

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

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News Highlights

Lockdown-free flight arrives in New Zealand

A staple of travel during the Covid-19 pandemic has been passengers on international flights being required to quarantine post-arrival. [In Auckland, this was not the case for passengers arriving from Rarotonga in the Cook Islands.](#) Passengers could greet family and friends at the airport in the first quarantine-free flight in the Pacific as part of New Zealand's travel bubble. The exemption is one-way, as New Zealanders are expected to isolate if travelling to the islands.

South Africans missing out on vaccines?

The government in South Africa is facing criticism over vaccine distribution. Its campaign to inoculate citizens against the novel coronavirus has stalled, with a procurement process described as 'haphazard' stoking frustration. [As of December, a stock of vaccines was acquired that could inoculate just ten percent of the population.](#) Officials including president Cyril Ramaphosa have defended the government's approach, citing issues with contracts and financing.

Jumping the queue in Spain?

Rollout of Covid-19 vaccines in Spain has seen some queue jumping in the haste to receive a shot. [Several mayors, a regional health chief and family members of medical workers are among those to have received a vaccine despite not being part of the group prioritised for inoculation in the first place.](#) This has been attributed to efforts to boost confidence in the vaccine, errors, or surplus supplies.

Tougher restrictions on the cards in the UK?

More strict restrictions in [England did not lead to a decline in Covid-19 rates in their first ten days, an Imperial College London study has found.](#) The health department said the restrictions' impact would not be reflected in the study, but health secretary Matt Hancock said 'we must not let our guard down.' The government faces pressure to tighten restrictions even further. [Prime Minister Boris Johnson has not ruled out extending restrictions until the summer.](#)

Lockdown Exit

U.K. Hospitals Struggle to Cope With a New Coronavirus Variant

As a new and more contagious variant of the coronavirus pounds Britain's overstretched National Health Service, health care workers say the government's failure to anticipate a wintertime crush of infections has left them resorting to ever more desperate measures. Hundreds of soldiers have been dispatched to move patients and equipment around London hospitals. Organ transplant centers have stopped performing urgent operations. Doctors have trimmed back the level of oxygen being given to patients to save overloaded pipes.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/21/world/europe/uk-hospitals-covid-variant.html>

This is what will happen to Covid-19 when the pandemic is over

After months of not knowing how the Covid-19 pandemic would end, we now have some answers.

Vaccines that came even faster and work even better than anticipated are the light at the end of this very dark, long tunnel – the beginning of the end is in sight. But the virus is unlikely to go away for good. The global race to vaccinate as many people as possible will usher in a new phase of our fight against Covid-19, yet there is little chance it will deliver a knockout blow. In the long run, what started as a global pandemic may become yet another example of humankind learning to live alongside a deadly virus.

<https://www.wired.co.uk/article/covid-19-pandemic-over>

Australia posts zero virus cases; state premier calls for 'Pacific bubble'

Australia recorded a fourth day of zero coronavirus cases on Thursday, prompting the chief of the country's most populous state to call for a special travel "bubble" with Pacific island nations. New South Wales has reined in an outbreak in mid-December that prompted a strict lockdown in Sydney's Northern Beaches, while broader social distancing rules and mandatory mask wearing were imposed for the rest of the city. Signaling those restrictions were set to be eased next week, Premier Gladys Berejiklian told the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper the federal government should consider establishing a travel arrangement with the Pacific. "There is no reason why we shouldn't aim to travel to New Zealand or some of the Pacific Islands well within the next 12 months," Berejiklian said. The comments come after Australia's chief medical officer Paul Kelly cautioned about restarting international travel, given the country was in an "envious position" compared to most of the world.

<https://japantoday.com/category/world/australia-posts-zero-virus-cases-state-chief-calls-for-'pacific-bubble'>

Wuhan bustles a year after world's first coronavirus lockdown

Barriers still enclose Wuhan's notorious seafood market -- one of the few immediate reminders the city was once the epicentre of the coronavirus pandemic that has transformed the world. Otherwise, the new normal in the central Chinese city of 11 million is much like the old reality; cars buzz down highways, sideways bustle with shoppers and public transport and parks are busy

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/china/wuhan-bustles-a-year-after-worlds-first-coronavirus-lockdown/articleshow/80381375.cms>

New Covid strain: Australian city lifts ban on wearing mask indoors

People living in Australia's third-largest city of Brisbane will no longer need to wear a mask in indoor venues from Friday onwards as the state of Queensland announced that it has managed to bring the local spread of a mutant Covid-19 strain under control. "From 1 am tomorrow we will be back to having amongst the lowest restrictions in our economy in the country - this is great news for business, great news for tourism, and great for the people of Queensland to celebrate," Xinhua news agency quoted the state's Health Minister Yvette D'Ath as saying on Thursday. As of Thursday, Queensland continues to record zero local cases, allowing the authorities to further ease the pandemic restrictions. Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk attributed the result to the state's "go hard and go quickly" strategy.

