

International

COVID-19 cases surge in Oklahoma, other states ahead of Trump rally

Tulsa rally to be largest indoor social gathering in US in 3 months

PHOENIX: Several US states including Oklahoma reported a surge in new coronavirus infections on late Wednesday, days before a planned campaign rally for President Donald Trump in Tulsa that would be the nation's largest indoor social gathering in three months.

An uptick in coronavirus cases in many states over the past two weeks, along with rising COVID-19 hospitalizations, reflected a troubling national trend that has seen daily US infection numbers climbing after more than a month of declines.

Oklahoma reported a record 259 new cases over the previous 24 hours, while Florida reported more than 2,600 new cases and Arizona more than 1,800 - the second-highest daily increases for those two states.

In Arizona, where doctors, nurses and health administrators called for making face coverings mandatory statewide in public places, Governor Doug Ducey said he would let local officials decide whether to impose such rules and how to enforce them.

"If you do go out, wear a mask. It's the smart thing to do," he said. Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego immediately tweeted that a vote on a proposed ordinance to require face masks outdoors in the nation's fifth-largest city would go on the agenda for the city council's next meeting.

Texas reported 3,100 new coronavirus cases on Wednesday, its biggest single-day tally yet, along with another all-time high for COVID-19 hospitalizations - nearly 2,800 patients. That marks the sixth straight day in

which the number of patients currently admitted for the highly contagious respiratory virus has reached record numbers in Texas. While Texas has not reported how many of its hospitalized COVID-19 patients are admitted to intensive care units, 1,500 ICU beds are available statewide. The daily count of infections also hit a new benchmark in California, with more than 4,000 cases recorded statewide on Wednesday. Los Angeles County alone reported its largest daily increase, over 2,100 new cases, though several hundred were attributed to a backlog in test results released all at once.

Trump's political team, meanwhile, forged ahead with plans for a campaign rally on Saturday in Tulsa, his first such event since stay-at-home restrictions were imposed across much of the country in March to fight the coronavirus.

Public health experts worry that assembling thousands of shouting, chanting people inside an arena - particularly if many aren't wearing masks - could turn the rally into a coronavirus "super-spreader event." Trump, in a Fox News interview on Wednesday, repeated an assertion he has made in the past that the coronavirus, with or without the advent of a vaccine or new effective treatment, is "fading away."

"It's going to fade away, but having a vaccine would be really nice, and that's going to happen," he added.

Trump's campaign advisers see the rally as a chance to rejuvenate his political base after a string of national and state opinion polls showed the president trailing Democratic rival Joe Biden.

protests in the United States and around the world against police brutality and racism.

It has also been a painful reminder to black mothers in the US how vulnerable their children, and especially their sons, are to police brutality, at least five women Reuters interviewed said.

Police-involved fatalities in the United States average nearly three deaths per day, a 2018 study in the American Journal of Public Health showed, and black men are more than twice as likely to be killed during them than white men.

One in every 1,000 black men in the United States will be killed by a police officer, vs. one in every 2,000 men overall, a 2019 study by National Academy of Sciences found.

Floyd's death follows a string of other high profile deaths of unarmed African Americans at the hands of police, including the shooting of 12-year-old Tamir Rice in Ohio in 2014, the choking death of Eric Garner in New York City in 2014, and the March shooting of Breonna Taylor in Kentucky during a "no knock" arrest that targeted the wrong house.

On June 12, Rayshard Brooks, a black man, was fatally shot in the back by police in Atlanta, after being found asleep in a parking lot.



NEW YORK: People gather outside a reopening phase following the COVID-19 outbreak in the East Village neighborhood in New York City, US.— Reuters

Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt said during a briefing on Wednesday that state officials were doing their utmost to ensure that the event is "safe as possible."

Oklahoma health officials recommend anyone attending the rally to get tested for the coronavirus before arriving, then to self-isolate afterward and get tested again. The health

commissioner urged those at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 - senior citizens and people with chronic underlying health conditions - to stay home.

Biden accused Trump of "surrendering" to the coronavirus pandemic and failing to stay prepared for a resurgence that could put a US economic recovery at risk.—Reuters

The anguish of raising black boys in America

NEW YORK/LOS ANGELES: Raising black boys in America involves "constant mental anguish," Danielle Pattillo, a special education teacher in New York City and mother to two sons, ages 14 and 22, said. Every day Pattillo told her sons they were unique, wanted, valued, and loved - "each step in their life, each plateau of their life."

"I let them know that the world does not love them," Pattillo said. "And just because they don't love you doesn't mean you're not great. And it doesn't mean that you're not important. And it doesn't mean that you don't exist."

The death of George Floyd, a 46-year old black man who died in May after a white Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes, has triggered widespread

Pattillo said she sobbed the first time she sat down her younger son, then 12 years old, to have what's known in the black community as "The Talk" - about how to behave when you are inevitably stopped by police, so you don't become another statistic.

Speak slowly, keep your school I.D. on you, but don't put your hand in your pocket to reach for it without asking. Don't give the officer anything that could be considered sass.

"These are not conversations that you should be having with your children who are 12," she said. The Talk is so ubiquitous that the National Black Police Association (NBPA) holds a dramatized version with police officers, judges and prosecutors in high schools, and distributes a written guide entitled "What to Do When Stopped by the Police."

"We show how quickly it can go bad," explained Regina Holman, a retired police officer in Las Vegas, president of the NBPA in Nevada, and mother and grandmother. Officers teach students "they have a very good chance that their cars are going to be ransacked, and they're not going to be treated right."

"When they become non-compliant, that's



NEW YORK: Raising black boys in America involves "constant mental anguish," Danielle Pattillo, a special education teacher in New York City and mother to two sons, ages 14 and 22, said. —Reuters

when things go wrong," Holman said. "We teach them you cannot fight your battles at that moment." Neakai Lewis, an event producer in Los Angeles, lives in upscale neighborhood View Park nicknamed "The Black Beverly Hills," that has been home to entertainers Ray Charles and Tina Turner. —Reuters