

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

21st Jan 2021

News Highlights

Brazil lagging in vaccination campaign

Though one of the nations worst-affected by the pandemic, Brazil is struggling with its vaccine rollout. On Wednesday, [foreign minister Ernesto Araujo failed to provide a timeline for the country to receive shipments of doses of the Sinovac vaccine from China](#) or the AstraZeneca vaccine from India. [The country is currently gripped by surging cases of Covid-19.](#)

UK vaccine rollout stalled, with experts cautioning against lifting restrictions

Experts have cautioned against loosening restrictions, with one chief medical advisor [likening National Health Service hospitals to war zones](#). Prime Minister [Boris Johnson is resisting calls for a public inquiry into his government's handling of the pandemic, saying to do so 'in the middle of the pandemic, does not seem sensible to me.'](#) The country is experiencing difficulties with the vaccine rollout, [with the number being inoculated falling behind the Johnson administration's targets.](#)

Biden begins presidency with health high on the agenda

President Joe Biden made health top-priority on his first day in office. [Actions included restoring relations with the World Health Organization and restoring the directorate for global health security and biodefence at the National Security Council](#) as well as asking Americans to wear masks and adhere to physical distancing. In his inaugural speech, Biden said the U.S. may be entering '[what may be the toughest and deadliest period](#)' of the pandemic, but '[it can overcome](#)' Covid-19.

Research suggests Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine effective against UK variant

Research by scientists indicates that the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is effective against the mutant strain of Covid-19 first identified in the UK. [The paper has yet to be peer reviewed. With the identification of mutant variants](#), concerns have been expressed as to whether the vaccines currently being used will remain effective. [Current evidence suggests they are but researchers are investigating how the novel coronavirus may mutate in the future.](#)

Lockdown Exit

Brazil lacks timeline on when coronavirus vaccines will arrive from India and China

Brazil's foreign minister, Ernesto Araujo, said on Wednesday he still could not provide a timeline when new coronavirus vaccine doses would arrive from India and China, raising concern in a country that is lagging others in vaccinating its people. Brazil is waiting for a shipment of AstraZeneca vaccines from India and a shipment of Sinovac vaccines from China. Brazil's right-wing president, Jair Bolsonaro, has repeatedly antagonized China in recent years for political reasons. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-brazil-vaccines-idUSKBN29P2SF>

China triumphant one year after Wuhan lockdown

"People Supremacy, Life Supremacy" reads the sign at a Wuhan exhibition, where visitors are

greeted by a paean to China's triumph over the pandemic and the agility of its communist leadership in a crisis. Saturday marks one year since the start of a 76-day lockdown of Wuhan, the central Chinese city where the coronavirus was first detected before sweeping across the world and killing more than two million people. With China's official death toll from the virus under 5,000, Beijing is on a prolonged victory lap to promote its narrative of how it contained Covid-19, engineered vaccines and rebooted its economy.

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210120-china-triumphant-one-year-after-wuhan-lockdown>

Australian Open linked to more coronavirus cases after arrivals for grand slam

Ten people who have flown to Melbourne for the Australian Open have tested positive to coronavirus, authorities said. Lisa Neville, police minister for the state of Victoria, reported three new cases on Wednesday, adding one of the cases was a player who has been in "hard lockdown" since arrival into Australia as he came in on a flight where positive cases had been recorded. The second case related to another player and the third is a support person with the player, she added. Tennis Australia chief executive Craig Tiley said the safety of the Victorian community will not be compromised, but added the body was walking a "tightrope"

<https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/tennis/australian-open-2021-covid-melbourne-b1789895.html>

Why is Australia risking everything for tennis?

Following fraught negotiations between Tennis Australia and the Victorian government, the Australian Open is set to take place next month. Like all arrivals to Australia, the players must quarantine for 14 days. However, they have been granted five hours a day of leave to practise. That is, unless they come into contact with a positive case. Despite the best efforts of Tennis Australia, which put on socially-distanced chartered flights, a handful of positive tests have forced over 70 players to 'hard' quarantine - unable to leave their rooms.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/comment/comment/australian-open-tennis-covid-quarantine-b900374.html>

Tennis Australia confirms it will pay for players' quarantine as cases linked to Australian Open rise

Tennis Australia has backtracked from comments made by its chief executive, Craig Tiley, that the Victorian government would foot part of the bill for quarantining Australian Open players, coaches and officials. The organisation was forced to clarify the details after Tiley told radio station 3AW on Wednesday morning that the state government was contributing to an expected \$40m in quarantine costs. The comments prompted a sharp rebuke from the Victorian police minister Lisa Neville, who insisted Tennis Australia - and not taxpayers - would foot the entire bill for quarantining those associated with the Australian Open, as the number of positive Covid-19 cases linked to the tennis tournament grew to 10.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jan/20/covid-cases-linked-to-australian-open-rise-to-10-as-victoria-says-taxpayers-wont-foot-quarantine-bill>

Why a trans-Tasman bubble by April is still on the cards

The border is still up. Kiwis returning from anywhere in the world - with the exception of Australia and some Pacific nations - will have to get a Covid-19 test before boarding their planes from Monday. Australia is recovering from another Covid outbreak that hit New South Wales just before Christmas. So what, realistically, are the odds of a trans-Tasman bubble opening by the end of March, as the Government signalled in December? Still pretty good.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/opinion/123993562/why-a-transtasman-bubble-by-april-is-still-on-the-cards>

Covid unlikely to die out, says New Zealand health chief Ashley Bloomfield

Covid-19 is unlikely to ever die out, even with vaccination efforts, but it could become more transmissible and less deadly, New Zealand's director general of health has warned. "If you think about influenza, which was first recorded in 1172 I think, in Europe ... these viruses don't tend to die

out ... They change over time and in fact what we are seeing with these new variants with the Covid-19 virus is that they tend become more transmissible and less deadly over time," Dr Ashley Bloomfield said. However, Bloomfield said that vaccines would help humans develop immunity, adding to the natural immunity that people who have been infected will also develop. He also warned if some of the new variants of Covid-19 escape managed isolation and quarantine, the impact could be greater than it was last year.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/20/covid-unlikely-to-die-out-says-new-zealand-health-chief-ashley-bloomfield>

New Zealand Hosts 20,000-Person Concert as Country Marks 2 Months Without COVID in Community

On January 16, New Zealand held a 20,000-person outdoor concert where attendees neither had to wear face masks nor observe social distancing measures. The concert occurred as the country marked its second month without any new COVID-19 transmissions occurring between citizens. The concert was the first stop in the six-stop summer tour of the native soul-pop band Six60. Before Six60's concert, the country had hosted various New Year's Eve music festivals that also had massive crowds, including Rhythm and Vines, Rhythm & Alps and the Northern Bass festivals, each held in different parts of the nation, according to NME

<https://www.newsweek.com/new-zealand-hosts-20000-person-concert-country-marks-2-months-without-covid-community-1562866>

Exit Strategies

PH to receive COVID-19 vaccines through COVAX Facility within 1st quarter of this year

The country is set to receive COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX Facility within the first quarter of this year, government officials said on Wednesday night. This was announced by Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Francisco Duque III and Vaccine Czar Carlito Galvez Jr.