<https://www.msn.com/en-ae/news/other/new-covid-strain-australian-city-lifts-ban-on-wearing-mask-indoors/ar-BB1cXi9l>

Tennis-Anderson urges players to show more respect for Australia's COVID-19 fight

Former U.S. Open and Wimbledon finalist Kevin Anderson appealed to players at the Australian Open to show more respect for the local community's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, following a chorus of complaints about quarantine conditions in Melbourne. As many as 72 players are confined to their hotel rooms for two weeks and unable to train for the Feb. 8-21 Grand Slam after passengers on three charter flights tested positive for the novel coronavirus. Complaints by some players over the severity of the health measures, food quality and even mice infestations in their rooms have sparked a backlash in Australia, which has many citizens stranded overseas due to pandemic-linked

border restrictions. Novak Djokovic was panned after writing to Tennis Australia chief Craig Tiley to ask for reduced isolation periods and having players moved to “private houses with tennis courts”.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/healthcoronavirus-tennis-ausopen/tennis-anderson-urges-players-to-show-more-respect-for-australias-covid-19-fight-idUSL1N2JW0WD>

Air New Zealand's first quarantine-free flight lands in Auckland

The first quarantine-free flight in 10 months has landed in Auckland with friends and family ready to greet passengers from the Cook Islands with an emotional welcome. The Air New Zealand flight landed at Auckland Airport shortly after 11am with a small gathering of family and friends waiting in the arrivals area.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/air-new-zealands-first-quarantine-free-flight-lands-in-auckland/ESMTDMRBUMZIVOF6KTZMRGDJQ/>

Emotional scenes as first quarantine-free flight from Rarotonga lands in Auckland

It was an emotional and cheerful reunion for those that gathered at Auckland Airport arrivals on Thursday, to greet friends and families who arrived in the first quarantine-free flight from Rarotonga. Air New Zealand Flight NZ941 departed at 7.43am local time from the Cook Islands and landed in Auckland at 11.06am. It is the first flight out of Rarotonga in New Zealand’s first travel bubble since the coronavirus lockdown. The bubble, although one way for now with New Zealanders still expected to undergo managed isolation on the island, is the first quarantine-free travel from the Pacific.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/travel/news/124010888/emotional-scenes-as-first-quarantinefree-flight-from-rarotonga-lands-in-auckland>

Exit Strategies

11,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses to arrive in Estonia next week

Based on the data of the Ministry of Social Affairs, in total 10,950 doses of both Pfizer/BioNtech and Moderna vaccines, should arrive in Estonia next week. Ministry of Social Affairs' media advisor Eva Lehtla told ERR that on Monday (January 25), 9,750 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine will arrive in Estonia and 1,200 doses of Moderna vaccine. Lehtla said the first Moderna doses arrived last week and there were also 1,200 of them. While AstraZeneca's vaccine had not been approved yet, Lehtla said, according to the current information, the European Medicines Agency should give its evaluation of the vaccine by January 29.

<https://news.err.ee/1608080842/11-000-covid-19-vaccine-doses-to-arrive-in-estonia-next-week>

Social care chief nurse urges workforce to take up Covid-19 vaccine

The chief nurse for adult social care has urged nursing staff in the sector to take up the offer of a Covid-19 vaccine “as soon as it comes”. Professor Deborah Sturdy’s appeal to the workforce comes as vaccines are rolled out to a wider group of social care professionals. While the first priority had been staff working in care homes for older adults, the vaccination programme has now been extended to other frontline social care workers as well as NHS staff who fall under priority group two.

<https://www.nursingtimes.net/news/social-care/social-care-chief-nurse-urges-workforce-to-take-up-covid-19-vaccine-21-01-2021/>

All overweight D.C. residents will get priority for the coronavirus vaccine. Experts are skeptical.

The District plans to give priority for coronavirus vaccines to the broadest possible swath of people with preexisting health conditions — a decision that will make hundreds of thousands eligible for scarce doses of the vaccine and that some public health experts say might not make medical sense. The plan, the details of which were confirmed by vaccine director Ankoor Shah, would offer vaccines to people whose weight and medical history would not qualify them for early access to the vaccine in almost any state in the country. D.C. Health Director LaQuandra Nesbitt told members of the D.C.

