Coronavirus cases surpass six million globally

Bryan Dyne
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There are now more than six million officially confirmed cases of the coronavirus pandemic globally, a number that is increasing by one million every 10 days. The dead now number 365,000, or about 6.1 percent of those infected, and the toll of fatalities is growing.

These numbers account for both the 2.6 million people who have recovered, some of whom suffered for weeks or months fighting off the disease, as well as the 2.9 million active mild cases of COVID-19 and nearly 54,000 serious or critical cases caused by the infection. As it has been noted before, these official numbers are a gross underestimation of the pandemic's true toll.

In the midst of the worst global medical emergency since the 1918 flu pandemic, US President Donald Trump announced Friday that he will withdraw the country from the World Health Organization and halt federal funding to the international public health agency. US funds presently account for roughly 15 percent of the WHO's budget. In his announcement, Trump reiterated the lie that the WHO is an agent of China and colluded with the regime in Beijing to conceal for weeks the seriousness of the "Wuhan virus" and allow it to escape to the rest of the world.

The president made no mention of the early warnings of the dangers of the virus provided by both China and the WHO, or the belated response by the United States, which allowed the coronavirus to gain a foothold in New York City and elsewhere and spread across the country. He instead demanded, "The world needs answers from China."

In fact, many of the strains of the virus that causes the disease, SARS-CoV-2, have come from the United States. An analysis of the genetic structure of the virus in different parts of the world, using data from Nextstrain and GISAID, clearly shows that the virus escaped from the US to the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, South America and Eastern Europe in February and March. And while the United States remains the hardest hit country, at nearly 1.8 million infections and 104,000 dead, many countries in those parts of the world are now regional and even global epicenters of the pandemic.

Such hotspots include India, which now has the most cases, 173,000, of any country in Asia. This is more than twice that of China. India also has one of the highest rates of new coronavirus cases on the planet. And while its current official death toll is still under 5,000, it is an open secret within the country that the official counts are under-reporting the scope of the disease.

At the same time, the forced reopening of the country by the government of Narendra Modi has caused the case count in the country to begin increasing exponentially. Epidemiologists estimate that the number of cases will hit one million within weeks, with a surge in mass deaths soon after.

Similar policies in neighboring Pakistan and Bangladesh have caused their infection and fatality rates to increase in recent weeks. The two countries have 64,000 and 43,000 cases, respectively. Both are second only to India in terms of new cases and face many of the same overcrowding problems in their cities that plague India, creating similar health emergencies.

There is also an increasing danger of a spike in cases in South Korea, which has begun to reopen after a largely successful campaign of testing and contact tracing to contain the pandemic as much as possible. Several clusters of the coronavirus have emerged in the country in the past few weeks, the most recent being a set of 96 new cases that occurred at a logistics center.

This and dozens of other cases forced more than 500 schools to close again Friday after briefly reopening. The government in Seoul has also closed its parks, art galleries, theaters and museums and urged similar private entities to do the same for the next 14 days to

curb the current outbreak.

The Middle East has also been hard hit. The number of cases and deaths in Turkey and Iran currently rival those in India. There are currently 162,000 cases and 4,400 deaths in Turkey and 146,000 cases and 7,600 deaths in Iran. Saudi Arabia has also become one of the most plagued nations in the region, with nearly 82,000 cases and 450 deaths. While its number of new cases is currently decreasing, Saudi Arabia's new death count has been steadily increasing since April.

Over that same period, Qatar has earned the dubious distinction of becoming the country with the most coronavirus cases per capita in the region and the world, excluding European microstates. This is followed by another Gulf nation, Bahrain. While both countries currently have a relatively low death toll, the pandemic is poised to rip through the populations of both nations, particularly their vulnerable immigrant laborers.

In South America, Brazil, Peru, Chile and Ecuador are the countries most infected by the pandemic. They collectively have more than 700,000 cases and more than 32,000 deaths, and are one of the global epicenters of the pandemic. The majority of these are in Brazil, which has at least 443,000 cases and nearly 27,000 deaths. Brazil's numbers are rising as fast as those in the United States even as fascistic President Jair Bolsonaro orders offices, retail stores, car dealerships, real estate agencies and shopping malls to reopen.

The worst hit city in Brazil is Sao Paulo, which is the most populous city in the Western Hemisphere and the one of the largest metropolitan areas in the world. There have so far been 55,000 cases of the virus in the city, which has already caused the medical system to reach capacity.

While Brazil may have overtaken it in the total number of cases and the daily number of new cases, Russia remains the European country with the most coronavirus infections, 387,000. Health officials in Moscow recently more than doubled the number of official fatalities in the city, with 1,561 in Moscow alone.

This figure was revised to account for those who had been recorded as having died from other causes even though they were, in fact, infected with the coronavirus. According to a report from the city's health department, the new toll now accounts for even the "most debatable" coronavirus deaths.

Other areas of the country are following suit. If a similar correction to the tally were to be made across the nation as a whole, Russia's dead would be behind only the United Kingdom, Italy, France and Spain, which are the hardest hit countries in Europe in terms of deaths, and remain some of the worst epicenters in the world.

The center of the pandemic, however, remains the United States, which has seen dramatic spikes in cases in certain areas. In Montgomery Alabama, there are currently just two unoccupied ICU beds as a result of an explosion of cases in the county, which have quadrupled since the state begun reopening. The majority of states in the South are seeing an increase in the number of cases, and it is likely that the two that are reporting a decrease in new cases, Texas and Florida, are deliberately manipulating their data to justify reopening. In the opposite end of the country, California continues to average more than 2,000 cases each day.

At the same time as case counts and deaths continue their macabre rise, the Trump administration is rolling back its Coronavirus Task Force. Vice President Mike Pence, who is the formal head of the group, called it together on Thursday for the first time in a week. This is down from daily meetings in March and April and meetings three times a week starting in May. Trump himself has focused his efforts on whipping workers back into factories, offices and plants, even as the deadly contagion continues to rage through the auto, meatpacking and logistics industries.

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