<https://mb.com.ph/2021/01/21/ph-to-receive-covid-19-vaccines-through-covax-facility-within-1st-quarter-of-this-year/>

Distributing the COVID-19 vaccine ... the just way

A look at COVID-19 vaccine distribution and how the developing world will almost certainly be left behind in the vaccination process.

<https://www.dw.com/en/distributing-the-covid-19-vaccine-the-just-way/av-56291135>

AstraZeneca and Pfizer supplies blamed for UK Covid vaccine slowdown

Mounting concerns about slowdown in vaccine rollout after three consecutive days saw falling numbers. Boris Johnson said 'on track' to hit mid-February target despite 37% dip on Monday compared to Friday. The PM admitted that 'constraints in supply' from Pfizer and AstraZeneca were making the situation harder. With possible exception of schools, unlikely to be any relaxation at first formal 'review point' in mid-February. Reports yesterday claimed that Boris Johnson was targeting Good Friday on April 2 as the earliest date. But several sources told the Mail that even this date could look optimistic, warning of restrictions into June. Britain recorded most deaths since the pandemic started yesterday, 30 per cent rise on same day last week. It comes amid alarm at the rising death toll in care homes, with fatalities doubling last week to 1,260

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9167069/Priti-Patel-blames-AstraZeneca-Pfizer-supply-issues-vaccine-slowdown.html>

Fury as coronavirus vaccine IT loophole 'allows people to jump the queue

Links to Swiftqueue website meant to allow over-70s and NHS staff book jabs But they have reportedly been shared on social media and Whatsapp People using them not asked for proof of eligibility when making appointments

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9168505/Fury-coronavirus-vaccine-loophole-allows-people-jump-queue.html>

Coronavirus vaccine passports will leave bosses on shaky legal ground

With more than four million people in Britain having received a first dose of the Covid vaccine and another ten million or more expected to do so over the next month, there is a clamour for those protected from the virus to be allowed to go about their normal lives. Many businesses, particularly in the transport and travel industries, believe that vaccine passports could offer a way out of restrictions and governments are reviewing the feasibility of such schemes.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/coronavirus-vaccine-passports-will-leave-bosses-on-shaky-legal-ground-fblhh05f9>

Saga requires all cruise customers to have Covid vaccine

Saga, the travel group targeting the over-50s, has become the first holiday business to insist that all of its customers must be vaccinated against coronavirus before they embark on its cruises. The company, whose customers are primarily in the UK, said on Wednesday that it had told holidaymakers they must be fully inoculated against the virus at least 14 days before travelling and take a pre-departure Covid-19 test. The requirement means customers must have had two doses of vaccine.

<https://www.ft.com/content/c0fcd968-e4e0-42f4-b3de-44eae600223f>

Seoul to procure enough COVID-19 vaccines for North, South Korea

South Korea is preparing to secure more COVID-19 vaccines via technology transfer from U.S. manufacturers Novavax Inc. and Moderna, allowing the country to produce local doses and enough potential vaccines for North and South Korea. South Korean President Moon Jae-in said Wednesday during a visit to a SK Bioscience Co. plant in Andong, North Gyeongsang Province, that Novavax vaccines will be produced in Korea and that enough vaccines to inoculate 10 million people will be secured through this supply agreement, Hankook Ilbo and Yonhap reported.

https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2021/01/20/Seoul-to-procure-enough-COVID-19-vaccines-for-North-South-Korea/1391611156113/

COVID-19: Plans for daily testing in schools put on hold over worries about accuracy

Plans for daily tests in schools are being halted amid warnings about the accuracy of lateral flow tests. The rapid turnaround tests were due to be used to keep pupils and staff in school if they had come into contact with a positive case.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-plans-for-daily-testing-in-schools-put-on-hold-over-worries-about-accuracy-12193452>

Covid-19 vaccines diverted to areas lagging behind as overall numbers of vaccinations fall

Vaccine doses are to be diverted into areas falling behind with the coronavirus inoculation drive amid concerns over differing levels of vaccination across England. As the Government fended off accusations of a "postcode lottery" in the programme, new vaccination figures suggested it was falling behind its pledge to supply the jabs to 14.6 million people in the most vulnerable groups by 15 February.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/covid-19-vaccines-postcode-lottery-diverted-targets-boris-johnson-836287>

UK 'nowhere near' easing lockdown and vaccine 'may not give us full herd immunity'

The UK is "nowhere near" easing its various lockdown measures, the Chief Scientific Advisor warned today. Sir Patrick Vallance sounded the grim alert after reports suggested England's restrictions will only start easing significantly in April. Boris Johnson previously claimed he wanted to lift restrictions from February 22, once the most vulnerable have a first vaccine dose. But the date appears to be slipping, with The Sun reporting he is now working on a plan to allow outdoor mingling at Easter. Sir Patrick today warned vaccines are not doing enough "heavy lifting" at the moment and case rates need to drop further.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/uk-nowhere-near-easing-lockdown-23352476>

Covid lockdown cannot be eased while NHS looks like 'war zone', warns chief scientific adviser

Parts of the NHS are such "a war zone" that the UK cannot afford to relax its lockdown, the government's chief scientific adviser has warned. Despite the vaccination of more than 4 million people against coronavirus, Sir Patrick Vallance warned that the country remains in "a difficult, dangerous situation". Vaccines alone are not yet doing enough "heavy lifting" to allow lockdown restrictions to be eased, and when relaxation does come it will be slow and gradual, he said.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/covid-lockdown-cannot-be-eased-while-nhs-looks-like-e2-80-98war-zone-e2-80-99-warns-chief-scientific-adviser/ar-BB1cVJYr>

London Schools Could Re-Open First After UK Lockdown, Official Says

The U.K. reported its highest daily death toll since the Covid-19 pandemic began, as data suggested one in eight people in England have had the disease. A further 1,610 people in the U.K. died within 28 days of a positive test, according to government figures released Tuesday -- taking the total number of deaths to more than 90,000. Covid-19 related deaths will "continue for some time throughout this second wave," Yvonne Doyle, medical director at Public Health England, said in a statement. "Whilst there are some early signs that show our sacrifices are working, we must continue to strictly abide by the measures in place."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-19/london-schools-could-re-open-first-after-lockdown-official-says>

As COVID-19 vaccination drives expand globally, many in India opt out of getting priority doses

Countries around the world stepped up their coronavirus vaccine campaigns Monday, with Russia offering jabs to all citizens, while an independent probe found fault with the early response to the pandemic. Both the World Health Organization (WHO) and Beijing could have acted faster when COVID-19 first surfaced in China a year ago, the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response concluded in a report. It added that countries where the virus was likely to spread should have put containment measures in place immediately. With the global death toll now past two million, many governments are betting on mass vaccination to throttle the pandemic, while tightening lockdown measures at the same time. Nationwide rollouts from Brazil to Azerbaijan were getting underway Monday, while Britain and France were widening inoculations to all elderly people.

