

New British Guidelines Sow Confusion

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Body

As France, Russia and others eased restrictions, Germany watches warily as the rate the virus is spreading has risen there. And in Mexico City, while other sounds are muffled, street musicians play on.

This briefing has ended. Read global updates on the coronavirus [here](#).

In Europe and beyond, many people regained freedom to shop or go to school, but life is still far from normal.

For the first time in eight weeks, the French may leave home without filling out release forms just to go grocery shopping. Half of Spain's population can meet in groups of up to 10, and sit outdoors at restaurants. Gyms reopened in Germany's most populous state, North-Rhine Westphalia.

Across Europe and beyond, nations took some of their biggest steps yet toward lifting coronavirus lockdowns on Monday, but life remained far from normal.

Many countries have falling rates of infection, hospitalizations and deaths, but with no vaccine, they are moving cautiously toward reopening, wary of triggering a surge in new cases.

In France, where restrictions vary by region depending on how seriously afflicted they are, some schools and shops reopened and some hair salons were fully booked. But in Paris and elsewhere, restaurants and theaters remained closed, and masks were still mandatory in public.

On the Paris metro, every other seat was blocked off, and large stickers on the floor showed people where to stand to remain a safe distance apart. Commuters risked fines for not wearing masks, which were handed out at station entrances, and transit workers wearing protective gear sprayed sanitizing gel on riders' hands.

Pedestrians returned to the Champs-Élysées, but in a trickle, far short of the normal torrent.

Spain also lifted restrictions by region on Monday, allowing small groups to gather and dine outdoors, and small shops to reopen. But about half the population, including residents of the two largest cities, Madrid and Barcelona, remained under tighter controls.

Spanish health officials said that two weeks after children were given limited freedom to venture outdoors, the change did not appear to have caused a surge in new infections.

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In Germany, the gradual easing of movement restrictions continued on Monday, with more children returning to classrooms.

And in Australia, popular beaches are open again for exercise. Children across Sydney returned to school on Monday, donning uniforms that had been folded in drawers for weeks.

The U.K. government's plan to ease the lockdown sowed confusion about what to do, and when.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's long-awaited blueprint for reopening Britain's economy ran into a barrage of criticism on Monday that characterized the plan as vague, confusing or contradictory. A question-and-answer session with the prime minister did not make things much clearer.

Mr. Johnson said on Sunday and Monday that the government's coronavirus message was shifting from "stay home" to "stay alert," but many people wondered what the change meant.

Mr. Johnson, making his first statement to Parliament on the virus, rejected criticism on Monday that his proposals were too vague, saying he trusted the public to apply "good, solid British common sense."

Taking questions from reporters and members of the public, he said the shift was from a simple directive to a "more complicated" one, but then he added, "staying alert for the vast majority of people still means staying at home as much as possible." Most things, he said, are "pretty much as they have been."

The government's written plan, released on Monday, avoided giving much concrete guidance on how and when to reopen, and much of it was advisory, not mandatory. For example, it stated, some schools should reopen at some point next month, and school administrations should "urge more children who would benefit from attending in person to do so."

The plan advised people who cannot work from home to contact their employers about returning to work; the government said that had been the guidance all along. It said workplace safety guidelines would be coming.

The plan told people to avoid public transportation, which for millions of people rules out going to work. The government said people should wear masks in public, but did not require it.

In February and March, Mr. Johnson took a more laissez-faire approach to social distancing and testing than his European counterparts, which critics said contributed to Britain's worsening outbreak. Then he reversed himself and imposed a lockdown, though not as strict as those in France, Spain and Italy.

As colleges debate how to handle the fall semester, McGill will conduct most of its classes online.

McGill University, one of Canada's most prestigious universities, will offer most of its courses online in September, underscoring the logistical challenges facing global universities during the pandemic.

McGill, the Montreal university, which shut down classes, halted exams and shuttered laboratories in March to comply with a Quebec government directive, said Monday that the move was necessary to protect the health and safety of its students. But Cynthia Lee, a university spokeswoman, said academic seminars, workshops and reading groups could potentially migrate to campus if public health restrictions on public gatherings were eased.