Council last week that she decided to open up vaccine access, possibly as soon as February, to such a large group in the hope of quickly vaccinating anyone who might suffer the worst outcomes if they contract the virus.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/dc-vaccine-overweight-smokers/2021/01/20/bd6cb53c-5a74-11eb-a976-bad6431e03e2_story.html

Scotland considers streamlining Covid-19 vaccine delivery for GPs

Calls from Scottish GPs for the coronavirus vaccine distribution process to be streamlined are to be considered by ministers, amid fears supplies are not getting to surgeries quickly enough. The British Medical Association (BMA) is pressing the Scottish Government to allow GPs to order their supplies directly, claiming the current system is too bureaucratic. It has asked Professor Alison Strath, the interim Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, to consider reforming the process so doctors can bypass health boards when ordering vaccines.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/scotland/scotland-streamlining-covid-19-vaccine-delivery-gps-839943>

Where Are Our Coronavirus Vaccines? South Africans Ask

South Africa's government, lauded for its swift lockdown in March to curb the spread of the coronavirus, is now being pilloried for being slow off the mark to secure vaccines. While developing nation peers such as Indonesia and Argentina are among more than 50 already administering shots, South Africa's inoculation program has yet to get off the ground. In December, it pinned down sufficient doses to cover just 10% of the population from Covax, a facility that aims to distribute vaccines equitably around the world. But those are only due to start arriving next month and the authorities have been scrambling to source additional supplies.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-21/south-africa-s-vaccine-holdup-heaps-pressure-on-ramaphosa>

Spain's Covid immunization drive dogged by line-jumping politicians and other irregularities

Concern is rising in Spain over the number of individuals who have jumped the line to receive the Covid-19 vaccine. The list includes several mayors, a regional health chief and family members of medical workers. In these cases, the vaccine was administered even though the person did not belong to the first priority group of the ongoing campaign: residents and staff of care homes, other healthcare workers and people with serious disabilities. In some instances, this was due to a misunderstanding, and in others, the individuals jumped the line "to build confidence" in the vaccine or because there were "leftover doses."

<https://english.elpais.com/society/2021-01-21/spains-covid-immunization-drive-dogged-by-line-jumping-politicians-and-other-irregularities.html>

US to join global coronavirus vaccine program

Dr. Anthony Fauci says U.S. President Joe Biden on Thursday will order the United States to support projects to deploy COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics to people in need around the world. Fauci also says the United States will cease reducing U.S. staff counts at the World Health Organization and will pay its financial obligations to it. Fauci, Biden's top medical adviser on the pandemic, told the WHO's executive board that the president will issue a directive Thursday that shows the United States' intent to join the COVAX Facility, a project to deploy COVID-19 vaccines to people in need around the world — whether in rich or poor countries. Fauci also said the United States would support the "ACT Accelerator" — an umbrella effort including COVAX that also focuses on distributing diagnostic tools and therapeutics for the coronavirus to countries around the world.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/us-to-join-global-coronavirus-vaccine-program-anthony-fauci-vaccines-joe-biden-people-world-health-organization-b1790537.html>

Coronavirus vaccine tracker: How many Canadians are vaccinated against COVID-19?

Nearly a year into the coronavirus pandemic, Canada has launched the largest mass vaccination

program in its history. And Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has promised that every Canadian — nearly 40 million people across 10 provinces and three territories — who wants to be inoculated against COVID-19 will be able to do so by September 2021. To keep track of it all, Global News has launched this project to keep track of: How many Canadians have been vaccinated each day How many people in each province have been vaccinated How Canada's vaccination efforts compare with the rest of the world

<https://globalnews.ca/news/7583050/covid-19-vaccine-tracker-coronavirus-canada/>

Biden inheriting nonexistent coronavirus vaccine distribution plan and must start 'from scratch,' sources say

Newly sworn in President Joe Biden and his advisers are inheriting no coronavirus vaccine distribution plan to speak of from the Trump administration, sources tell CNN, posing a significant challenge for the new White House. The Biden administration has promised to try to turn the Covid-19 pandemic around and drastically speed up the pace of vaccinating Americans against the virus. But in the immediate hours following Biden being sworn into office on Wednesday, sources with direct knowledge of the new administration's Covid-related work told CNN one of the biggest shocks that the Biden team had to digest during the transition period was what they saw as a complete lack of a vaccine distribution strategy under former President Donald Trump, even weeks after multiple vaccines were approved for use in the United States. "There is nothing for us to rework. We are going to have to build everything from scratch," one source said.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/21/politics/biden-covid-vaccination-trump/index.html>

Fed-Up Executives Plot a Faster Covid-19 Vaccine Rollout

Executives from an industrial conglomerate, a health system and a professional sports ownership group met up this month in their Charlotte, N.C., neighborhood to walk and vent. The national rollout of Covid-19 vaccine doses, they agreed, wasn't going fast enough. By the end of the stroll, they had sketched the outline of a plan to speed things up: Combine the logistics technology of Honeywell International Inc., the expertise of health system Atrium Health, and the real estate of Tepper Sports & Entertainment to inoculate thousands more people a day than the average North Carolina vaccination site currently does. "It's the last mile," Honeywell Chief Executive Darius Adamczyk said of the problems that have plagued the vaccine rollout. Mr. Adamczyk is part of the North Carolina trio, along with Atrium CEO Eugene Woods and Tepper President Tom Glick. "We dramatically need to pick up the pace."