<https://www.firstpost.com/world/as-covid-19-vaccination-drives-expand-globally-many-in-india-opting-out-of-getting-priority-doses-9215831.html>

S.Korea may secure additional COVID-19 vaccines from Novavax, Moon says

South Korea may secure additional coronavirus vaccines for 20 million people from U.S. drugmaker Novavax Inc, President Moon Jae-in said, according to a statement from the presidential office on Wednesday. Novavax entered into a development and supply agreement for its vaccine with South Korea's SK bioscience Co last year, according to a statement in August. Moon visited SK bioscience's work site on Wednesday and said that the agreement between Novavax and SK bioscience "raised the possibility of securing vaccines for an additional 20 million people," the statement said. That is in addition to the vaccines that the South Korean government has secured so far. The country has secured 106 million doses to allow for coverage of 56 million people, more than the 52 million residents of the country, Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) director Jeong Eun-kyeong said earlier this month.

<https://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/20/01/2021/S.Korea-may-secure-additional-COVID-19-vaccines-from-Novavax,-Moon-says>

South Africa's Ramaphosa scrambles for enough Covid-19 vaccines

The scramble by South Africa for Covid-19 vaccines is intensifying pressure on the government to square its plans for immunizing the country with reality. President Cyril Ramaphosa has sketched

out a program to acquire and administer enough vaccines to immunize two-thirds of South African's population of 58 million by the end of this year with the goal of achieving so-called herd immunity. But the plan suffers from a shortage of specifics and a surfeit of ambition, say some in the public health community, who have counseled the government to rethink its target and up its transparency.

<https://qz.com/africa/1959853/south-africas-ramaphosa-scrambles-for-enough-covid-19-vaccines/>

UK still in COVID-19 peril so too early to talk about lifting lockdown, minister says

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson resisted calls for an inquiry into his government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic on Wednesday as the country's death toll neared 100,000 and his chief scientist said hospitals were looking like war zones. Johnson has been accused of reacting too slowly to the crisis, failing to supply sufficient protective equipment and bungling the testing system, although the United Kingdom has been swift to roll out a vaccine. The official death toll is 93,290 - Europe's worst figure and the world's fifth worst, after the United States, Brazil, India and Mexico. Deaths rose by another record daily number on Wednesday.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-idUSKBN29POPD>

Coronavirus: Vaccinators could lose their licences for giving second doses prematurely

Hospitals say they have been told they could lose their licence to deliver coronavirus vaccines if they give second doses to anyone before 12 weeks have passed since their first jab. In a message sent to vaccinators at the University Hospital Southampton Foundation Trust and seen by The Independent, staff were told the hospital's chief executive had been given a "crystal clear" instruction that no second doses should be given to anyone before 12-week mark. There is mounting criticism of the delays in giving frontline NHS staff a second dose of the vaccine amid concerns that these could leave them more at risk. Emerging data from Israel suggested on Wednesday that the effectiveness of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine could be as low as 33 per cent after only the first dose.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-vaccines-nhs-hospitals-second-dose-b1790217.html?r=22629>

New York City reschedules 23,000 vaccination appointments due to supply issues

Tens of thousands of New Yorkers had their coronavirus vaccine appointments rescheduled this week due to a lack of supply, Mayor Bill de Blasio (D) said Wednesday. According to the mayor, a delay in the delivery of Moderna's vaccine contributed to the supply issues, which puts the city's goal of 1 million vaccinations by the end of the month in jeopardy. "We've had to tell 23,000 New Yorkers who had an appointment this week that they will not be able to get that appointment for lack of supply," de Blasio said during a news conference.

<https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/535100-new-york-city-reschedules-23000-vaccination-appointments-due-to-supply>

Partisan Exits

COVID-19: Boris Johnson accused of 'overruling' Priti Patel's call to shut UK's borders at start of pandemic

Boris Johnson has been accused of "overruling" Home Secretary Priti Patel - after she claimed she argued for the shutting of the UK's borders at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In video footage of her comments to Tory supporters, Ms Patel suggested she privately pushed for tougher border measures during the UK's first national lockdown last year.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-boris-johnson-accused-of-overruling-priti-patels-call-to-shut-uks-borders-at-start-of-pandemic-12193406>

Boris Johnson blames 'supply constraints' from AstraZeneca and Pfizer for vaccine slowdown but says target of 14m jabs by mid-February IS still 'on track' - amid fears

lockdown will last until Easter even if the goal is met

Mounting concerns about slowdown in vaccine rollout after three consecutive days saw falling numbers. Boris Johnson said 'on track' to hit mid-February target despite 37% dip on Monday compared to Friday. The PM admitted that 'constraints in supply' from Pfizer and AstraZeneca were making the situation harder. With possible exception of schools, unlikely to be any relaxation at first formal 'review point' in mid-February. Reports yesterday claimed that Boris Johnson was targeting Good Friday on April 2 as the earliest date. But several sources told the Mail that even this date could look optimistic, warning of restrictions into June. Britain recorded most deaths since the pandemic started yesterday, 30 per cent rise on same day last week. It comes amid alarm at the rising death toll in care homes, with fatalities doubling last week to 1,260

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9167069/Priti-Patel-blames-AstraZeneca-Pfizer-supply-issues-vaccine-slowdown.html>

Struggling French students protest university closures

French university students protested Wednesday on Paris' Left Bank to demand to be allowed back to class, and to call attention to suicides and financial troubles among students cut off from friends, professors and job opportunities amid the pandemic. Carrying a banner reading "We Will Not Be the Sacrificed Generation," hundreds of students gathered to march on the Education Ministry, seeking government help for those struggling. Other student protests were planned Wednesday elsewhere in France. The government ordered all universities closed in October to stem resurgent virus infections, after a similar closure in the spring set many students back academically and socially.

