

## Virus

## A grim milestone

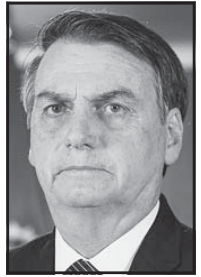
## Brazil's coronavirus death toll hits 100K

RIO DE JANEIRO, Aug. 9. (Agencies): Brazil surpassed a grim milestone of 100,000 deaths from COVID-19 on Saturday night, and five months after the first reported case the country has not shown signs of crushing the disease.

The nation of 210 million people has been reporting an average of more than 1,000 daily deaths from the pandemic since late May and reported 905 for the latest 24-hour period.

The Health Ministry said there had been a total of 3,012,412 confirmed infections with the new coronavirus — death and infection tolls second only to the United States. And as in many nations, experts believe that both numbers are severe undercounts due to insufficient testing.

In a tribute to COVID-19 victims Saturday morning, the non-governmental group Rio de Paz placed crosses on the sand on the famed Copacabana beach and released 1,000 red balloons into the sky.



Bolsonaro

"It's very sad. Those 100,000 represent various families, friends, parents, children," said Marcio do Nascimento Silva, a 56-year-old taxi driver who lost his children in the pandemic and joined the tribute.

"We reach that mark (100,000) and many people seem to not see it, both among the government and our people. They are not just numbers but people. Death became normal," Silva said.

President **Jair Bolsonaro** — who himself reported being infected — has been a consistent skeptic about the impact of the disease and an advocate of lifting restrictions on the economy that had been imposed by state governors trying to combat it. He has frequently mingled in crowds, sometimes without a mask.

On the day that Brazil reached more than 100,000 deaths, the federal government's communication secretariat confronted criticism from former Justice Minister Sergio Moro on social media for the management of the pandemic.

"There are many numbers that deserve to be disclosed: Almost 3 Million Lives Saved Or In Recovery — One Of The Lowest Deaths Per Million Among Large Nations," said the secretariat's official account on Twitter, sharing Moro's tweet. Bolsonaro answered the tweet with an emoji of shaking hands.

## Complained

Experts have complained of a lack of national coordination under Bolsonaro and scattershot responses by city and state governments, with some reopening earlier than health experts recommended.

"Administrative incompetence ruined our chance to have a good response to COVID," said Miguel Lago, executive director of Brazil's Institute for Health Policy Studies, which advises public health officials.

Brazil is facing the pandemic with an interim health minister, Eduardo Pazuello, an army general who made his career in logistics. Two earlier health ministers, both physicians, exited over differences with Bolsonaro about social distance measures and the use of hydroxychloroquine, an anti-malaria drug promoted by the president but which most studies have found to be ineffective against COVID-19, or even dangerous.

Bolsonaro, who has called COVID-19 a "little flu," says he recovered from his own infection thanks to that drug.

Many of Brazil's 27 states have begun to reopen shops and restaurants, though responses have differed, as has the strain on the health system. While Brasilia, the capital, has recorded almost 80% occupancy of its ICU beds, Rio de Janeiro's occupation rate is now down to less than 30% in private hospitals.

In Rio, shopping malls and restaurants have already opened and people have returned to the beaches.

"The situation is very comfortable and we don't understand why it is happening. Perhaps the infection rate was much higher than what was reported at the beginning of the pandemic and many of those on the street are immune," speculated Graccho Alvim, director of the state's association of hospitals.

Viviane Melo da Silva, 47, lost her mother, Esther Melo da Silva, in the Amazonas state capital of Manaus on April 9. The mother reported having a cold, and a few days later started having problems breathing. She died after five days in a public hospital.

"I still don't accept her death, not yet," said da Silva, crying, and expressing regret the family had been unable to hold a wake for her mother.

"The government was saying that it was a 'little flu.' It did not care. It was not worried with that and that's what happened: Innocent people died because of the negligence and the lack of preparation from the government," she added.

Nazare Rosa de Paula, 67, said many people remain indifferent to the virus despite so many deaths. She said her husband Geraldo, a 70-year-old retired bus driver, would wear a mask to go to the supermarket in Rio de Janeiro, but never believed he would be infected.

In April he got what seemed to be just a flu. After his health worsened for eight days, he was diagnosed with COVID-19 and died on April 28.

"It was fast. There was not time to do anything and it surprised a lot of people," de Paula said.

They had been together for 43 years. "Only the feeling of missing him is left. People said that with time (it will get better), but for me, it will not end, it won't."

## Also:

**BEIJING:** Chinese authorities announced 31 new coronavirus cases, including 25 local infections, without any deaths in the past 24 hours.

The new infections raised the total number of cases to 84,596 in mainland China with 4,634 deaths, Xinhua news agency quoted the Chinese National Health Commission as saying on Saturday.

Meanwhile, 35 patients were discharged from hospitals, raising the number of recoveries to 79,123 while 838 others are still receiving medical care.

Meanwhile, the Philippines announced, Friday 24 COVID-19-related deaths and 3,379 infections, putting tally at 2,168 and 122,754 respectively.