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/fed-up-executives-plot-a-faster-covid-19-vaccine-rollout-11611232941>

Jumping Covid-19 vaccine queue is 'morally reprehensible' says top NHS doctor

It is "morally reprehensible" to try to jump the queue for the Covid-19 vaccine, a senior NHS director has said. Brits have reportedly been securing appointments for coronavirus vaccinations through links to the NHS booking system shared on WhatsApp and social media. The Evening Standard found people had secured jabs through the loophole which should go to the elderly and vulnerable. And today Dr Vin Diwakar, NHS England regional medical director for London said they were denying vulnerable people a "life-saving vaccine". He told a Downing Street press conference: "People are being called in priority order so that we can vaccinate those most at risk of serious illness first. "That is why I was horrified to hear reports that some unscrupulous people have used links shared with them to try and falsely book a vaccination appointment.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/jumping-covid-19-vaccine-queue-23362683>

Another 65 pharmacies join COVID-19 vaccination programme

A further 65 pharmacy-led sites will begin administering COVID-19 vaccinations over the coming days, but "many more" pharmacies are keen to offer their service, sector leaders say. The 65 additional sites - which include pharmacy teams operating from a mosque, pop-up Odeon and

Village Hotel sites operated by Pharmacy2U and the Manchester Whalley Range Tennis and Cricket Club, run by Wilbraham Pharmacy – join the initial six pharmacies that went live last week (January 14).

<https://www.chemistanddruggist.co.uk/news/another-65-pharmacies-join-covid-19-vaccination-programme>

Coronavirus: Emmanuel Macron promises more support for students in France

French university students have protested against the financial and psychological effects of the lockdown. The French president has promised to allow a very limited return to campus. French President Emmanuel Macron on Thursday pledged more support for students affected by university closures. Students had protested on Wednesday against campus closures as part of coronavirus restrictions, calling for a resumption of in-person teaching. They rallied against the financial and psychological effects of the lockdown.

<https://www.msn.com/en-xl/news/other/coronavirus-emmanuel-macron-promises-more-support-for-students-in-france/ar-BB1cXRrj>

France may follow Germany in making clinical masks mandatory

Medical-grade face masks rather than cloth coverings could become mandatory in a number of European countries to help contain the rapid spread of highly contagious Covid variants first identified in the UK and South Africa. Angela Merkel and the leaders of Germany's 16 states agreed on Tuesday that either single-use surgical FFP1 masks or more protective FFP2 filtering facepiece respirators should be worn in the workplace, on public transport and in shops.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/20/france-may-follow-germany-in-making-clinical-masks-mandatory>

Mandatory travel quarantine should be introduced by Ireland, experts urge

Many countries across Europe including Ireland are concluding that the only way to curb Covid-19 "is to bring this virus sharply under control" with tighter measures on isolation and mandatory quarantine, according to public health specialist Prof Anthony Staines. Speaking at a webinar on the case for an international travel quarantine, the Dublin City University academic predicted that if Ireland was not the first country in the European Union to pursue this course, Germany would be. "Each country has to decide for itself what it wants to do. I have a sense across Europe that many are facing the same challenge that we're facing and moving to the same conclusions. We need to bring this virus sharply under control. But they're looking for someone to go first," Prof Staines said at the event hosted by the Independent Scientific Advocacy Group (ISAG) for Covid in Ireland.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/health/mandatory-travel-quarantine-should-be-introduced-by-ireland-experts-urge-1.4464184>

Covid-19: Two weeks' notice for England's school return and warning over infection levels

Parents will know a fortnight in advance when their children will return to schools in England, Education Secretary Gavin Williamson says. Telling BBC Breakfast he wants pupils back in classrooms at "the earliest possible opportunity", he says he's "not able to exactly say" when schools will reopen but the "key criteria" will be whether pressure on the NHS was lifting

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55745725>

Schools will be first to open when lockdown relaxed, Gavin Williamson says

Schools will "very much be the first to open" when lockdown is eased, Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said today. He stressed that teachers, parents and pupils would be given two weeks notice for the return to class and that he "certainly hoped" that would be by Easter. The Cabinet minister explained that this would not happen before the pressure on the NHS, with many hospitals struggling to cope with a surge in Covid patients, started to ease. "What we will be wanting to do is give schools as much notice as possible so teachers can get ready, children can prepare and parents know in order to be able to manage their lives," he told Sky News.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/education/schools-first-open-lockdown-eased-gavin-williamson-b900550.html>

Coronavirus: Hungary first in EU to approve Russian vaccine

Hungary has become the first country in the European Union to give preliminary approval to the Russian coronavirus vaccine, Sputnik V. On Thursday, Prime Minister Viktor Orban's chief of staff confirmed both the Russian jab and the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine had been given the green light by the health authorities. Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto is travelling to Moscow for further talks, where he is expected to discuss a shipment and distribution deal. Early results from trials of the Sputnik vaccine have shown promising results. Hungarian health officials are also in Beijing for talks with the Chinese authorities over the approval and immediate delivery of one million doses of the Sinopharm vaccine, which is already being used in neighbouring Serbia.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-55747623>

