

YOUR FULL FIVE DAY WEATHER FORECAST: SEE INSIDE BRITAIN AND U.S. WORST HIT BUT BEST PREPARED FOR HEALTH CRISIS

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London.—The United States and Britain are among the countries worst hit by the coronavirus and have faced criticism for their handling of the pandemic. But only last year, they ranked as the countries most prepared for a major health crisis.

That suggests that when it comes to preparedness, “we’re not measuring what we need to measure,” said Kristie Ebi, a University of Washington public health specialist - adding that also applies to emerging threats from climate change. From healthcare facilities built in the likely path of floods or wildfires to an inability to effectively track outbreaks, vulnerability to climate-related health threats is likely greater than we think, health experts

said during an online event this week. COVID-19 is now helping “every country measure and evaluate the (preparedness) of their health system”, said Niranjana Saggurti, director of the Indian office of the Population Council, a health and development research non-profit. In Africa, where the rich regularly jet abroad for care as national health systems struggle, the virus is sparking a rethink about how sturdy systems need to be, said Chris Gordon, a University of Ghana environmental scientist.

“I think a lot of world leaders in developing countries have taken COVID-19 much more seriously than other events because of the lockdown,” he said.

FREE AT LAST



Joggers and cyclists across Spain emerged from their homes early yesterday, with adults allowed out for exercise for the first time in seven weeks as the government began easing coronavirus restrictions.

In Barcelona, runners and cyclists crowded paths near the beach, while surfers and paddle-boarders were out enjoying the waves. Mar Visser, 45, who lost her job as an events organiser, was jogging along the path in Castelldefels, a town near Barcelona.

“I have been longing for this. It beats running in my house or doing yoga or Pilates inside,” she said. In Madrid, cyclists

and skateboarders streamed along the city’s wide boulevards, ducking under police tape set up to prevent people congregating in common areas.

Hit by one of the world’s worst COVID-19 outbreaks, Spain imposed a strict lockdown in March, confining most of the population to their homes for all but essential trips.

Sports and recreational walks were banned as authorities scrambled to stop the disease from spreading and ease the burden on the stricken healthcare system. Charlotte Fraser-Prynn, 41, a British government affairs consultant, was among the first to savour the new free-

dom to exercise - out for a run at 6 a.m. near the city’s Retiro Park. While the park remained closed, hundreds of people were running on the pavement around it.

“I have been looking forward to this for weeks. I was joking with my friends that I would be the first out in Madrid. I am very happy to be out after six weeks of yoga videos,” she said.

As the rate of infection has fallen and hospitals have regained their footing, the government has shifted its focus towards reopening the country and reviving the economy. Last weekend, children under 14 were allowed out for an hour a day of supervised activity.

On Tuesday Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez announced a four-phase plan to return the country to what he termed “the new normality” by the end of June.

To avoid overcrowding as people get outside, the government has implemented a shift system, allocating different time slots to different age groups.

Businesses that operate by appointment, such as hairdressers, will be allowed to open from Monday. Bars and restaurants will remain closed for at least another week.

Spain has recorded a death toll of 24,824 from the illness, and more than 215,000 cases.

BALEARIC EUROPEAN MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT SLAMS SPANISH GOVERNMENT: SEE SUNDAY INTERVIEW INSIDE