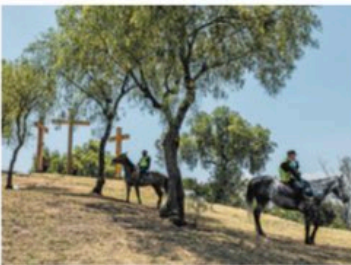


LONDON A Good Friday prayer at Westminster Cathedral's door.



MEXICO CITY Guarding a park that usually hosts a passion play.



THE PHILIPPINES Defying distancing orders by gathering in Manila.



MILAN More images of Good Friday around the world. Page A7.

Conspiracists Blame Cell Towers For Outbreak, and Arsons Follow

By ADAM SATARIANO and DAVEY ALBA

LONDON — On April 2, a wireless tower was set ablaze in Birmingham. The next day, a fire was reported at 10 p.m. at a telecommunications box in Liverpool. An hour later, an emergency call came in from another cell tower in Liverpool that was going up in flames.

Across Britain, more than 30 acts of arson and vandalism have taken place against wireless towers and other telecom gear this month, according to police reports and a telecom trade group. In roughly 80 other technicians in the country, telecom epidemics have been harassed on the job.

The attacks were fueled by the same cause, government officials said: an internet conspiracy theory that links the spread of the coronavirus to an ultraviolet wireless technology known as 5G. Under the false idea, which has gained

momentum in Facebook groups, WhatsApp messages and YouTube videos, radio waves sent by 5G technology are causing small changes to people's bodies that make them succumb to the virus.

The episodes starkly demonstrate how coronavirus conspiracy theories have taken a dark turn by spilling out into the real world. In just a few weeks, the pandemic has given pre-existing fringe ideas online new urgency by playing on people's fears.

Before the coronavirus, rarely did such theories cause as much tangible harm so quickly, disinformation researchers say.

In the United States, one person died after self-medicating with chloroquine, which was touted online as a miracle cure for the coronavirus even though its efficacy is

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Braced for Apocalyptic Surge, New York Avoids Worst, So Far

By ALAN FEUER and JESSE MCKINLEY

On March 24, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo appeared at the Jacob K. Javits Center in Manhattan, and as soldiers scrambled to transform it into a hospital, he offered the public a dire assessment.

Sophisticated scientists, Mr. Cuomo said, had studied the coming coronavirus outbreak and their projections were alarming. Infections were doubling nearly every three days and the state would soon require an unthinkable expansion of its health care system. To avert a catastrophe, New York might need up to 140,000 hospital beds and as many as 40,000 intensive care units with ventilators.

"We were looking at a freight train coming across the country," Mr. Cuomo said one forecaster told him.

Two weeks later, however, with an unprecedented shutdown of

public schools, countless businesses and most of outdoor life, New York has managed to avoid the apocalyptic vision that some forecasters predicted.

The daily death toll has still been staggering, around 800 for a third straight day on Friday, and some hospitals continue to teeter on the brink of chaos.

But the number of intensive care beds being used declined for the first time in the crisis, to 4,908, according to daily figures released on Friday. And the total number hospitalized with the virus, 18,569, was far lower than the darkest expectations.

In yet another sign that the worst of the predictions had not yet come to pass, the Javits Center, the convention center where Mr. Cuomo offered his worrisome assessment, was treating only 300

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PRESIDENT WEIGHS SETTING SCHEDULE TO OPEN ECONOMY

Pandemic Scrambles Supply Chains Final Word Remains With Governors

By ANA SWANSON

WASHINGTON — Factories are idled. Workers are in lockdown. Goods are piling up at some ports, while elsewhere container ships sail empty. Dairy farmers are dumping their milk, while toilet paper aisles at the grocery store have been picked bare.

The spread of the coronavirus has disrupted global supply chains, leading to shortages and price increases that are cascading from factories to ports to retail stores to consumers. While factories in China have been slowly restarting as the country's epidemic fades, many manufacturers in India, the United States and Europe are powering down, or running at partial capacity.

These disruptions in global trade could grow more noticeable in the months to come, as consumers hoard products and countries clamp down on exports of medical supplies and even food. Shoppers may see more shortages of unexpected products, including laptops, toilet paper and medicines. Some companies could find themselves lacking raw materials and components, a recipe for further financial trouble.

At the White House on Friday, President Trump said he was allocating at least \$16 billion to American farmers, ranchers and agricultural producers to keep the American food supply stable.

"In this time of crisis we must keep our supply chains moving from the beginning, right from beginning to end," he said.

On Wednesday, the United States put its own export restrictions on medical supplies needed to fight the virus, echoing bans in Europe, India, Turkey and elsewhere that critics have said could leave some parts of the world short.

