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**Number of confirmed Covid-19 cases SURPASSES 500,000 globally**

By: RT  
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Data compiled by Johns Hopkins University in the US shows over 510,000 confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus around the world as the pandemic continues to spread.

The figure rose above the half a million mark for the first time on Thursday. China remains the country with the most recorded cases at 81,782, though Italy is on the cusp of overtaking it, with 80,539 cases. The latter has suffered the highest death toll to date, with the loss of 8,165 people to the fast-spreading virus.

The recent acceleration in US cases of Covid-19 prompted the World Health Organization's spokesperson Margaret Harris to this week warn that the US has the potential to take over from Italy as the new epicenter of the disease.

China, where the novel coronavirus was first recorded, on Thursday announced major curbs on its international flight routes in an effort to prevent a second wave of Covid-19 kicking off there. A day prior, Chinese officials announced no new locally-transmitted cases on the mainland for the sixth time in eight days, though imported cases rose.

Beijing is also temporarily suspending visas and residence permits of most foreigners "in light of the outbreak situation and the practices of other countries."