"We will be prepared to shift to on campus instruction if we are allowed to do so in line with public health recommendations," she said.

The remote teaching would apply to undergraduates and graduate students and would include McGill's vaunted medical, law and business schools, she said.

"To allow McGill students to begin, or continue, their academic path no matter where they are, Fall 2020 courses will be offered primarily through remote delivery platforms," the university said in a statement.

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On Friday, the French-language University of Montreal also announced plans to hold many of its classes remotely in the autumn. In the Vancouver area, the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University have also been shifting toward online teaching.

The shuttering of universities across the world has caused an existential crisis for some institutions amid fears of lost revenue, shrinking endowments and enrollment. In a recent opinion piece in *The Times*, Christina Paxson, the president of Brown University, called for American campuses to open in the fall, saying that, despite the capabilities of videoconferencing technology, students face “financial, practical and psychological barriers as they try to learn remotely.”

Most colleges and universities in the U.S. are going out of their way to say that they intend to reopen with in-person classes in the fall, but are also making backup plans for online classes. The Chronicle of Higher Education has been keeping a running tally of colleges’ plans, and only a handful have said they are leaning toward online-only classes, including Wayne State University in Detroit, a virus hotspot, and Sierra College in California. A few say they are planning a hybrid model.

Quebec has been among the Canadian provinces hardest hit by the coronavirus, with 38,469 cases and 3,013 deaths out of a total of nearly 5,000 deaths in the country. Montreal, a multicultural city with several universities, attracts tens of thousands of students from the rest of Canada and around the world.

Quebec’s elementary schools and day care centers outside of the Montreal region were allowed to open on Monday — a decision that has drawn opprobrium from some parents and teachers who say it is too early to do so.

High schools were scheduled to open their doors in late May.

In Mexico City, the sound of quarantine has rhythm.

Our newest correspondent in Mexico City, Natalie Kitroeff, arrived just as the coronavirus was sweeping the globe. As the virus dampened so many sounds in her new city, she tells us what remains.

Lone organists walk the streets playing melancholy songs I can’t place. Two musicians bang out “Get Lucky” by Daft Punk on a marimba. Trumpeters serenade the block with “La Llorona,” a song about a woman who can’t stop crying.

In normal times, street musicians are everywhere in Mexico City, serenading lovers on dinner dates and charming money out of tourists. They play ballads and rancheras, the kind of music you would sing along to after a tequila or two. Now, as the pandemic washes over Mexico, there are far fewer of them. The ones who remain are playing because their odds at home, with no income, are even worse.

There are officially more than 35,000 infections in the country. But many Mexicans do not believe the real numbers are that low.

So for those of us who can afford to stay inside, safe but distanced from usual joys, the musicians have become a guilty pleasure. Some people drop pesos from their balconies or run downstairs to put tips in an outstretched bag. The performers move on to the next block to repeat the process.

“This is the city’s quarantine soundtrack,” wrote my colleague, Paulina Villegas, in an Instagram story filmed from her balcony, of a saxophonist playing.

She sent me another video, taken by her brother, of a saxophonist who reproduced The Beatles’ “Hey Jude” outside his apartment. “This is how I will remember this time, a weird but nostalgic, life goes on anyway kind of mood,” Paulina told me.

The other day, I was stressed and crashing on deadline when a mariachi band broke through the silence of my street. They were in the throes of an energetic rendition of “Cielito Lindo,” a Mexican folk classic that instructs us to sing and not cry. All of a sudden, so was I.

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"Ay ay ay ay," I belted at my houseplants. "Canta y no llores!"

Germany is keeping a wary eye on the rate of virus spread as it moves to reopen.

The rate of coronavirus spread in Germany remained slightly and stubbornly above a crucial threshold for eventually taming the epidemic, officials said on Monday, even as many schools and stores across the country were allowed to reopen.