<https://www.startribune.com/struggling-french-students-protest-university-closures/600012826/>

Biden starts term with COVID actions on masks, support for WHO

The 46th US president, Joe Biden, will make several executive orders today pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic, including issuing a mask mandate on federal grounds, reports CNN. Biden will also ask Americans to wear a mask when in public for the next 100 days, and to adhere to physical distancing. He has already set forth a goal of distributing 100 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines in the next 100 days. "As you've heard the president-elect say, the pandemic will continue to get worse before it gets better," Jeff Zients, the incoming White House COVID-19 response coordinator, told reporters according to the Washington Post. "This is clearly a national emergency and we will treat it as such."

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/biden-starts-term-covid-actions-masks-support-who>

Biden, in inaugural address, pledges the U.S. 'can overcome' Covid-19

President Biden on Wednesday pledged that the United States "can overcome" the Covid-19 pandemic, even as he warned that it is entering "what may be the toughest and deadliest period" of the crisis. The remarks, made during key moments in his inauguration address on the west front of the Capitol, represented a forceful pledge that the country can bring the pandemic to an end. They also marked a stark departure from the approach taken by former President Trump, who spent weeks avoiding the subject of Covid-19 in his public comments, and then referred to the pandemic in past tense Wednesday before he departed Washington, D.C.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/20/biden-in-inaugural-address-pledges-the-u-s-can-overcome-covid-19/>

EU and BioNTech/Pfizer clash over reduced vaccine deliveries

A decision by Pfizer and BioNTech to reduce the number of vaccine vials they send to European countries has forced health officials to slow vaccination plans, with at least one EU member state threatening legal action as tensions over limited supplies mount. The move by the manufacturers followed a ruling this month from the European Medicines Agency that six doses can be extracted from each BioNTech/Pfizer vial rather than five, after health professionals found there was often extra vaccine left over.

<https://www.ft.com/content/59a014d0-aacc-43a5-b061-8ea4b25c3c00>

Boris Johnson says UK ready to deploy tweaked vaccines

Boris Johnson on Wednesday declared Britain was ready to quickly deploy tweaked vaccines to combat new variants of coronavirus, as the number of daily Covid-19 deaths in the UK hit a record of 1,820. The prime minister said he was concerned about the risk posed by dangerous variants of the virus — as well as Britain, Brazil and South Africa have reported new strains — as he justified new border restrictions in the UK. Neil O'Brien, a Conservative MP, asked Mr Johnson at prime minister's questions in the House of Commons about "concerning data from South Africa" that the virus could mutate and thus "dodge the vaccines and reduce their efficacy".

<https://www.ft.com/content/4c608be6-2546-4050-a6bc-4df6f47ab89e>

Continued Lockdown

Small UK businesses are 'running out of cash', chancellor warned

"I suppose the technical phrase is we're screwed," said Ruari McCulloch, owner of Pinstripes & Peonies, a high-end London florist, which counts several London department stores and the Paris Air Show among its clients. Mr McCulloch is one of the many small business owners facing the toughest few months yet of the pandemic, starved of income for much of the past year as the UK approaches the anniversary of the first national coronavirus lockdown in March. Cash levels are depleted and debt loads have risen fast for companies with high fixed costs but zero revenues, leading to urgent calls from the UK's business lobby groups, including the CBI and the British Chambers of Commerce, for immediate and sustained financial support from the chancellor Rishi Sunak.

<https://www.ft.com/content/4b5b71fe-9063-40c1-b886-171a4d8e959b>

Covid: Crops 'damaged nationwide' by lockdown walkers avoiding mud

Crops are "being damaged nationwide" by lockdown walkers avoiding mud, a rural business organisation has said. The Country Land and Business Association (CLA) said an influx of people walking over planted crops was affecting farmers' businesses. One farmer said there had been a tenfold increase in walkers during lockdown, while another had seen a 5ft (1.5m) path widen to 36ft (11m) across. Walking charity Ramblers said people must "stick to marked paths". CLA president Mark Bridgeman said while he did not want to discourage people from using the countryside, "crops are being damaged nationwide" by those avoiding quagmires.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-55712672>

Germany Extends Lockdown Measures, Concerned About Covid-19 Variant

Germany prolonged on Tuesday night its lockdown that has been in force since November and introduced even stricter measures amid concerns about the spread of a new and more infectious coronavirus variant.

<https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/covid-2021-01-19/card/WTBw4R0GGJxFhPv5SivM>

Germany extends and tightens COVID lockdown

Germany's coronavirus restrictions will stay in place until the middle of February. Chancellor Angela Merkel and the leaders of the country's 16 states agreed that the recent drop in infection rates was not enough to ease the current measures.

<https://www.dw.com/en/germany-extends-and-tightens-covid-lockdown/av-56281120>

New strain of coronavirus is discovered in GERMANY as Merkel extends lockdown restrictions

Health officials said the variant was identified in Bavarian hospital patients It's not yet known how transmissible this latest strain of the virus may be German schools and shops will continue to be closed until at least February 14

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9165725/New-strain-coronavirus-discovered-GERMANY-Merkel-extends-lock>

[down-restrictions.html](#)

The silent epidemic: Abuse against Spanish women rises during lockdown

Fewer Spanish women were killed by their partner or ex-partner in 2020 than in previous years, but that statistic masks a rise in gender-based violence as COVID lockdowns left victims confined with their abusers, rights groups and officials say. Emails to abuse helplines soared nearly six-fold in April, the first full month of Spain's lockdown. "Control-based violence - which doesn't murder, but is insidious and devastating - grew, because violent partners already had women under their physical control," Victoria Rosell, the ministry's top official on gender abuse issues, told reporters on Wednesday. In 2020 overall, calls to the government's abuse helpline rose 15% while emails increased more than 230%, but contact with victims was often lost as enforced cohabitation pushed women to seek help silently to avoid partners' reprisals.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-spain-women/the-silent-epidemic-abuse-against-spanish-women-rises-during-lockdown-idUSKBN29P1WU?il=0>

France faces tough COVID month, with ski lifts and restaurants set to stay shut

A more infectious coronavirus variant is expected to spread rapidly through France in the coming month, hospital chiefs said on Wednesday, raising fears of another lockdown as hopes faded that ski lifts and restaurants could reopen soon.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-france-idUKKBN29P0QR>

Israel extends Covid lockdown despite vaccination drive

The Israeli government decided Tuesday to extend the country's coronavirus lockdown to the end of the month after a spike in infections, despite an intensive vaccination campaign. Israel began its third lockdown in late December and tightened it on January 8, with officials saying at the time it would be lifted after two weeks if the daily caseload decreased sufficiently. Since the rollout of vaccinations one month ago, the Jewish state had inoculated more than 2.2 million of its nine million inhabitants, Health Minister Yuli Edelstein said Tuesday.