Hungary gives initial approval for AstraZeneca and Sputnik V vaccines

Hungary's drug regulator has given initial approval for use of Britain's AstraZeneca and Russia's Sputnik V vaccines against the coronavirus, Prime Minister Viktor Orban's chief of staff said on Thursday, confirming media reports. Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto was travelling to Moscow for talks about the Sputnik V vaccine later on Thursday, Gergely Gulyas told a briefing. If he secures a shipment deal with Russia, Hungary would be the first European Union member to receive the Sputnik V shot, underlining Budapest's rush to lift coronavirus lockdown measures in order to boost the economy, even though the EU's medicines regulator has yet to green-light the Russian vaccine. The European Medicines Agency (EMA) has also not approved the vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University in Britain but a decision is expected on Jan. 29.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-hungary-vaccine/update-1-hungary-gives-initial-approval-for-astra-zeneca-and-sputnik-v-vaccines-idUSL1N2JWORE>

Don't ease Covid lockdown too soon, expert warns

A public health expert has warned that the Government cannot "take the foot off the brake" on Covid restrictions "any time soon." Dr Gabriel Scally told RTÉ's Today with Claire Byrne that moving from Level 5 to Level 3 restrictions in December had not been a sensible decision. While the recent slow reduction in the number of cases was good, but there was still a long way to go. "It will take a long time to get the numbers really down." There were serious questions about "how to take things forward" to keep the country safe for the rest of the year. Dr Scally said he supported a "zero Covid" policy, but that it would require a lot of planning now. "You can't tell what decisions politicians will take."

<https://www.breakingnews.ie/ireland/dont-ease-covid-lockdown-too-soon-expert-warns-1068005.html>

Covid-19 vaccine supply is running low. Here's how Biden hopes to fix that

The Biden administration is willing to consider almost anything to boost the nation's dwindling supply of Covid-19 vaccines. A new strategy document released Thursday, totaling nearly 200 pages, offers the first clear list of the options President Biden has before him, though it doesn't specifically say he'll actually take all of the steps. On the list are some controversial ideas, like cutting the amount of vaccine being administered to each American. He's also made it clear he wants to utilize the Defense Production Act to ramp up production of key supplies, and some more straightforward options like buying more doses.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/21/covid-19-vaccine-supply-biden-hopes-to-fix-that/>

Partisan Exits

Covid-19 vaccine batch testing speeds up, giving more proof ministers can't blame all hold-ups on supply chain

Britain's medical regulators have managed to speed up the process of approving individual batches

of the Covid-19 vaccine with not a single batch failing the test, i can reveal. Ministers have repeatedly said that supply of jabs is the current “rate-limiting factor” in the vaccine roll-out – meaning that supply is the one issue which dictates the maximum pace at which the NHS can administer doses, rather than staffing or logistics. They specifically pointed to batch approvals as one of the major hold-ups. The National Institute for Biological Standards and Control (NIBSC), part of the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), is responsible for testing the Pfizer and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines which are provided in batches of up to half a million doses each. This process initially took as long as three weeks per batch but has been streamlined to four days.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/covid-19-vaccine-batch-testing-speeds-up-giving-more-proof-ministers-can-e-2-80-99t-blame-all-hold-ups-on-supply-chain/ar-BB1cXWDP>

Spanish Government Refuses To Authorise Earlier Curfew Or Full Lockdown

The Spanish government once again stood firm on Wednesday in refusing to bow to the pressure being exerted by regional administrations to allow the start of the night-time curfew to be brought forward to 20.00 in an effort to bring coronavirus infection rates down, despite 15 of the 17 Autonomous Communities requesting that this modification be made to the conditions of the current national state of emergency.

https://murciatoday.com/spanish_government_refuses_to_authorise_earlier_curfew_or_full_lockdown_1552160-a.html

Wealthy UK flyers opt for private jets to evade Covid and lockdowns

Wealthy flyers in the UK are opting for private jets and charter flights to evade Covid-19 and beat sudden lockdowns, data shows. While the number of commercial flights from the UK has dropped by three-quarters since the start of the pandemic, private flights are down only 42% compared with 2019, according to the aviation consultancy WingX. In August, demand for private jets was back to 93% of normal levels, while scheduled flights were down 65%. Another rebound was seen around Christmas, with private flights operating at around 70% of pre-pandemic levels in December.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jan/21/wealthy-uk-flyers-opt-for-private-jets-to-evade-covid-and-lockdowns>

UK's Johnson resists pandemic inquiry as hospitals likened to war zone

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. There have been calls for a public inquiry from some doctors and bereaved families into the management of the crisis.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain/uk-still-in-covid-19-peril-so-too-early-to-talk-about-lifting-lockdown-minister-says-idUSKBN29P0PD>

Good news for shot-makers: COVID-19 vaccine confidence leaps to 69%, Harris Poll finds