Epidemiologists carefully watch how many people, on average, an infected person spreads the virus to — a number known as the reproduction or R factor. If the figure is below 1.0, it suggests the number of active cases is declining; a number above 1.0 indicates cases are increasing.

The latest R factor was estimated at 1.07, the Robert Koch Institute, Germany's primary disease control agency, said on Monday — the third day in a row the figure was above the threshold of 1.0, although it was down slightly from 1.1 on Saturday and 1.13 on Sunday.

But calculations by different experts can vary based on how they account for unknown factors, and any one estimate has a high degree of uncertainty. The Koch Institute said there was a 95 percent likelihood that Monday's true figure was somewhere from 0.88 to 1.29.

In April, after reporting that it had pushed the R factor well below 1.0, Germany began easing restrictions on public life, which officials warned would cause infections to rise, as they have.

"The increase in the estimated R-value makes it necessary to monitor developments very closely in the coming days," the Koch Institute said on Monday.

Chancellor Angela Merkel has explained that the goal is to remain under 1.0, because even a rate as low as 1.1, if unchecked, would overwhelm the health care system by October. Ms. Merkel has said restrictions can be reimposed if the numbers worsen.

Germany went ahead with its second phase of loosening restrictions on Monday in all but three regions where the number of new infections was deemed too high.

The chancellor and governors of the country's 16 states agreed last week on a plan that would allow regions with low numbers to restart their economies and allow groups of people from two separate households to meet in public, while observing social distancing rules.

Latest in science: A second wave of the virus in the United States may come sooner than expected.

As businesses open and restrictions ease in parts of the United States, scientists say a much-feared "second wave" of infection may not wait until fall and instead may become a series of wavelets breaking unpredictably across the country.

Most states that are reopening have not met even minimal criteria set by public health experts for doing so safely, and in some, coronavirus cases are rising. A resurgence in infections may not become apparent for two or three weeks, when some people would need hospitalization.

The question now, scientists say, is whether the nation can minimize the damage.

Evidence is mounting that masks — if worn in public places, by everyone — are far more effective at stopping transmission than was previously realized. While testing remains inadequate, home-use nasal swabs and saliva tests are on the way and may provide a clearer picture of where the virus is.

Employers are moving to design safer workplaces. A modestly effective antiviral treatment has been found. Laboratories around the world are racing toward the grail — a vaccine — at an unprecedented pace.

And scientists are also learning more about the virus.

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A new study published Monday in the journal JAMA Pediatrics paints the most detailed picture yet of American children who were treated in intensive care units as the pandemic was taking hold.

The study looked at 48 cases from 14 hospitals in patients under 21, in late March and early April. Two patients died. Eighteen were placed on ventilators and two remain on the breathing machines more than a month later, said Dr. Lara S. Shekerdemian, chief of critical care at Texas Children's Hospital, and an author of the study.

The study both reinforces the evidence that only a small percentage of children will be severely affected by the virus, but they can become devastatingly ill.

None of the study's subjects were stricken by the new mysterious inflammatory syndrome linked to the coronavirus that can cause life-threatening cardiac issues in children.

U.S. news: Trump abruptly ends his news conference after being pressed by a pair of female reporters.

President Trump abruptly ended his Rose Garden news conference on Monday shortly after a Chinese-American reporter pressed him on why he suggested she "go ask China" in response to her question on virus death rates.

Weijia Jiang, a White House correspondent for CBS News, asked Mr. Trump why he had created a "global competition" by claiming that the United States had done far better than any other country on testing its citizens for the virus.

"Well," Mr. Trump responded, "they're losing their lives everywhere in the world, and maybe that's a question you should ask China."

Ms. Jiang, who had been leaning into a contact-free microphone to ask her question, lowered her face mask and paused for a couple seconds before asking, "Sir, why are you saying that to me, specifically?"

In a recent interview, Mr. Trump complained that Ms. Jiang and another reporter were not behaving like Donna Reed, an actress famous for her portrayals as a consummate housewife. Mr. Trump has targeted Ms. Jiang in recent days for her tough line of questioning in news briefings, including gruffly telling her to "keep your voice down" in past exchanges.