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210119-israel-extends-covid-lockdown-despite-vaccination-drive>

Coronavirus: French students highlight pandemic's mental health toll

French students have planned a series of protests on Wednesday to draw attention to the rising mental health problems many say they are suffering as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. A combination of isolation, inactivity and a broader loss of purpose has left many students close to breakdown, according to university psychologists. Student mental health resources, such as counsellors, have been overwhelmed by the numbers seeking help in recent weeks. In the last two weeks alone, two undergraduates in Lyon have tried to take their lives.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55716340>

Germany extends Covid-19 lockdown until mid-February

Germany on Tuesday toughened a partial lockdown and extended it to February 14, with Chancellor Angela Merkel warning of possible border checks to contain "the danger" of new coronavirus variants believed to be more contagious. Speaking after hours of crisis talks with the leaders of Germany's 16 states, Merkel said the latest restrictions were necessary as "a precaution for our country, the health of our citizens and also for the economy". According to a final text seen by AFP, Merkel and the state premiers agreed to make medical masks mandatory on public transport and in shops—meaning only surgical masks or the so-called FFP2 masks will be allowed. They also said employers must make it possible for staff work from home wherever it is feasible.

<https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20210120-germany-to-extend-covid-19-lockdown-until-mid-february>

Scientific Viewpoint

Moderna cooperating with investigation into possible COVID-19 vaccine allergic reactions

Moderna said in a statement yesterday that it is 'fully' cooperating with an investigation into possible allergic reactions at a vaccination centre in the US administering its mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccine. The adverse events were reported by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) in the US, after a number of individuals at a vaccination centre in San Diego were treated for possible allergic reactions following vaccination using doses from one lot of Moderna's jab. On Sunday, California's state epidemiologist Dr Erica Pan issued a statement with recommendations for healthcare providers to pause vaccination from the lot in question - no. 041L20A - after the possible allergic reactions.

https://www.pmlive.com/pharma_news/moderna_cooperating_with_investigation_into_possible_covid-19_vaccine_allergic_reactions_1361606

Coronavirus: Israeli doctor claims Pfizer's vaccine is less effective than expected after one dose

Dr Nachman Ash complained people were still catching coronavirus after jabs But protection is only expected to kick in from two weeks after the first dose British vaccine regulator claims one Pfizer dose gives high level of protection Sir Patrick Vallance said lower efficacy to be expected but UK should watch data

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9166991/Coronavirus-Israeli-doctor-claims-Pfizers-vaccine-effective-expected-one-dose.html>

Glass maker Schott predicts enough vials to go around for COVID-19 vaccines

Germany's unlisted Schott AG, the world's biggest supplier of speciality glass for medical bottles and syringes, said on Wednesday it did not see any shortage of vials for bottling COVID-19 vaccines. Drugmakers last year warned of limited supplies of vials to bottle future COVID-19 vaccines, but Schott said at the time that their rush to secure supplies early risked making matters worse. Schott, whose founder Otto Schott invented heavy-duty borosilicate glass in the 1890s, delivered 110 million vials for COVID-19 vaccines during the second half of last year and was now scheduled to clear an order backlog of 600 million vials for that purpose well into 2022.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-schott-idUSKBN29P28A>

COVID-19: 'Real-world' analysis of coronavirus vaccine in Israel raises questions about UK strategy

The first real-world analysis of the Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine suggests it is matching its performance in clinical trials, but raises serious questions about the UK's decision to delay the second dose. Scientists in Israel - which is leading the COVID-19 vaccination race - have told Sky News that they are "very hopeful" having studied preliminary data from 200,000 vaccinated people. But crucially they say their results do not show efficacy at a level close to that used by the UK to justify delaying the second dose of the Pfizer/BioNtech jab.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-real-world-analysis-of-vaccine-in-israel-raises-questions-about-uk-strategy-12192751>

Covid-19: How likely you are to die from the virus, according to the latest research

The pandemic rages on and over 2 million people have now succumbed to Covid-19. Since last year, scientists have scrambled to determine just how deadly the virus is. But it's a hard question to answer. "Globally, about 3.4 per cent of reported Covid-19 cases have died," WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told media during a March 2020 briefing. The comments sparked widespread alarm, particularly as initial estimates suggested Covid-19's mortality rate was lower. A death rate of 3.4 per cent was terrifying. Flu's mortality rate, in comparison, is usually below 0.1 per cent. During the Spanish influenza pandemic, 2.5 percent of those infected died.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/123979859/covid19-how-likely-you-are-to-die-from-the-virus-according-to-the-latest-research>

One-dose vaccine strategy may not protect against Covid-19

Health officials have said they must look “very carefully” at Britain’s plan to delay second vaccine doses after research from Israel suggested that one dose may not provide adequate protection against Covid-19. Sir Patrick Vallance, the chief scientific adviser, said this morning that the government would “just need to keep measuring the numbers” to ensure that a single dose offered reasonable protection. He also said it was monitoring how many inoculated people were taken to hospital with the virus.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/one-dose-vaccine-strategy-may-not-protect-against-covid-8gpx7s7r7>

DNA test developed in Cambridge can identify secondary infections in Covid-19 patients in hours

A DNA test developed in Cambridge can quickly identify secondary infections in Covid-19 patients, who face double the risk of developing pneumonia while on ventilation compared to those with other conditions. It is capable of detecting 52 pathogens that often cause infection in intensive care, and can pick up antibiotic resistance. It means targeted antibiotic treatments can be given within hours, rather than days. Dr Andrew Conway Morris, from the University of Cambridge’s Department of Medicine and an intensive care consultant, said: “Early on in the pandemic we noticed that Covid-19 patients appeared to be particularly at risk of developing secondary pneumonia, and started using a rapid diagnostic test that we had developed for just such a situation. “Using this test, we found that patients with Covid-19 were twice as likely to develop secondary pneumonia as other patients in the same intensive care unit.”

<https://www.cambridgeindependent.co.uk/news/dna-test-developed-in-cambridge-can-identify-secondary-infections-in-covid-19-patients-in-hours-9148750/>

What new Covid-19 variants mean for our fight with the virus

For more than three months the patient struggled against Covid-19. His immune system was already in a bad way when he caught the virus – he had been receiving a drug treatment for lymphoma, a type of blood cancer, that depleted some of his immune cells. With fewer of the usual defences against infection, the virus was able to spread in his body relatively unchecked. As doctors tried to help the elderly patient fight the virus, they gave him blood plasma collected from people who had already recovered from Covid-19. Contained within this milky-brown liquid – also known as convalescent plasma – were antibodies against the virus that might help to neutralise it. Over the course of 101 days as they treated the man, clinicians at Addenbrookes Hospital in Cambridge, UK, took 23 swab samples as he fought against the disease. Each swab was sent off to a nearby laboratory to be analysed. But when virologists looked at the virus’s genetic material in the samples, they noticed something astonishing – Covid-19 was evolving before their eyes.