Americans are back on the COVID-19 vaccine bandwagon. Sixty-nine percent now plan to get a COVID-19 vaccine, close to the previous high of 73% in April, according to the latest data from The Harris Poll. At the lowest point in October, vaccine skepticism had far more Americans hesitating: Just 58% said they would get a vaccine. That’s good news for vaccine makers—and at least a little better news for public health officials, who say a minimum 75% of the population will need to be vaccinated to stop COVID-19. That percentage has been moving upwards of late; Anthony Fauci, M.D., director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), recently admitted the goal may need to move as high as 90% to truly halt the U.S. outbreak.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/marketing/covid-19-vaccine-confidence-ticks-up-intent-to-get-a-vaccine-near-pandemic-start-harris>

Continued Lockdown

UK PM Johnson says too early to say when national lockdown will end

It is too early to say when the national COVID lockdown in England will end, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Thursday, adding that persistently high infection levels demonstrated how infectious a new variant was. "I think it's too early to say when we'll be able to lift some of some of the restrictions," Johnson told broadcasters. "What we're seeing in the ONS data, in the REACT survey, we're seeing the contagiousness of the new variant that we saw arrive just before Christmas. There's no doubt it does spread very fast indeed."

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-britain-johnson-idUSL9N2DM01Q>

Follow lockdown rules or face punishment, says UK interior minister

British interior minister Priti Patel warned those who break COVID-19 lockdown rules that they faced punishment by police, announcing a new 800 pound (\$1,097.36) fine for those who attend house parties. "My message is clear: If you don't follow these rules, then the police will enforce them," Patel told a news conference. "Police officers are now moving more quickly to hand out fines when they encounter breaches."

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/follow-lockdown-rules-or-face-punishment-says-uk-interior-minister/ar-BB1cYdtW>

England's third lockdown shows 'no evidence of decline' in Covid rates, study says

A third national lockdown in England appears to have had little impact on the rising rate of coronavirus infections, according to the findings of a major study, with "no evidence of decline" in the prevalence of the virus during the first 10 days of tougher restrictions. The closely watched REACT-1 study, led by Imperial College London, warned that health services would remain under "extreme pressure" and the cumulative number of deaths would increase rapidly unless the prevalence of the virus in the community was reduced substantially. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the latest figures were "appalling" and warned, "There are still tough weeks to come."

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/21/covid-englands-third-lockdown-sees-no-evidence-of-decline-in-cases.html>

4.6m people in UK given Covid vaccine amid pressures for tougher lockdown

The UK has now given doses of the coronavirus vaccine to 4.6 million people, Matt Hancock has said, as he came under pressure to consider tougher restrictions given concerns that cases of the virus may not be falling. Answering an urgent question in the Commons, the health secretary said more than 5m doses had been given, also counting more than 400,000 second injections. "This virus is a lethal threat to us all and, as we respond through this huge endeavour, let's all take comfort in the fact we're giving 200 vaccinations every minute," said Hancock, who was appearing from home, as he is self-isolating after being alerted by the test-and-trace app this week.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jan/21/46m-people-uk-covid-vaccine-pressure-tougher-lockdown>

Merkel: Germany's tough COVID-19 lockdown beginning to pay off

Chancellor Angela Merkel called it encouraging at a press conference on Thursday that the COVID-19 surge in Germany was beginning to ease. "This shows that the tough cutbacks that people in Germany have had to endure for weeks are starting to pay off and it basically shows that the effort is worth it," she said. The number of daily COVID-19 infections was below the previous week's level and increased by 20,398 on Thursday, according to Robert Koch Institute

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/world/2021/01/22/merkel-germany039s-tough-covid-19-lockdown-beginning-to-pay-off>

Lebanon extends total lockdown by two weeks

Lebanon has prolonged a total lockdown by two weeks to stem an unprecedented rise in coronavirus cases and protect its collapsing health sector. The strict restrictions include a round-the-clock curfew and limit grocery shopping to home deliveries. "The total lockdown is extended to February 8, 5 am," the Higher Defence Council, Lebanon's top security body, said in a statement.

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210121-lebanon-extends-total-lockdown-by-two-weeks>

Boris Johnson refuses to rule out lockdown lasting to the summer amid claims he is willing to keep Covid curbs longer to make sure it is the last national squeeze of pandemic

Boris Johnson today refused to rule out the brutal lockdown lasting until the summer amid claims he is willing to keep curbs longer to ensure it is the last national squeeze. The PM insisted it is 'too early to say' whether the restrictions will stay in place for months longer - despite cases falling by more than a fifth on last week and hopes rising that the most vulnerable groups will be vaccinated by mid-February, with a record 366,919 jabs administered in 24 hours. Mr Johnson also delivered a stark message that the new coronavirus strain is 'much more contagious', repeating his plea for people to stay at home and obey the rules.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9172621/Boris-Johnson-refuses-rule-lockdown-lasting-SUMMER.html>

Malaysia extends lockdown in capital and other states until February

Malaysia on Thursday extended restrictions on movement in the capital Kuala Lumpur and five states until Feb. 4 as part of a lockdown to combat a surge in coronavirus infections. The Health Ministry has confirmed that COVID-19 cases are accelerating within the community in many states, Security Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob said in a statement. This week, the government placed six other states under a two-week lockdown. Essential sectors including plantations, manufacturing and construction are allowed to operate but state and international borders remain closed.

