

US state of emergency as Trump caves in to pressure

By Mark Reynolds

DONALD Trump declared a state of emergency in the United States last night as coronavirus cases continued to soar.

The move, amid growing pressure on the President after he initially played down the crisis, will free up financial resources to help Americans hit by the outbreak.

It came as the number of cases of coronavirus in the United States reached 2,030 yesterday, with the death toll climbing to 41.

Mr Trump said: "To unleash the full power of the federal government, I am officially declaring a national emergency.

"No resources will be spared, nothing whatsoever."

He said his action will free up \$50billion to help states in "our shared fight against this disease."

The US President ordered all 50 states to set up centres to deal with the virus and activate contingency plans.

Mr Trump said the order would give broad new authority to the US health secretary to waive a series of laws and regulations to give healthcare operators greater flexibility in the battle against the spread of the virus.

He claimed as many as half a million coronavirus tests would be made available next week, while millions more will follow.

The state of emergency announcement came shortly after Mr Trump met major laboratory company executives about the response to the coronavirus outbreak.

The US administration last night insisted that Mr Trump was in good health, despite the Brazilian president's press secretary testing positive for coronavirus days after meeting the US leader.

Jair Bolsonaro was initially reported to have tested positive for coronavirus, although his son later said it had been negative.

Mr Trump was pictured appearing to shake the Brazilian leader's hand last Saturday.

There were also concerns for Mr Trump's daughter Ivanka after Australian home affairs minister Peter Dutton was revealed to be infected with the virus just days after meeting with her at the White House.

Schools in the states of Ohio, Michigan, Oregon, Maryland, Kentucky and New Mexico were ordered to close for at least two weeks. The state of Washington has already closed schools in three counties.

New York State's Governor Andrew Cuomo has banned all gatherings of more than 500, prompting Broadway to suspend all performances for a month.

Mr Trump's state of emergency announcement came as countries around the world began enforcing mass closures yesterday after

WORLDWIDE LATEST

CASES 144,031

DEATHS 5,397

CASES COUNTRY BY COUNTRY

COUNTRY	CASES	NEW CASES	DEATHS	NEW DEATHS
China	80,815	22	3,177	8
Italy	17,660	2,547	1,266	250
Iran	11,364	1,289	514	85
S. Korea	7,979	110	71	5
Spain	4,334	1,188	122	36
Germany	3,675	930	8	2
France	3,661	785	79	18
USA	2,030	333	41	0
Switzerland	1,139	271	11	4
Norway	940	140	1	0
Sweden	814	127	1	0
Netherlands	804	190	10	5
Denmark	801	127	0	0
Sweden	687	187	1	0
UK	798	208	11	1
Belgium	559	160	3	0
Austria	504	143	1	0
Qatar	262	0	0	0

Defiant voice of the elderly

A BLITZ spirit is emerging among pensioners across the UK, who refuse to live in terror because of the coronavirus.

CANCER patient and grandfather William Howard, 86, from Birmingham: "I'm taking normal hygiene steps like washing hands that I have to do lots anyway because of my immune system."

JAMES Coombes, 80, retired teacher from Solihull: "Coronavirus is just another winter ailment that we have every year. People are making a far too big deal of it to the detriment of us all."

JOAN Smyth, 70, from Leeds is determined to get on with her life. The grandmother-of-two said: "I'm not looking forward to all of this but I'm not worried. I'm still going out to the town hall for a concert."

WIDOW Mary Denby, 84, a retired nurse from Solihull: "I've been wearing my gloves and using my white gloves to get money out of the bank. I don't move with the times so I wouldn't like to have to stop using cash."

PATRICIA Baker, 86, retired computer programmer from Solihull: "It's not like the war when there were bombs falling and you didn't know if you'd be next. We've got to get on with life, if we get it, we get it."

RETIRED warden Ruth Deakin, 84, of Leeds: "I'm worried about isolation because I'll have to be alone for 14 days. I'd be tearing my hair out. When my time comes the Lord will take me, virus or otherwise."



Author...Sharon Feinstein

Venice is reduced to a ghost town as Italy plunges into crisis

VENICE is an eerie ghost town, its magic of centuries replaced by fear and disbelief, (writes Sharon Feinstein). Until now, the world was worried that Venice

would sink, flood, or collapse from the toll of 27 million tourists a year. Instead, something very different has happened... the people have gone. Not a single plane in the sky, no motorboats

along the Grand Canal or a gondola in sight. As of today, we have been ordered to stay at home. All life has stopped. Only supermarkets and pharmacies remain open, with long queues

outside - three people are allowed in at a time. You can only leave home for food or medicine once every two days, and you must produce your "pass", effectively a visa, reminiscent of the war.

Police stalk the streets. Hospital beds are spilling into the corridors and corpses are piling up. Until today the elderly were still walking around and meeting in cafes, maybe spreading the virus.

First world Italy is in deep medical crisis. These draconian measures have been taken in an attempt to limit the contagion. The news came in waves, delivered in the middle of the night, each more

shocking. First we couldn't travel around Italy and were deemed part of the yellow zone. Then restaurants and bars were ordered to close at 6pm. I came here to write a novel. Now we are locked

in. The governor of Veneto has pleaded with Italians in the north, where the virus is virulent, to stay at home. Venice has experienced three bubonic plagues in the past. No one expected 2020 to bring the fourth.

the first area of the outbreak had been proving effective. However, Italy suffered its worst death toll for a single day yesterday, with 250 succumbing to the virus. Meanwhile, Britons returning from the coronavirus-hit Grand Princess cruise ship yesterday told

of a terrifying flight home from California on a windowless cargo plane where six coronavirus victims were held in a metal box. In addition, cabin crew wore hazmat suits to serve sandwiches. Denise and Len McConkey said they and 100 other passengers had been barked at by cabin crew using

a megaphone on the flight. Back in London, Mrs McConkey said: "It was truly terrifying. We boarded but there were separate areas for those who had been diagnosed with the virus, those thought to have it and us other passengers." Elsewhere, yesterday it was

announced in France that schools will be closed from Monday for 15 days, while Belgian schools will be closed until Easter. The German states of Bavaria and Saarland said their schools would be closed until the end of Easter holidays in late April. The capital Berlin will also start

closing its schools next week. Deaths in Spain have risen by 50 per cent to reach 120, while infections have jumped to 4,200. And as the death toll there rises, four towns in the Catalonia region have been put under lockdown - a first for the country. As of Monday, every shop in

Austria will also be closed. The Czech Republic has said that from Monday it will ban all foreigners without temporary or permanent residency from entering the country and all Czech citizens from leaving. This follows similar measures by neighbouring Slovakia. Malta has

announced mandatory 14-day quarantines for everyone entering the country. Iran announced that another 85 deaths - the country's highest toll in a 24-hour period - have brought the total number of dead there to 514.