing positive again.

“We are closely liaising with our clinical experts and working hard to get more information on those individual cases. It is important to make sure that when samples are collected for testing on suspected patients, procedures are followed properly,” it said.

According to the WHO’s guidelines on clinical management, a patient can be discharged from hospital after two consecutive negative results in a clinically recovered patient at least 24 hours apart, it added. Based on current studies, there is a period of about two weeks between the onset of symptoms and clinical recovery of patients with mild COVID-19 disease, the agency said. “We are aware that some patients are PCR positive after they clinically recover, but we need systematic collection of samples from recovered patients to better understand how long they shed live virus,” it said.

FILE PHOTO: A South Korean patient affected with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) casts her ballot for the parliamentary election at a polling station set up at a quarantine center in Yongin, South Korea, April 11, 2020.



Healthcare workers push a patient on a stretcher at the emergency unit at Severo Ochoa hospital during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak in Leganes, near Madrid, Spain April 11, 2020. REUTERS/Juan Medina TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY

REUTERS/Kim Hong-Ji/File Photo South Korean health officials said on Friday that it remains unclear what is behind the trend, with epidemiological investigations still under way.

“As COVID-19 is a new disease, we need more epidemiological data to draw any conclusions of virus shedding profile,” the WHO said. The number of deaths linked to the novel coronavirus reached 100,000 on Friday, as reported cases passed 1.6 million, according to a Reuters tally.



BUSINESS

Funds Available For Businesses With Up To 10,000 Employees Federal Reserve Announces Details For \$2.3T Main Street America Lending Program



FILE – In this Jan. 29, 2020 file photo, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell pauses during a news conference in Washington. The Federal Reserve is taking additional steps to provide up to \$2.3 trillion in loans to support American households and businesses as well as local governments as they deal with the coronavirus. (AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta, File)

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

The Federal Reserve said it will rollout more than \$2 trillion worth of government loans to help ease the pain caused by the coronavirus. On Thursday, the Fed announced details from its anticipated Main Street Lending Program, which includes funds for businesses with up to 10,000 employees. It also props up the Payroll Protection Program, which keeps workers on the books with their employers. This prevents them from having to file for unemployment and allows them to keep any health benefits their jobs offer. In a recent statement, Federal Reserve chairman Jerome Powell said, “the Fed’s role is to provide as much relief and stability as we can during this period of constrained economic activity.”



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Chair Powell gives remarks @Brookings on COVID-19 and the economy: <https://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/speech/powell20200409a.htm> ...

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Economic Update with Chair Powell

Watch Live:
April 9th, 2020
10 a.m. ET

Hosted by the Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C. (via webcast)



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Powell also assured that the Fed plans to keep interest rates to near zero until “they are confident the economy has weathered the storm and is on track to achieve maximum employment and stability goals.”
The announcement came after weekly jobless claims continued to surge amid the coronavirus pandemic. The Labor Department reported 6.6 million Americans filed initial claims for unemployment benefits last week, which sharply beat expectations of 5 million.
The prior week’s claims were also revised higher by nearly 220,000, which brought the total over the past three weeks to more than 16 million unemployed Americans. The surge in claims came after businesses shutdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
Related
States Unemployment Websites, Hotlines Crashing After 10M People File New Claims In Recent Weeks



A worker, right, hands out paper unemployment applications after a batch of applications in English were brought in, Tuesday, April 7, 2020, at Babcock Park in Hialeah, Fla. (AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee)
A line of people were seen stretched around the block in Hialeah, Florida in violation of the state’s social distancing guidelines. However, the people risking their health had no choice as standing in line Tuesday was the only way to get an application for unemployment after the county’s online application portal

crashed and those who tried to calling the hotline were forced to wait for hours on hold.
In recent weeks, more than 10 million people filed unemployment claims, which is a number that is set to push the unemployment rate past 10 percent in April. States were not prepared for the rush of applications and most systems quickly crashed.
“It’s just too overloaded right now, we’ve got no one to help because they can’t,” explained Dana Simone, and unemployed Michigan resident. “There’s so many people trying to apply for benefits right now that both online and the phones are totally overloaded.”
In recent weeks in New York, 450,000 people found out the delays on their applications were due to the state using software more than 40 years old to process applications.



“It took probably two hours for me to actually be able to fill and submit the claim because the website is very slow,” recounted Weslynn Therasse, an unemployed nurse in New York. “It kept on freezing and crashing...it took about two hours.”
With people unable to receive either a paycheck or unemployment benefits, some bills are not being paid. In the last weeks of March, calls for a rent strike circulated across social media with tenants arguing the pandemic made paying their lease less of a priority.
“I was unemployed, or am unemployed, and just barely scraping by,” said Neal Miller, an unemployed resident of Illinois. “Now with this new reality, this crisis, is just makes sense to withhold rent from our landlords and to simply say that we’re not going to pay for what is effectively our means of survival.”