<https://news.trust.org/item/20210121100749-ji2fa>

English lockdown is helping to relieve pressure on health system, education minister says

It is too early to say when the national coronavirus lockdown in England will end, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Thursday, as daily deaths from COVID-19 reach new highs and hospitals become increasingly stretched. Britain posted a fresh record in daily deaths on Wednesday for the second day running, hitting 1,820, figures that Johnson has called "appalling". The daily death count dropped on Thursday. A prevalence survey, known as REACT-1, suggested infections had not fallen in the first days of lockdown, though the government has said that the impact of national restrictions introduced on Jan. 5 was not yet reflected in the numbers.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-britain/english-lockdown-is-helping-to-relieve-pressure-on-health-system-education-minister-says-idUSKBN29QOR4>

Scientific Viewpoint

India allows commercial export of COVID-19 vaccines from Friday; first stop brazil, morocco

India has allowed commercial export of COVID-19 vaccines being manufactured in the country from Friday. Brazil and Morocco will be the first two countries that are getting the commercial contracted supplies of 20 lakh doses each with flights leaving at 4.15 am IST and 8 am IST, respectively on Friday. Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro had written Prime Minister Narendra Modi for COVID-19 vaccines. In a letter, he had said, "Brazilian government has launched the National Immunization Program against COVID-19" and "Among the vaccines selected by the Brazilian government, are those from the Indian company Bharat Biotech Internacional Limited (Covaxin) and AstraZeneca at the University of Oxford (Covishield), also produced by the Serum Institute of India."

<https://zeenews.india.com/india/india-allows-commercial-export-of-covid-19-vaccines-from-friday-first-stop-brazil-mor>

[occo-2337135.html](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-9171483/Herd-immunity-not-achievable-UK-vaccinated.html)

Covid UK: Herd immunity may not be achievable even if ALL vaccinated

University of East Anglia (UEA) study found Kent strain too infectious for herd immunity with current vaccines. But goal of vaccination scheme is to prevent the most vulnerable from falling sick or dying, not eradicate virus. SAGE scientists said today at current pace, most draconian curbs need to remain in place until May at least

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-9171483/Herd-immunity-not-achievable-UK-vaccinated.html>

'Five dead' in devastating fire at world's biggest coronavirus vaccine facility

As many as five people have been killed in a fire at the site of the world's largest coronavirus vaccine manufacturer, according to reports. Plumes of smoke could be seen rising from the Serum Institute of India (SII) today. Millions of doses of the Covidshield vaccine, developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University, are being produced at the plant. Initial reports suggested that there had been no casualties but Adar Poonawalla, SII's CEO, confirmed there had been "some loss of life" in a statement. He said: "Upon further investigation we have learnt that there has unfortunately been some loss of life at the incident.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/huge-fire-breaks-out-worlds-23358741>

Eli Lilly's coronavirus antibody drug prevents 80% of nursing home residents from falling ill from COVID-19, firm reveals

Eli Lilly tested its antibody drug against a placebo in 1,000 US nursing home staff and residents. The drug, bamlanivimab, prevented COVID-19 in 57% of staff and residents combined. In nursing home residents alone, the drug prevented 80% of infections. Nursing home residents account for 4.7% of cases but 37% of COVID-19 deaths. The drug is already authorized to treat mild or moderate cases of COVID-19 and Lilly will ask the FDA to expand the emergency approval for preventive use.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-9172241/Lilly-antibody-drug-prevents-COVID-19-80-nursing-home-residents.html>

Lilly: Drug can prevent COVID-19 illness in nursing homes

Drugmaker Eli Lilly said Thursday its antibody drug can prevent COVID-19 illness in residents and staff of nursing homes and other long-term care locations. It's the first major study to show such a treatment may prevent illness in a group that has been devastated by the pandemic. Residents and staff who got the drug had up to a 57% lower risk of getting COVID-19 compared to others at the same facility who got a placebo, the drugmaker said. Among nursing home residents only, the risk was reduced by up to 80%. The study involved more than 1,000 residents and staff at nursing homes and other long-term care locations like assisted living homes. The vast majority tested negative at the start of the study. Some were assigned to get the drug, which is given through an IV, and others got placebo infusions.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/lilly-drug-can-prevent-covid19-illness-in-nursing-homes-covid19-illness-study-eli-lilly-residents-b1790746.html>

Will Britain's vaccine drive be enough to end Covid crisis? UK WON'T achieve herd immunity through jab rollout, study claims as SAGE warns lockdown may be needed until MAY ...