The next reporter he called on, Kaitlan Collins of CNN, has engaged in similar back-and-forth exchanges with Mr. Trump. Ms. Collins tried to ask Mr. Trump a question after briefly ceding her turn at the microphone to let Ms. Jiang follow up, but Mr. Trump tried to move on to another reporter. After Ms. Collins remained at the microphone and twice tried to ask her question, Mr. Trump abruptly ended his news conference and left the Rose Garden.

Also on Monday in the U.S.:

- New guidance from the White House will require Trump administration employees to wear masks when inside the West Wing, according to an internal memo. It was an abrupt establishment of a policy that came as a number of White House staff tested positive for the virus in recent days. The new rules are not expected to apply to Mr. Trump or Vice President Mike Pence.
- President Trump declared at a news conference that "we have met the moment, and we have prevailed," making a series of misleading statements as he claimed that the United States had far exceeded other nations in testing and that the number of cases was rapidly declining.
- Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo of New York, the state hit hardest by the virus, announced on Monday that three upstate regions might partially reopen this weekend, with limited construction, manufacturing and curbside retail allowed.
- A federal watchdog is investigating whether a top Interior Department official violated ethics rules when she helped decide how a critical tranche of funds for Native American tribes in the \$2.2 trillion coronavirus stimulus law should be distributed.

As a small number of new cases emerge in Wuhan, a worried China orders thousands more tests.

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The city of Wuhan, where the coronavirus emerged late last year, has reported six new cases in one neighborhood over the last few days, underscoring the difficulty of containing the spread of the virus even after the city's strict lockdown.

An 89-year-old man was confirmed to be infected on Saturday, the first confirmed case in the city since early April. He was tested last week after feeling unwell. Five other cases were announced on Monday, including his wife, 81, and four others who live in their neighborhood. The five are all asymptomatic.

In Wuhan, more than 20,000 people will be tested in the area where the most recent cases were found, Xinhua said. Wuhan imposed a lockdown on January 23 and only lifted it on April 8.

More than 3,800 people have died in the city, according to the official tally. China has faced questions about the accuracy of its number and whether it has divulged the true extent of its outbreak.

The head of the street committee for the area with the new cluster was removed from office after the cases were reported, state-run Xinhua news service reported. The committee head was removed from his post for poor management of the closing-off and control of the Sanmin residential community, where the new cases were reported.

China has begun to reopen after a widespread lockdown put in place to control the coronavirus. But flareups have persisted. Parts of northeast China increased controls last month after a spate of new cases that were traced to people returning from Russia.

And on Sunday, Shulan in Jilin Province declared that it was at "high risk" from the epidemic after a rash of at least 15 infections around the area that started with a woman who was reported to have no history of contact with known cases.

Natural gas exports slow as the pandemic reduces global demand.

The coronavirus pandemic is putting the brakes on a two-decade-long global expansion for natural gas, which has been replacing coal for electricity and heating and even competing with oil as a transportation fuel in some developing countries. Gas prices, already low after a relatively warm winter in the Northern Hemisphere, have plummeted and storage facilities have filled to the brim. Struggling international oil and gas companies have slashed investment budgets, jettisoning projects.

Now, tankers carrying gas in its compressed, cooled liquid form are sitting idle off the coasts of Europe as factories and businesses are only slowly coming back on line, if at all, and many people are forced to wait out the pandemic at home.

"The coronavirus trajectory is a big unknown in both economic and financial impact and policy changes to manage the fallout," said Leslie Palti-Guzman, president of Gas Vista, a research and consulting firm. "But it poses unprecedented risk to L.N.G. demand and investments."

Investment decisions for proposed multibillion-dollar liquefied natural gas export terminals — which can take up to a decade to plan, permit and build — have been delayed or canceled in Australia, Mozambique, Qatar, Mauritania, Senegal and the United States in recent weeks. Industry executives estimate that investments of more than \$50 billion will be delayed this year and next.

Saudi Arabia is tripling its sales tax as the cost of fighting the virus and lower oil prices strain its budget.