The National Multifamily Housing Council reported Wednesday that nearly a third of apartment renters did not pay April rent.
For renters in government housing or in the 28 states that have adopted policies to prevent evictions, not paying rent may not have immediate consequences. However, analysts worry the lack of payment may result in a domino effect going from tenant to landlord to bank to another government bailout. (Courtesy <https://www.oann.com/>)



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Editor's Choice



People are seen wearing protective face masks in Greenwich Park as the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) continues, London, Britain, April 11, 2020. REUTERS/Henry Nicholls



Mourners attend a funeral at The Green-Wood Cemetery during the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the Brooklyn borough of New York City



Two women are seen passing a police cordon in Greenwich Park as the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) continues, London, Britain, April 11, 2020. REUTERS/Henry Nicholls



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visits armed forces' positions near Petrivske village in Donetsk region



A medical specialist rests inside an ambulance, which queues before driving onto the adjacent territory of a local hospital amid the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in Khimki outside Moscow, Russia April 11, 2020. REUTERS/Tatyana Makeyeva



A doctor scans residents from Dharavi, one of Asia's largest slums, with an infrared thermometer to check their temperature as a precautionary measure against the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), in Mumbai, India, April 11, 2020. REUTERS/Francis Mascarenhas



Volunteers are pictured while handing out approximately 300 laptops to students at East Los Angeles College during the global outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Monterey Park, California, U.S., March 26, 2020. REUTERS/Mario Anzuoni



A priest of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church sprays holy water on boxes containing Easter cakes in an office of Ukrposhta, the state post of Ukraine, amid the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, in Kiev, Ukraine April 11, 2020.

Coronavirus Survivor: ‘In My Blood, There May Be Answers’



Tiffany Pinckney poses for a portrait in the Harlem neighborhood of New York on April 1, 2020. After a period of quarantine at home separated from her children, she has recovered from COVID-19. Pinckney became one of the nation’s first donors of “convalescent plasma.” Doctors around the world are dusting off a century-old treatment for infections: Infusions of blood plasma teeming with immune molecules that helped survivors beat the new coronavirus. (AP Photo/Marshall Ritzell)

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

NEW YORK (AP) — Tiffany Pinckney remembers the fear when COVID-19 stole her breath. So when she recovered, the New York City mother became one of the country’s first survivors to donate her blood to help treat other seriously ill patients.

“It is definitely overwhelming to know that in my blood, there may be answers,” Pinckney told The Associated Press.

Doctors around the world are dusting off a century-old treatment for infections: Infusions of blood plasma teeming with immune molecules that helped survivors beat the new coronavirus. There’s no proof it will work. But former patients in Houston and New York were early donors, and now hospitals and blood centers are getting ready for potentially hundreds of survivors to follow.

The Food and Drug Administration Fri-

day announced a national study, led by the Mayo Clinic, that will help hospitals offer the experimental plasma therapy and track how they fare. The American Red Cross will help collect and distribute the plasma.

“There’s a tremendous call to action,” said Dr. David Reich, president of New York’s Mount Sinai Hospital, which declared Pinckney recovered and raced to collect her blood. “People feel very helpless in the face of this disease. And this is one thing that people can do to help their fellow human beings.”



In this March 26, 2020 photo pro-

vided by Tiffany Pinckney, she donates blood for a study at a hospital in New York after recovering from COVID-19.

“It is definitely overwhelming to know that in my blood, there may be answers,” said Pinckney, 39, (Courtesy Tiffany Pinckney via AP)

As treatments get underway, “we just hope it works,” he said.

What the history books call “convalescent serum” was most famously used during the 1918 flu pandemic, and also against measles, bacterial pneumonia and numerous other infections before modern medicine came along.

Why? When infection strikes, the body starts making proteins called antibodies specially designed to target that germ. Those antibodies float in survivors’ blood — specifically plasma, the yellowish liquid part of blood — for months, even years.

When new diseases erupt and scientists are scrambling for vaccines or drugs, it’s “a stopgap measure that we can put into place quickly,” said Dr. Jeffrey Henderson of Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, who is helping to develop a nationwide study. This “is not a cure per se, but rather it is a way to reduce the severity of illness,” Henderson said.

Doctors don’t know how long survivors’ antibodies against COVID-19 will persist. But for now, “they’re the safest ones on the street,” said Dr. Rebecca Haley of Bloodworks Northwest in Seattle, which is working to identify donors. “We would not be making a dent in their antibody supply for themselves.”

Last week, the Food and Drug Administration told hospitals how to seek case-by-case emergency permission to use convalescent plasma, and Houston Methodist Hospital and Mount Sinai jumped

at the chance.



When Tiffany Pinckney was seriously ill with the coronavirus, all she could do was pray that she didn’t give it to her two sons or her co-workers. Now that she is recovered, she’s hoping there’s something in her blood that will help others. (April 3)

And a desperate public responded, with families taking to social media to plead on behalf of sick loved ones and people recovering asking how they could donate.