The number of those recovering from the virus reached 66,837.

India said on Sunday that 861 people died due to COVID-19 and 64,399 fresh cases were reported from around the country in the last 24 hours.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said in its latest update that death toll following coronavirus infections in the country soared to 43,379 while total positive cases rose to 2,153,010.

The ministry data revealed that so far 1,480,884 people have recovered from the pandemic as it spread to 35 Indian states and Union Territories.

**Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, New Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Telangana, Gujarat and Bihar** are the worst affected Indian states.

The government issued recently fresh guidelines for the third phase of unlock and relaxed the lock-down restrictions in areas outside containment zones.

The new guidelines lifted night curfews imposed in the country and movement of people or goods across the country is permitted with no additional pass. Metro services, cinema halls and swimming pools, entertainment parks, bars, theatres, auditoriums and other social gathering places will also be shut.

Large gatherings and social, political, sports, entertainment, academic, cultural, religious functions will not be permitted, the guidelines said.



In this July 6, 2020, file photo, Dr Joseph Varon, (right), leads a team as they try to save the life of a patient unsuccessfully inside the Coronavirus Unit at United Memorial Medical Center in Houston. America's failure so far to contain the spread of the coronavirus as it moves across the country has been met with astonishment and alarm on both sides of the Atlantic. (AP)

## Coronavirus

## US virus response met with incredulity abroad

## 'Don't they care about their health?'

By Nicole Winfield and Lisa Marie Pane

The United States' failure to contain the spread of the coronavirus has been met with astonishment and alarm in Europe, as the world's most powerful country edges closer to a global record of 5 million confirmed infections.

Perhaps nowhere outside the US is America's bungled virus response viewed with more consternation than in Italy, which was ground zero of Europe's epidemic. Italians were unprepared when the outbreak exploded in February and the country still has one of the world's highest official death tolls at 35,000.

But after a strict nationwide 10-week lockdown, vigilant tracing of new clusters and general acceptance of mask mandates and social distancing, Italy has become a model of virus containment.

## Precautions

"Don't they care about their health?" a mask-clad Patrizia Antonini asked about people in the United States as she walked with friends along the banks of Lake Bracciano, north of Rome. "They need to take our precautions ... They need a real lockdown."

Much of the incredulity in Europe stems from the fact that America had the benefit of time, European experience and medical know-how to treat the virus that the continent itself didn't have when the first COVID-19 patients started filling intensive care units. Yet, more than four months into a sustained outbreak, the US is about to hit an astonishing milestone of 5 million confirmed infections, easily the highest in the world. Health officials believe the actual number is closer to 50 million, given testing limitations and the fact that as many as 40% of all cases are asymptomatic.

"We Italians always saw America as a model," said Massimo Franco, columnist with daily Corriere della Sera. "But with this virus we've discovered a country that is very fragile, with bad infrastructure and a public health system that is nonexistent."

Italian Health Minister Roberto Speranza hasn't shied away from criticizing the US, officially condemning as "wrong" Washington's decision

to withhold funding from the World Health Organization and marveling personally at President Donald Trump's virus response.

After Trump finally donned a protective mask last month, Speranza told La7 television: "I'm not surprised by Trump's behavior now; I'm profoundly surprised by his behavior before."

With America's list-leading 160,000 dead, politicized resistance to masks and rising caseload, European nations have barred American tourists and visitors from other countries with growing cases from freely traveling to the bloc.

France and Germany are now imposing tests on arrival for travelers from "at risk" countries, the US included.

"I am very well aware that this impinges on individual freedoms, but I believe that this is a justifiable intervention," German Health Minister Jens Spahn said in announcing the tests last week.

Mistakes were made in Europe, too, from delayed lockdowns to insufficient protections for nursing home elderly and critical shortages of tests and protective equipment for medical personnel.

The virus is still raging in some Balkan countries and thousands of maskless protesters demanded an end to virus restrictions in Berlin earlier this month. Hard-hit Spain, France and Germany have seen infection rebounds with new cases topping 1,000 a day, and Italy's cases inched up over 500 on Friday. The UK is still seeing an estimated 3,700 new infections daily, and some scientists say the country's beloved pubs might have to close again if schools are to reopen in September without causing a new wave.

## Population

In the US, new cases run at about 54,000 a day — an immensely higher number even when taking into account its larger population. And while that's down from a peak of well over 70,000 last month, cases are rising in nearly 20 states, and deaths are climbing in most.

In contrast, at least for now Europe appears to have the virus somewhat under control.

"Had the medical professionals been allowed to operate in the States, you would have belatedly gotten to a point of getting to grips with this back

in March," said Scott Lucas, professor of international studies at the University of Birmingham, England. "But of course, the medical and public health professionals were not allowed to proceed unchecked," he said, referring to Trump's frequent undercutting of his own experts.

When the virus first appeared in the United States, Trump and his supporters quickly dismissed it as either a "hoax" or a virus that would quickly disappear once warmer weather arrived. At one point, Trump suggested that ultraviolet light or injecting disinfectants would eradicate the virus. (He later said he was being facetious).