Saudi Arabia's government said Monday that it would triple the rate of its value added tax on sales to 15 percent and take other measures to shore up state finances, as the combination of lower oil prices and the costs of fighting the coronavirus pandemic strains the kingdom's budget.

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The minister of finance, Mohammad Aljadaan, also said that spending on Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 projects, which aim to diversify the Saudi economy and create new jobs for Saudis, would be cut, according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

The Crown Prince, who is Saudi Arabia's chief policymaker, wants to build a futuristic new city called Neom, and vast tourist schemes on the Red Sea and in the interior, but the effects of the pandemic have virtually killed off international tourism.

The new measures would boost state coffers by around 100 billion Saudi riyals, or about \$26 billion.

Saudi Arabia's government is heavily reliant on oil revenue, and the price of oil has collapsed more than 50 percent this year, partly because of lost demand as governments shut down their economies to curb the spread of the coronavirus. Saudi Arabia has recorded about 39,000 coronavirus cases and more than 245 deaths.

Putin declares an end to Russia's 'nonworking period,' but data raise questions about the outbreak.

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia on Monday declared an end to the nationwide "nonworking period" instituted seven weeks ago, but told governors to strengthen or relax lockdowns depending on the situation in their individual territories.

Speaking on state television shortly after the health authorities reported the biggest one-day rise in infections, Mr. Putin acknowledged that the pandemic had not yet been defeated but said it was now up to regional governors to decide on restrictions.

"Starting tomorrow, May 12, the national nonworking period will end for the entire country and for all sectors of the economy," Mr. Putin said, "But the fight with the epidemic is not ending."

Earlier on Monday, authorities in Moscow, by far Russia's hardest hit region, announced that the city would remain in lockdown until at least the end of May. Starting Tuesday, the wearing of masks and gloves in public will be mandatory in the Russian capital.

The authorities said on Monday that 11,656 cases had been confirmed in the past 24 hours, bringing the official total to 221,344.

But experts believe the crisis is much deeper than official figures imply.

Since the coronavirus first exploded into a major pandemic, researchers have been left puzzled by Russia's mortality rate just 13 deaths per million, far below the global average of 36.

But data released by Moscow's city government on Friday showed that the number of total registered deaths in the Russian capital in April exceeded the five-year average for the same period by more than 1,700. That total is far higher than the official Covid-19 death count of 642 — an indication of significant underreporting by the authorities.

"Mortality figures in Moscow seem to be much higher than average for Aprils over the last decade," said Tatiana N. Mikhailova, a senior researcher at the Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration in Moscow.

"One thing is clear: The number of Covid-19 victims is possibly almost three times higher than the official toll," she said in an interview, adding that additional calculations were required for a precise number.

A similar situation of underreporting fatalities has been observed in many other countries, where subsequent data reveal large upticks in deaths compared with the same period in previous years.

Moscow's figures contrast sharply with the line that has been peddled by the Kremlin and state-run television, that Russia's effort to fight the virus has been superior to Western nations'.

Officially, 2,009 deaths nationwide had been attributed to the virus as of Monday.

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In seeking an inquiry, Australia leaps onto global stage and draws China's ire.

When Australia started pushing for a global inquiry into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic, no other countries were on board, and officials had no idea how it would work or how China might react.

Europe soon joined the effort, moving to take up the idea with the World Health Organization this month. And Australia, in its newfound role as global catalyst, has become both a major target of Chinese anger and the sudden leader of a push to bolster international institutions that the United States has abandoned under President Trump.

"We just want to know what happened so it doesn't happen again," Prime Minister Scott Morrison said on Friday, describing his conversations with other nations.

Confronting a once-in-a-generation crisis, the world's middle powers are urgently trying to revive can-do multilateralism.

Countries in Europe and Asia are forging bonds on issues like public health and trade, planning for a future built on what they see as the pandemic's biggest lessons: that the risks of China's authoritarian government can no longer be denied, and that the United States cannot be relied on to lead when its foreign policy is increasingly "America first."