According to Michigan State University, more than 1,000 people signed up with the National COVID-19 Convalescent Plasma Project (<https://ccpp19.org/>) alone. Dozens of hospitals formed that group to spur plasma donation and research.

Would-be donors can’t just show up at a blood center. Those with a proven infection who’ve been symptom-free for several weeks must get tested to ensure the virus is gone. They also must be healthy enough to meet the other requirements for blood donation — plus get an additional test to see if their antibody level is high enough.

“You don’t want to take plasma from someone who had a mediocre immune response. That wouldn’t be helpful,” said Dr. Julie Ledgerwood of the National Institutes of Health.

Chinese doctors last week reported that five patients given convalescent plasma all showed some improvement about a week later. But they also received other therapies, and without a rigorous study, there’s no way to know if the plasma made the difference.

Studies are being planned to test convalescent plasma against regular care in sick patients, and to prevent infections among

people at high risk of exposure such as health care workers.



Regeneron Pharmaceuticals’ preclinical manufacturing lab where selected antibodies for preclinical and toxicology studies will be made in stainless-steel bioreactors.

Another approach: Spain-based plasma manufacturer Grifols aims to concentrate donor plasma in a North Carolina factory, creating a high-dose version that also would need testing.

Separately, NIH researchers are measuring survivors’ antibody levels to learn how strong the vaccines under development must be to protect. Other teams, including at Beijing’s Tsinghua University, are hunting which antibodies are most potent, to copy in a lab and turn into drugs.

But donations from people like Pinckney could be used as fast as blood centers can process it. She got sick the first week of March. First came the fever and chills. She couldn’t catch her breath, and deep breathing caused chest pains. The single mother worried about her sons, 9 and 16.

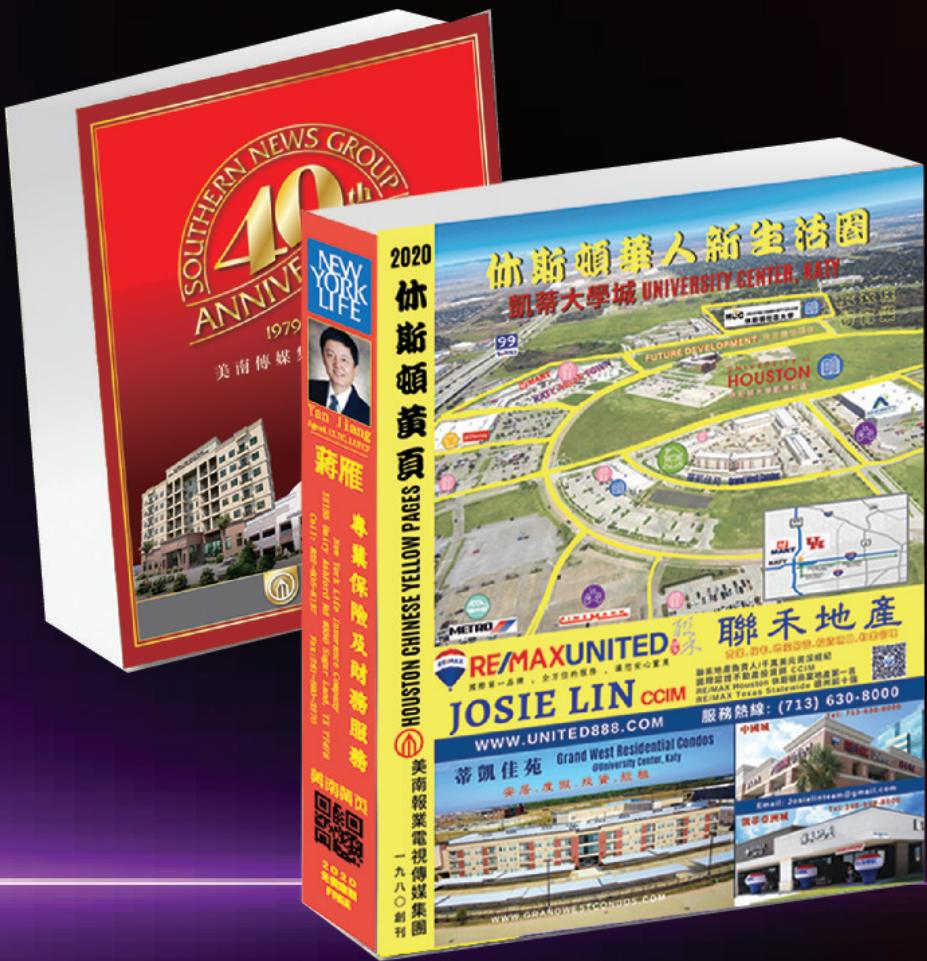
“I remember being on my bathroom floor crying and praying,” the 39-year-old said. So when Mount Sinai, which diagnosed her, called Pinckney to check on her recovery and ask if she’d consider donating, she didn’t hesitate.

“It’s humbling. And for me, it’s also a beacon of hope for someone else,” she said. (Courtesy <https://apnews.com/>)

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