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20210119-covid-19-variants-how-the-virus-will-mutate-in-the-future>

BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine found effective against Covid-19 variant

The Covid-19 vaccine developed by BioNTech and Pfizer is likely to be effective against a rapidly spreading strain of the virus that was first discovered in the UK, a laboratory-based study by the companies has shown. The variant, known as B.1.1.7, has a high number of mutations, which has led to concerns that could bypass the immune defences built up by vaccines being rolled out worldwide, a large proportion of which have been made by BioNTech and Pfizer. However, researchers at BioNTech’s headquarters in Mainz found that a test-tube version of the virus carrying all the new strain’s mutations was neutralised by antibodies in the blood of 16 patients who had received the vaccine in previous trials, half of whom were over 55 years old.

<https://www.ft.com/content/943c8ca9-0c92-4366-8ab4-b569a1e123b8>

Lockdown, quarantine and self-isolation: How COVID restrictions affect our mental health

In the year since the city of Wuhan, China, went into the world's first coronavirus lockdown, we have

all had to live under some form of pandemic-related restriction. Some countries have opted for strict national lockdowns, like the one currently in place in the UK, while other countries such as Taiwan have opted for border closures and mandatory quarantine for overseas arrivals. Such different approaches to restricting movement have different effects on our well-being.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-01-lockdown-quarantine-self-isolation-covid-restrictions.html>

One in eight people in England has had Covid, ONS survey estimates

An estimated one in eight people in England had had Covid-19 by December last year, according to antibody data from the Office for National Statistics's Covid-19 Infection Survey. It comes as the number of first doses delivered in the UK passed four million. Indeed, the Government says it is on track to vaccinate around 15 million high-priority people across the UK by February 15, including frontline health and social care staff, the over 70s and people in care homes. Once those vaccines have taken effect, around two to three weeks later ministers will consider whether lockdown measures can be eased in England.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/one-in-eight-england-covid-ons-infection-survey-b900259.html>

Novavax sees some COVID-19 vaccine trial dropout as Pfizer, Moderna rollouts gear up

As more supplies of Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna's authorized COVID-19 vaccines arrive, many states are expanding their reach beyond the elderly and into the 65-plus crowd. That broader rollout has created some problems for clinical trials of other experimental shots. Novavax's phase 3 trial of its COVID-19 candidate NVX-CoV2373 has received drop-out requests from some participants 65 or older as New York said it's now vaccinating people of that age group, The Washington Post reported. One Long Island physician told the Post that the trial site he managed has received a "significant" number of calls asking to be unblinded from the study and that recruitment is getting harder because "all of a sudden the people over 65 became less interested."

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/vaccines/novavax-sees-covid-vaccine-trial-dropout-as-pfizer-moderna-shots-rollout-gears-up>

[up?mkt_tok=eyJpIjoiTm1aa1pERTJZbUV5T0RkaClInQioiUaWNqUkVNcnY5SDJVVUx1QIINTlpuSWE2WFZsd0pMR1N2S05Sd2QydnRrMFp3aGFqdCthN29jK1JOUjFielV4NGs3eDFjYIEzaFM3eDjiSm1YQIItTzdzbdEeyY3Z4UDkzT3NJUHhKSCsrQkd2RDBsaGg4a1VPQW5VRIFjSXl5UyJ9&mrkid=693571](https://www.fiercepharma.com/vaccines/novavax-sees-covid-vaccine-trial-dropout-as-pfizer-moderna-shots-rollout-gears-up?mkt_tok=eyJpIjoiTm1aa1pERTJZbUV5T0RkaClInQioiUaWNqUkVNcnY5SDJVVUx1QIINTlpuSWE2WFZsd0pMR1N2S05Sd2QydnRrMFp3aGFqdCthN29jK1JOUjFielV4NGs3eDFjYIEzaFM3eDjiSm1YQIItTzdzbdEeyY3Z4UDkzT3NJUHhKSCsrQkd2RDBsaGg4a1VPQW5VRIFjSXl5UyJ9&mrkid=693571)

Patients, clinicians seek answers to the mystery of 'Long COVID'

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, public attention has mainly focused on the number of people who become severely ill and die from COVID-19. But what's become clear in recent months is the large and growing group of people who continue to deal with prolonged symptoms long after their original illness. In a recent study posted on the preprint server medRxiv, analysis of an international survey of more than 3,700 respondents with COVID-19 found that over two-thirds were still experiencing numerous symptoms at 6 months, with significant impacts on patients' lives and livelihoods. Respondents with symptoms for more than 6 months said they are experiencing an average of nearly 14 symptoms across multiple organ systems.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/patients-clinicians-seek-answers-mystery-long-covid>

Race, income inequality fuel COVID disparities in US counties

A study today in JAMA Network Open details US county-level COVID-19 infection and death inequities based on racial composition and income in the first 200 days of the pandemic, adding to mounting evidence of disproportionate burdens among racial minorities and those of lower income levels. Researchers from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and DePaul University analyzed data from seven US agencies and organizations on all but 1 of 3,142 counties in 50 states and Washington, D.C. from Jan 22 to Aug 8. They found that a 1.0% increase in a county's income inequality was associated with a 2.0% increase in COVID-19 infection and a 3.0% rise in related deaths.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/race-income-inequality-fuel-covid-disparities-us-counties>

Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine works just as well against variant first detected in U.K., study indicates

The Covid-19 vaccine from Pfizer-BioNTech appears to work just as well against a fast-spreading variant of the coronavirus first identified in the United Kingdom as it does against earlier forms of the pathogen, the companies reported in a study Wednesday. The paper from company scientists, which has not yet been peer-reviewed, is a welcome signal that existing vaccines don't seem to be weakened by the variant in question, dubbed B.1.1.7. Already, scientists had tested the Pfizer vaccine against one of the key mutations in the variant and found the immunization's neutralization power was not affected.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/20/pfizer-biontech-covid-19-vaccine-works-just-as-well-against-variant-first-detected-in-u-k-study-indicates/>

BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine found effective against Covid-19 variant

The Covid-19 vaccine developed by BioNTech and Pfizer is likely to be effective against a rapidly spreading strain of the virus that was first discovered in the UK, a laboratory-based study by the companies has shown. The variant, known as B.1.1.7, has a high number of mutations, which has led to concerns that could bypass the immune defences built up by vaccines being rolled out worldwide, a large proportion of which have been made by BioNTech and Pfizer. However, researchers at BioNTech's headquarters in Mainz found that a test-tube version of the virus carrying all the new strain's mutations was neutralised by antibodies in the blood of 16 patients who had received the vaccine in previous trials, half of whom were over 55 years old.