The middle-power dynamic may last only as long as the virus. But if it continues, it could offer an alternative to the decrees and demands of the world's two superpowers.

Coronavirus cases are climbing in Iraq, driven in part by relaxed stay-at-home orders.

Iraq's coronavirus experience has been an anomaly. Even in a region with far fewer cases than Europe or the United States, Iraq's scarcity of confirmed cases, about 2,700 by early May, has stood out.

But the numbers are climbing steadily, leaving some experts asking, why now? The answer seems linked to a handful of superspreading events paired with the relaxation of lockdown measures. In the 19 days since Iraq's curfew was eased, coronavirus cases in the country have risen 73 percent.

At least two isolated instances that led to dozens of infections — a funeral in Basra, and a birthday party in Baghdad — have been deemed superspreading events. Although it is hard to tie all the cases to those events since Iraq does only limited contact tracing, infections in both cities climbed steadily after they took place, even as cases slowed in other areas of the country.

Around 110 people who attended the funeral in Basra or came into contact with someone who attended have tested positive for the coronavirus, said Dr. Mustafa Abdul Rahman, the head of public health for the province. The health authorities did not realize that someone in the area was infected, and once people began to move around because of the relaxed stay-at-home order, it was already too late.

The health ministry moved belatedly to block off the area where most of those who tested positive came from, putting up blast walls to stop people from going in or out, and stationing security forces at the town's entrance.

"Better late than not doing it at all," Dr. Rahman said.

But the restrictions may have had the opposite effect, said Talib Sarhan al Maliki, a psychologist who lives in the town.

"The people feel stigmatized," he said. "People fear being shut in with other sick people."

And that, in turn, means people are reluctant to come forward and be tested.

Mistakes and good intentions let the virus run wild on a French aircraft carrier, the defense minister says.

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"Errors in judgment" by commanders led to a massive coronavirus outbreak last month on France's flagship aircraft carrier, the defense minister said on Monday, but she defended the officers, saying they acted with good intentions based on incomplete information.

Reporting to France's Parliament on internal investigations into the outbreak, the minister, Florence Parly, said that the command and medical officers of the Charles de Gaulle had "excessive confidence" in their ability to contain the virus and loosened social distancing restrictions too quickly.

Of the nearly 1,100 sailors infected in the outbreak — about three-fifths of those aboard — all but one have fully recovered, she said.

Investigators found that the virus first arrived aboard the ship on one of the flights that regularly ferry supplies and crew members from land, at some point after it left Cyprus in late February, Ms. Parly said.

A mid-March stop in Brest, on France's Atlantic coast, where sailors went ashore and mingled with others, was not the original source of infection, as was previously thought, she added. But it did expose more crew members, she said, calling the stop "an accelerating factor."

After leaving Brest, the de Gaulle's commanders enforced strict social distancing, canceling several events. But after 14 days at sea without any visible cases, they loosened the restrictions. Ms. Parly said the decision was prompted by a drop in crew morale and the officers' overconfidence.

Once things got worse, she said, information moved too slowly up the naval chain of command.

"Knowing what we know today — and I insist on this term today — there were errors of judgment," she added, but the officers "always had the health of the crew at heart."

The de Gaulle's experience differs from that of the U.S. aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt, where nearly 1,000 crew members were infected. In that case, the ship's captain saw the outbreak as disastrous and appealed to his superiors for help, but was accused of overreacting.

Shanghai Disneyland reopens with a long list of new safety rules.

Temperature checks are conducted on ticket holders upon arrival. All guests must wear face masks. Parades are suspended. No theater shows or fireworks. Purple social-distancing mats prevent bunching while waiting in line. Rows of seats are left empty on rides.

It's not quite the escapist fantasy Disney typically hopes its theme parks will be, but the reopening of Shanghai Disneyland on Monday carried immense symbolic importance. It sent a message to Disney's furloughed park employees — 43,000 in Florida alone — about the future: There will be one.