Trump's frequent complaints about Dr. Anthony Fauci have regularly made headlines in Europe, where the US infectious diseases expert is a respected eminence grise. Italy's leading COVID-19 hospital offered Fauci a job if Trump fired him.

Trump has defended the US response, blaming China, where the virus was first detected, for America's problems and saying the US numbers are so high because there is so much testing. Trump supporters and Americans who have refused to wear masks against all medical advice back that line.

## Sickness

"There's no reason to fear any sickness that's out there," said Julia Ferjo, a mother of three in Alpine, Texas, who says she is "vehemently" against wearing a mask. Ferjo, 35, teaches fitness classes in a large gym with open doors, where she doesn't allow participants to wear masks.

"When you're breathing that hard, I would pass out," she said. "I do not want people just dropping like flies."

And health officials watched with alarm as thousands of bikers gathered Friday in the small South Dakota city of Sturgis for a 10-day motorcycle rally. The state has no mask mandates and many bikers expressed defiance of measures meant to prevent the virus's spread.

Dr David Ho, director of the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center at Columbia University Irving Medical Center, who is leading a team seeking treatments for COVID-19, decried such behavior, as well as the country's handling of the virus.

tion have reported positive West Nile virus pools this season, but Canyon and Gem County have reported positive samples of the virus.

To protect yourself against West Nile Virus, CDH recommends covering exposed skin when outdoors and apply DEET or other EPA-approved insect repellent to exposed skin and clothing. Carefully follow instructions on the product label, especially for children. (AP)

**Outpatient pill use OK'd:** Women in Italy can now use the abortion pill on an outpatient basis rather than be hospitalized to terminate a pregnancy.

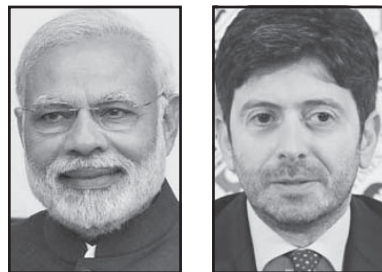
Italy's health minister, **Roberto Speranza**, announced the change in guidelines in a tweet Saturday. He said it was based on scientific evidence and was "an important step forward" in line with Italy's 1978 law legalizing abortion.

Previously, women in Italy had to admitted to the hospital to take mifepristone, which terminates a pregnancy by causing the embryo to detach from the uterine wall.

Women's groups and pro-choice advocates lobbying for outpatient use had argued that the hospitalization requirement discouraged use of the drug, given the high levels of conscientious objection to abortion within the Italian health care service. (AP)



A health worker sprays disinfectant to sanitize near a cemetery amid the new coronavirus pandemic in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, Saturday, Aug. 8. (AP)



Modi

Speranza

## Health

**4 deaths tied to 'sanitizers':** Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can help stop the coronavirus from spreading, but drinking the products turned out to be deadly for four people in two states.

Health officials reported this week that 15 adults were poisoned in Arizona and New Mexico in May and June after drinking hand sanitizer. Besides the four who died, three had ongoing vision problems, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said.

All had consumed sanitizers containing methanol, or wood alcohol. The active ingredient that kills germs in legitimate sanitizers is ethyl alcohol, which is consumable. But some companies have been replacing it with poisonous methanol, which is used in antifreeze.

The US Food and Drug Administration issued a warning in June about Mexican-made hand sanitizer gel that it said contained large amounts of methanol. Since then, the FDA has expanded the list. The FDA has identified dozens of hand sanitizers that contain methanol and have been recalled in the US by manufacturers and distributors. (AP)

**India docs ask for support:** The Indian Medical Association says 196 doctors have died of COVID-19 so far, and in an open letter to Prime Minister **Narendra Modi**, requested adequate care for physicians and their families.

The Health Ministry on Sunday recorded nearly 64,000 new coronavirus cases in the past 24 hours for a total of 2,153,010. At least 628,747 patients are still undergoing treatment.

India also recorded 861 fatalities, driving the death toll to 43,379.

India has been posting an average of around 50,000 new cases a day since mid-June and has the third-highest caseload in the world after the United States and Brazil. It has the fifth-most deaths but its fatality rate of about 2% is far lower than the top two hardest-hit countries.

Even as India has maintained comparatively low mortality rates, the disease has spread widely across the country. (AP)

**Positive mosquitoes in Idaho:** A pool of West Nile positive mosquitoes was found in Elmore County Friday.

KIVI-TV reports that Central District Health announced a single pool mosquitoes carrying the virus were identified in Prairie,

Idaho. Since the discovery, the Elmore County Mosquito Abatement District treated the area where the mosquitoes were found, CDH announced.

Mosquito traps are routinely set and

samples are collected weekly throughout the county. This year, 27 traps were set and this is the first positive sample discovered, according to CDH.

No other county within CDH's jurisdic-



Rescuers in protective suits carry the body of a victim from Hotel Swarna Palace where a fire broke out early morning in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh state, India on Aug. 9. The fire in the hotel being used as a COVID-19 facility killed seven coronavirus patients. (AP)