<https://www.ft.com/content/943c8ca9-0c92-4366-8ab4-b569a1e123b8>

China's COVID-19 vaccine makers apply to join COVAX scheme

China said on Wednesday three drugmakers had submitted applications to supply their COVID-19 vaccines to global vaccine-sharing scheme COVAX in the country's first formal move to provide locally developed shots to the initiative. Sinovac Biotech, China National Pharmaceutical Group (Sinopharm) and CanSino Biologics have applied to join the scheme, China's foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a news conference on Wednesday. The COVAX scheme - led by the World Health Organization and GAVI vaccine alliance - is due to start rolling out vaccines to poor and middle-income countries in February, with 2 of 3 billion doses expected to be delivered this year.

<https://finance.yahoo.com/finance/news/chinese-vaccine-makers-sinovac-sinopharm-081804165.html>

Coronavirus Resurgence

New CDC director to take over beleaguered agency amid worsening COVID-19 crisis

Dr. Rochelle Walensky will be tasked with reasserting the agency while the pandemic is in its deadliest phase yet and the nation's largest-ever vaccination campaign is wracked by confusion and delays

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-new-cdc-director-to-take-over-beleaguered-agency-amid-worsening-covid/>

Zimbabwe's foreign minister dies of COVID-19 amid resurgence

Zimbabwe's Foreign Minister Sibusiso Moyo, who gained prominence in 2017 as the military general who announced the coup against then-president Robert Mugabe on television, has died from COVID-19 the government announced Wednesday. He was 61. Moyo, previously little known to the public, became the face of the coup when he announced that the military had placed Mugabe under house arrest as the military's armored vehicles rolled into the capital, Harare. The coup ended Mugabe's 37-year rule in Zimbabwe and he later died in Sept. 2019.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/zimbabwes-foreign-minister-dies-of-covid19-amid-res>

[urgence-covid19-robort-mugabe-zimbabwe-foreign-minister-television-b1789962.html](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-5689962)

COVID-19: UK records another 1,820 coronavirus deaths and 38,905 new cases

A further 1,820 people have died within 28 days of testing positive for COVID-19 - the highest number of UK deaths reported on a single day since the outbreak began. It surpasses the previous record of 1,610, which was announced on Tuesday. Since the start of the pandemic, a total of 93,290 people have now died in the UK within 28 days of a positive COVID test. When asked by reporters about the record number of deaths, Prime Minister Boris Johnson warned "there will be more to come" and said the figures were "appalling".

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-uk-records-another-1820-coronavirus-deaths-and-38905-new-cases-12193513>

COVID-19: 'Public health emergency unfolding' in prisons as coronavirus cases soar

The new coronavirus strain and a rapidly rising number of infections in prisons across England and Wales is a "public health emergency unfolding before our eyes," the shadow justice secretary has warned. Labour MP David Lammy said it was vital that ministers "act urgently" to prevent the virus from spreading further in jails - or risk preventable deaths. "We're not condemning our prisoners to death in this country, but for some prisoners, that's what it means," said Mr Lammy.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-public-health-emergency-unfolding-in-prisons-as-coronavirus-cases-soar-12192395>

Spain reports highest weekly figure of new coronavirus cases so far: 233,523

The coronavirus is spreading in Spain at a slightly slower rate, according to data released on Tuesday by the Spanish Health Ministry. On Monday, Fernando Simón, the director of the Health Ministry's Coordination Center for Health Alerts (CCAES), said that Spain could be reaching the peak of the third wave of the virus, and there are indications in the latest figures that suggest this could be the case, although the data must be viewed with caution. For example, for the first time since January 7, a region has reported a drop in the 14-day cumulative number of cases per 100,000 inhabitants. Indeed three regions registered a fall in their incidence rate: the Balearic Islands (-0.31%), Cantabria (-0.98%) and Catalonia (-1.54%). On the opposite end of the spectrum, the incidence rate in Extremadura has risen to 1,412.

<https://english.elpais.com/society/2021-01-20/spain-reports-highest-weekly-figure-of-new-coronavirus-cases-so-far-233523.html>

Spain rejects tighter rules despite rising Covid-19 cases

Spain is gambling that its coronavirus wave is peaking and has rejected calls for tough new lockdowns despite high case numbers and warnings that intensive care units are full. Infections have tripled and hospital admissions doubled in the past three weeks, with about one in five hospital beds and a third of the intensive care capacity occupied by Covid-19 patients. Non-urgent operations have already been postponed.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/spain-rejects-tighter-rules-despite-rising-covid-19-cases-c30dgc38t>

Spain headed toward de facto lockdown amid surge in coronavirus cases

The third wave of the coronavirus pandemic is pushing Spain toward a de facto lockdown, that - while stopping short of the strict home confinement rules introduced last spring during the first wave - greatly restricts social activities and freedom of movement. In response to the rising number of coronavirus cases, Spanish regions have introduced tough new measures, such as the perimetral lockdowns of municipalities and the closure of all food and drink establishments. But there is now debate about whether or not the current state of alarm should be modified to allow regions to apply even stricter restrictions.

<https://english.elpais.com/society/2021-01-20/spain-headed-toward-de-facto-lockdown-amid-surge-in-coronavirus-cases.html>

How South Korea's Covid-19 success faltered

South Korea's aggressive response to Covid-19 has often been praised internationally as a success, becoming the envy of many countries around the world struggling to control their own outbreaks. One year on, the nation's tight-grip approach to containing the virus is now slowly taking its toll on citizens – and has become the subject of fierce attacks from critics. The country detected its first Covid-19 case on 20 January 2020. One month later, a major cluster of cases hit, centred around the Shincheonji Church of Jesus in the city of Daegu. The religious group was blamed for thousands of infections and made sensational headlines around the world. Health authorities, however, were ready. Their weapon of choice? Pervasive contact tracing. It proved effective in flattening the curve of the country's first wave without the need to close private businesses, and provided an example to the world of how best to tackle the virus.