From a business standpoint, Shanghai Disneyland will be operating far below its potential. The Chinese government has limited capacity at the park to 24,000 people daily, less than one-third of its pre-outbreak capacity. Bob Chapek, Disney's chief executive, said last week that Disney would reduce ticket sales even further — "far below" the government's limit, in his words — to make sure that employees can enforce new safety rules. Fewer tickets sold means decreased food and merchandise sales.

Investors have been relieved. Disney shares have climbed 8 percent since May 5, when Mr. Chapek announced that Shanghai Disneyland would reopen, perhaps paving the way for similar actions at Disney resorts in the United States, Japan and France. The limited number of tickets that Shanghai Disneyland put on sale for this week sold out within hours, suggesting that people are willing to resume public activities, even without a vaccine.

When the Shanghai resort reopened on Monday, according to videos of the event, cast members — Disney's term for employees — lined Mickey Avenue, which leads to the castle and aerial Dumbo ride, and waved madly as they greeted attendees. Belle, Minnie, Woody, Duffy and other costumed characters appeared with welcome banners as a marching band played an upbeat "Mary Poppins" tune.

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"It has been an emotional morning," Joe Schott, president and general manager of the Shanghai Disney Resort, said in a phone interview. "There is light at the end of the tunnel."

U.S. plans to accuse China of trying to hack vaccine data.

The F.B.I. and the Department of Homeland Security are preparing to issue a warning that China's most skilled hackers and spies are working to steal American research in the crash effort to develop vaccines and treatments for the coronavirus.

A draft of the forthcoming public warning, which officials say is likely to be issued in the coming days, says China is seeking "valuable intellectual property and public health data through illicit means related to vaccines, treatments and testing."

It focuses on cybertheft and action by "nontraditional actors," a euphemism for researchers and students the Trump administration says are being activated to steal data from academic and private laboratories.

The efforts are part of a surge in cybertheft and attacks by nations seeking advantage in the pandemic.

More than a dozen countries have redeployed military and intelligence hackers to glean whatever they can about other nations' virus responses. Even American allies like South Korea and nations that do not typically stand out for their cyberabilities, like Vietnam, have redirected state-run hackers to focus on virus-related information, according to private security firms.

The decision to issue a specific accusation against China, current and former officials said, is part of a broader deterrent strategy that also involves United States Cyber Command and the National Security Agency. Under legal authorities that President Trump issued nearly two years ago, they have the power to bore deeply into Chinese and other networks to mount proportional counterattacks.

A spokesman for China's foreign ministry denied the hacking allegations on Monday.

At a routine news briefing in Beijing, the ministry's spokesman, Zhao Lijian, said China had long "resolutely opposed" all forms of hacking.

"China is at the forefront of the world in research and treatment of novel coronavirus vaccines," Mr. Zhao said. "It is unethical for anyone to slander and falsely concoct rumors if they can't provide evidence."

The forthcoming warning is the latest iteration of a series of efforts by the Trump administration to blame China for being the source of the pandemic and exploiting its aftermath.

New Zealand and Australia begin to ease lockdowns.

New Zealand and Australia have begun to ease social distancing restrictions with small numbers of family and friends allowed to visit each other's homes or go to restaurants.

The Australian state of Victoria, which has moved cautiously in responding to the pandemic, will now allow visits of as many as five people between homes and gatherings of up to 10 people outdoors, the state's premier, Daniel Andrews, said on Monday.

New South Wales, the state that includes Sydney, will adopt roughly the same guidelines as of Friday, following a plan released by the federal government that outlined how the country could largely resume normal domestic life by July.

In New Zealand, where Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern favored an especially severe lockdown that has lasted for nearly two months, restrictions are set to ease on Thursday to an even greater degree.

Ms. Ardern said that restaurants could have a maximum of 100 customers, with bookings limited to groups of 10. Retail stores, malls, cinemas and other public spaces can reopen, while enforcing physical distancing requirements.

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Home visits of as many as 10 people will be allowed, and schools are set to return to normal classes starting May 18. If no outbreaks alter the timetable, Ms. Ardern said, bars will reopen May 21.