In live-streamed remarks that morning, Roberto Azevedo, the director general of the World Trade Organization, said the contraction in global trade this year would be "ugly," representing the sharpest

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HAWKS Some lawmakers are using the crisis to press for punitive action against China. PAGE A6

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Where 10,520 Public Schools Are Closed, One Is in Session

By BRIAN WOLLITZ and ALI D'FAZZI

FARMERSVILLE, Calif. — At 7:45 on a recent morning, the strangest of scenes unfolded at Outside Creek Elementary: A school bus pulled up. Students stepped off and sauntered to class. The principal, Dennis Bravo, greeted a parent with a friendly hey-there handshake.

It was humdrum normalcy in the most abnormal of times, as if there were no pandemic, no statewide order to shelter in place, no social-distancing directives.

Of the 10,521 public schools in California, Outside Creek is the lone holdout, at a tiny school in a remote rural community in the San Joaquin Valley that is insisting on holding classes for the 21 students from kindergarten through eighth grade who showed up last week.

Mr. Bravo, who is also the school's superintendent and eighth-grade teacher, said he and the school board did not make the decision lightly. Yes, local health authorities had urged all schools to close, and every other school in Tulare County had done just that

Deciding to Stay Open for Students in Need in Rural California

after Gov. Gavin Newsom issued a shelter-in-place order for the entire state on March 19. They also knew the numbers — 10 dead so far out of at least 187 residents in the county who have tested positive for the coronavirus.

But when Mr. Bravo turned to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for advice, the nation's leading authority on infectious diseases seemed to suggest in its written guidance that small schools outside hot spots could remain open if they took precautions. And then Mr. Bravo thought about the everyday struggles of the families who work the citrus and walnut groves here. Nearly every one of his students qualifies for free or subsidized lunches, and remote learning is a fantasy for the many families who cannot

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'Please Don't Let Me Die': The Perils of Giving Birth in Venezuela

By JULIE TURKOWITZ and ISAYEN HERRERA

CARACAS, Venezuela — The labor pains began in her village, in the dark.

Her baby was coming, and Milagros Vásquez, 20, needed help.

With a maid stretched over her swollen and increasingly stressed body, Ms. Vásquez braved a motorbike journey across three rivers and gripped her belly through two jolting bus rides. But arriving at the first hospital was just the beginning.

Over the course of 40 hours, Ms. Vásquez, a former high school athlete, visited a second hospital, a third, a fourth. We have no sterile tools, they told her at one. No incubator, they said at another.

She took another bus. She slept on a bench. She cried in the street, losing count of the number of doctors who had placed their hands inside her, measuring her body's dilation, only to tell her to leave.

She tried a fifth hospital. We can't help you, they said.

Finally, in Caracas, the capital, she stood outside the largest maternity ward in the country and sent up a last, desperate plea.

"Please God," Ms. Vásquez



Milagros Vásquez, after 36 hours of labor, with her mother outside a locked emergency room.

prayed, "please don't let me die." Venezuela's public health system, once the best in Latin America, has been in a state of progressive collapse for years, crippled by a broken economy overseen by an increasingly authoritarian government. But few parts of that system have been as damaged as its maternity wards, where the most critical birthing tools — vital sign monitors, ventilators, sanitation systems — have broken down or just disappeared, sometimes forcing doctors to turn women away.

About half of the country's physicians

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NATIONAL A17-19

When Ballot Is in the Mail

There is no evidence to back up claims by President Trump that all-mail voting presents an advantage for Democrats, experts say. PAGE A18



Xenophobia Seen in Trump Ad

The spot, which calls Joseph R. Biden Jr. soft on China, includes an image of former Gov. Gary Locke of Washington, an Asian-American. The ad is the opening shot in a message war. PAGE A19

INTERNATIONAL A15-16

Philanthropist and Prisoner

In one day, Osman Kavala, a Turkish businessman and do-gooder, was acquitted then rearrested. He languishes in jail. The Saturday Profile. PAGE A15

Gaza Activist Jailed Over Chat

A video call intended to build bridges between Israelis and Palestinians has led to accusations of treason. PAGE A15

SPORTS SATURDAY B9-10

A Breakthrough, Now Broken

Women's soccer was poised to leap ahead when the pandemic hit but could be left behind in a restart. PAGE B9

BUSINESS B1-8

The Rush To Assemble

Jigsaw puzzle makers have raced to meet demand from a world that suddenly has a lot of spare time on its hands. PAGE B1

Teaming Up to Trace Infected

The technology giants Apple and Google said they would embed a feature in phones and devices that would allow users to track contact with those who have the coronavirus. PAGE B1



ARTS C1-7

Superheroes Fight for Life

A large distributor of comic books and graphic novels has halted deliveries, and shops are shuttered, putting the industry in jeopardy. "A lot of people are going to lose their livelihoods." PAGE C1

Applause Most Excellent

Every evening at 7, a writer and her neighbors clap for health care professionals, delivery workers and others, reminding themselves that though we are isolated, we are not alone. PAGE C1

THIS WEEKEND



EDITORIAL, OP-ED A22-23
Timothy Egan PAGE A22