<https://www.newstatesman.com/world/asia/2021/01/how-south-korea-s-covid-19-success-faltered>

Coronavirus deaths hit grim new daily high, as expert warns it will be weeks before they fall significantly

Deaths from coronavirus hit a grim record on Tuesday, with daily fatalities reaching a high of 1,610 across the UK as a government scientific adviser warned that it could be weeks before significant reductions are seen. The highest daily toll of the pandemic brought the total official figure for deaths above 90,000. But a separate measure of death certificates which mentioned Covid-19 put the total at 108,000. Antibody data suggested that one in eight people in England had been infected with coronavirus at some point in the pandemic up to December, in what one expert described as “one of the worst coronavirus problems in the world”.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/coronavirus-death-rates-vaccinations-antibodies-b1789686.html>

Malaysia Holds Key Rate Amid Lockdown to Curb Virus Surge

Malaysia kept its benchmark interest rate unchanged Wednesday, saving its policy ammunition as the country grapples with a surge in Covid infections that could take months to subside. Bank Negara Malaysia maintained the overnight policy rate at a record-low 1.75% at its first meeting of the year, as expected by 12 of 23 economists surveyed by Bloomberg. The rest had forecast a 25-basis point cut.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-20/malaysia-holds-key-rate-amid-lockdown-to-curb-fresh-virus-surge>

China's capital steps up COVID-19 measures as outbreak persists

China's capital Beijing said it will investigate all individuals who entered the city from abroad from Dec. 10 and it shut down a subway station after reporting the biggest daily jump in new COVID-19 cases in more than three weeks. The measures come amid what has become China's most serious coronavirus outbreak since March 2020 ahead of Lunar New Year holiday season, when hundreds of millions of people travel, raising fears of another major COVID-19 wave that could bring the country back into a debilitating standstill. The National Health Commission said on Wednesday a total of 103 new COVID-19 cases were reported on Jan. 19, down from 118 a day earlier. Northeastern Jilin province reported 46 new infections, however, setting another record in daily cases, while Hebei province surrounding Beijing reported 19 new cases.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-china/chinas-capital-steps-up-covid-19-measures-as-outbreak-persists-idUSKBN29P023?il=0>

Third Portuguese minister hit by coronavirus in a week

Portuguese Economy Minister Pedro Siza Vieira has tested positive for COVID-19 and is in self-isolation, his office reported late on Tuesday, the third cabinet member to be diagnosed with the virus in a week. He had already been in quarantine at home since Saturday as a precautionary measure after Finance Minister Joao Leao tested positive following a meeting with top EU officials.

Siza Vieira and Prime Minister Antonio Costa were also at that meeting. Siza Vieira was the third minister to be diagnosed with the coronavirus in the past week, following Leao and Labour Minister Ana Mendes Godinho.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-portugal/third-portuguese-minister-hit-by-coronavirus-in-a-week-idUSL8N2JV1QN>

France reports 23,608 COVID cases over 24 hours

France reported 23,608 new confirmed COVID-19 cases on Tuesday, up from 3,736 on Monday, while admissions to intensive care units continued to rise. Health Minister Olivier Veran said earlier the coronavirus was still circulating at a worrying level, but stopped short of recommending a third national lockdown. A nationwide curfew was brought forward to start at 6 p.m. from last Saturday, and authorities say it will remain in place for at least a fortnight. Health ministry data also showed 656 people had died from the virus in hospitals on Tuesday, up from 403 on Monday, bringing the total death toll to 71,342, the world's seventh-highest.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-france/france-reports-23608-new-covid-19-cases-over-24-hours-idUSKBN29Q2CT>

Desperate relatives of Covid patients in Brazil queue for hours to fill their loved-ones' oxygen tanks as mutant strain ravages country

Amazonas state has been gripped by a devastating resurgence of the disease and doctors at hospitals in Manaus, the rainforest's largest city, are having to decide which of their patients should get oxygen. Desperate family members queued up outside a local oxygen plant during a downpour on Tuesday. They arrived with huge green tanks to be filled with oxygen and then rushed back to their ailing relatives. Comes as Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro dispatched oxygen to the region infuriating President Jair Bolsonaro. 'He could give aid to his people too, right? Wages there don't buy half a kilo of rice,' Bolsonaro said

https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9166047/Desperate-relatives-Covid-patients-Brazil-queue-loved-ones-oxygen-tanks.html?ito=social-twitter_mailonline

Global COVID-19 deaths climb; hot spot locations shift

Global COVID-19 cases declined a bit last week, but the number of deaths rose to record levels, as hot spots within world regions shift and more countries report the detection of variant SARS-CoV-2 strains, the World Health Organization (WHO) said yesterday in its regular weekly update. Cases were down 6%, partly led by declines in parts of Europe and the Americas. Deaths, however, increased by 9%, with the world reporting a record weekly high of 93,000, the WHO said, noting that hospitalizations and deaths are a lagging indicator.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/global-covid-19-deaths-climb-hot-spot-locations-shift>

New Lockdown

Outer Hebrides islands put into lockdown as Covid takes hold

About 1,000 islanders on Barra in the Outer Hebrides are taking a "robust and responsible" approach to being placed in full lockdown from midnight on Tuesday, as a coronavirus outbreak spreads to affect about 16% of the population. Having kept the virus off the 11-mile-long island since the pandemic began, there are now 45 positive tests with a further 140 individuals self-isolating. Although islanders were already observing a voluntary lockdown as the outbreak spread rapidly since taking hold in the second week of January, Nicola Sturgeon announced on Tuesday that the islands of Barra and Vatersay, which are connected by a causeway, would go into tier 4, the highest level of Scotland's five levels of Covid controls.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/20/outer-hebrides-islands-put-into-lockdown-as-covid-takes-hold>

Rwandan capital back under full coronavirus lockdown

Rwanda's capital Kigali was back under total lockdown on Tuesday after a surge in coronavirus cases in a country that has adopted some of Africa's toughest anti-Covid measures. President Paul Kagame's government announced the measures late Monday after a cabinet meeting, banning "unnecessary movements" in the capital. Rwanda imposed one of Africa's first total shutdowns in March 2020, and has maintained an evening curfew, changing the times and imposing curbs on transport as its outbreak fluctuated.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/rest-of-world/rwandan-capital-back-under-full-coronavirus-lockdown/articleshow/80345629.cms>

Lockdown is imposed on five Beijing neighbourhoods, with 1.6 million people ordered to stay at home

Lockdown has been imposed on five Beijing neighbourhoods after two cases of the British Covid-19 variant were detected in the Chinese capital. The cases had 'no genetic correlation with previously reported local cases and imported cases in Beijing', the head of the Beijing health authority Pang Xinghuo told reporters, but are 'considered to be variants of the new coronavirus discovered in the UK.' The two cases of the UK variant were among seven new Covid-19 cases detected on Wednesday, with six found in the city's southern Daxang district alone.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9166933/Lockdown-imposed-five-Beijing-neighbourhoods-1-6-million-people-ordered-stay-home.html?ci=69930&si=24249205>