“Our team of five million has united to beat the virus and must keep doing so — and now we must unite to keep rebuilding our economy,” Ms. Ardern said on Monday.

The announcements come as pressure to reopen and revive the economies of both countries has intensified. Small protests broke out on Sunday in Melbourne and Sydney, led by those who claimed that the measures to stop the spread of the virus had gone too far.

As schools reopen in Europe, relief combines with risk.

The self-administered coronavirus tests being distributed at the high school in Neustrelitz, a small town in northern Germany, is one of the more intriguing efforts in Europe as countries embark on a giant experiment in how to reopen schools, which are being radically transformed by strict hygiene and distancing rules.

Restarting schools is at the core of any plan to restart economies globally. If schools do not reopen, parents cannot go back to work. So how Germany and other countries that have led the way on many fronts handle this stage in the pandemic will provide an essential lesson for the rest of the world.

For now, Europe is a patchwork of approaches and timetables — a vast laboratory for how to safely operate an institution that is central to any meaningful resumption of public life.

Austria, Belgium and Greece are all resuming lessons for select grades in coming weeks. Sweden never closed its schools but has put in place distancing and hygiene rules. Some hard-hit countries like Italy and Spain are not confident enough to open schools until the fall.

In Germany, which announced last week that it would reopen most aspects of its economy and allow all students back in coming weeks, class sizes have been cut in half. Hallways have become one-way systems. Breaks are staggered. Teachers wear masks, and students are told to dress warmly because windows and doors are kept open for air circulation. Germany allowed older children back to school first because they are better able to comply with rules on masks and distancing.

Evidence suggests that children are less likely to become seriously ill from Covid-19 than adults. But small numbers of children have become very sick and some have died, either from the respiratory failure that causes most adult deaths or from a newly recognized syndrome that causes acute inflammation in the heart.

An even greater blind spot is transmission. Children often do not have symptoms, making it less likely that they are tested and harder to see whether or how they spread the virus.

Countries where hardship is familiar sometimes fare better against the virus.

As the coronavirus has hopscotched the world, a paradox has emerged: Rich nations are not necessarily better at fighting the crisis than poorer ones.

In Europe, the disease has been burning through Britain, France and Italy, three of the continent's four biggest economies. But smaller, poorer nations quickly imposed and enforced tough restrictions, stuck to them, and have so far fared better at keeping the virus contained.

The nations include many in the former Communist East, as well as Greece and Croatia, where the authorities are cautiously optimistic about their people's endurance in the face of adversity.

Those countries could draw on deep reservoirs of resilience born of relatively recent hardship. Compared with what their people went through not long ago, the stringent lockdowns seemed less arduous, apparently prompting a larger social buy-in.

New British Guidelines Sow Confusion

In Greece, where the strictures of the country's debt crisis are fresh in most minds, the specter of one in three people being out of work is nothing new. In Croatia, many remember being barricaded indoors and hearing air raid sirens blaring for weeks on end during the conflict in the Balkans in the 1990s.

Ive Morovic, a 45-year-old barber in Zadar, Croatia, believes the focused way in which people in Croatia have responded to the pandemic harks back to wartime and the legacy of communism.

"People today are afraid," he said. "The discipline we all learned helps us get in line and creates some sort of forced unity."

Reporting was contributed by Donald G. McNeil Jr., Pam Belluck, Stephen Castle, Austin Ramzy, Ivan Nechepurenko, Allison McCann, Alissa J. Rubin, Aurelien Breeden, Constant Méheut, Raphael Minder, Melissa Eddy, Isabella Kwai, Megan Specia, Livia Albeck-Ripka, Damien Cave, Chris Buckley, Matina Stevis-Gridneff, Iliana Magra, Ceylan Yeginsu, Katrin Bennhold, Abdi Latif Dahir, David E. Sanger, Nicole Perlroth, Maria Abi-Habib, Neil Vigdor, Maggie Haberman, Michael D. Shear, John Eligon, Audra D.S. Burch, Tracey Tully, Anemona Hartocollis and Jim Tankersley.

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