University of East Anglia (UEA) study found Kent strain too infectious for herd immunity with current vaccines. But goal of vaccination scheme is to prevent the most vulnerable from falling sick or dying, not eradicate virus. SAGE scientists said today at current pace, most draconian curbs need to remain in place until May at least

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-9171483/Herd-immunity-not-achievable-UK-vaccinated.html>

France will need new COVID lockdown if curfew doesn't work -epidemiologist

France will probably need a third national lockdown if the current 6 p.m. curfew fails to rein in the spread of the novel coronavirus, a member of the French national vaccine committee told BFM TV on Thursday, before saying that it could be limited to the most vulnerable. "If the number of cases keep rising, we shall have to resort to a lockdown again," epidemiologist Odile Launay said. "We should seriously consider a lockdown limited to vulnerable people."

<http://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/france-will-need-new-covid-lockdown-if-curfew-doesnt-work-epidemiologist/ar-BB1cX2YQ>

Research finds people more likely to follow Covid rules when friends and family do

New research has shown that people are more likely to follow Covid-19 restrictions based on what their friends do, rather than their own principles. Research led by the University of Nottingham carried out in partnership with experts in collective behaviour from British, French, German and American universities shows how social influence affects people's adherence to government restrictions. The researchers found that the best predictor of people's compliance to the rules was how much their close circle complied with the rules, which had an even stronger effect than people's own approval of the rules. The research published in British Journal of Psychology highlights a blindspot in policy responses to the pandemic. It also suggests that including experts in human and social behaviour is crucial when planning the next stages of the pandemic response, such as how to ensure that people comply with extended lockdowns or vaccination recommendations.

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2021-01/uon-rfp011921.php

Officials warn of threat to Europe from variant COVID-19

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) today raised the risk of spread of new SARS-CoV-2 variants to very high, as COVID-19 activity in the United Kingdom, where the B117 variant is dominant, keeps a tight hold despite the country's third lockdown. Meanwhile, nations in other parts of the world, including China, announced new steps to beat back the stubborn spread of the virus. In its first update of its SARS-CoV-2 variant risk assessment today, the ECDC said the more transmissible variants have led to deteriorating epidemiological situations. Based on new information, the risk of B117 introduction and community spread is very high and impact on health systems is considered high. For the 501Y.V2 variant first found in South Africa, cases have been confirmed in 10 European countries, with one cluster under investigation in France and the United Kingdom and Israel also reporting cases or clusters of non-travel related 501Y.V2 infections.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/officials-warn-threat-europe-variant-covid-19>

Combo monoclonal antibody drugs may lower coronavirus loads

Mildly to moderately ill COVID-19 adult outpatients given a combination of the monoclonal antibodies bamlanivimab and etesevimab early in the disease had significantly lower viral loads at day 11 than those who received a placebo, but a similar effect was not seen in those given bamlanivimab alone, a study published today in JAMA finds. Bamlanivimab manufacturer Eli Lilly sponsored the double-blind phase 2/3 BLAZE-1 clinical trial, which involved 533 COVID-19 patients at 49 US medical centers. The goal was to assess the antispikes neutralizing antibodies' effects on viral loads of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, at 11 days and clinical outcomes at 29 days.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/combo-monoclonal-antibody-drugs-may-lower-coronavirus-loads>

Remember normal? Pfizer and BioNTech join with health groups to remind us—and promote COVID-19 vaccine safety

Remember hugging, playing with grandchildren, kissing people goodbye and sharing exciting news with family in person? While COVID-19 has kiboshed those things, Pfizer and BioNTech want to remind people about them—and how they'll be possible again with vaccines. The Comirnaty vaccine makers, together with a coalition of health organizations, recently debuted an awareness campaign

aimed at shoring up confidence in the new COVID-19 shots. The 25- to 30-second videos are real takes of real people—found online and then licensed with consent for the digital campaign, which launched last week on social media. Future plans include a move to local TV.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/marketing/pfizer-and-biontech-join-health-groups-to-promote-covid-19-vaccine-safety>

With many Regeneron and Lilly antibodies going unused, new candidates aim to ease dosing and defeat variants

Thanks to dosing logistics, COVID-19 antibodies from Eli Lilly and Regeneron have gotten off to a slow start in the U.S., and now they're facing a new stumbling block in viral variants. While the two companies are scrambling to learn about their meds' efficacy against the variants, other drugmakers are advancing their own antibodies with eyes on both challenges—dosing and the new variants. Eli Lilly, which has agreed to sell 950,000 doses of its bamlanivimab antibody to the U.S., believes the drug “should maintain full activity against the new strain originating in the U.K.,” a spokeswoman said.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/astrazeneca-biotechs-advance-new-covid-19-antibodies-eyes-dosing-mutation-challenges>

Eli Lilly says its monoclonal antibody prevented Covid-19 infections in clinical trial

Eli Lilly said Thursday that its monoclonal antibody prevented Covid-19 infections in nursing home residents and staff in a clinical trial, the first time such a treatment has been shown to prevent infection. Lilly released the results in a press release, although it said that it would publish the data in a research paper as quickly as possible. In November, the antibody, bamlanivimab, was authorized for emergency use by the Food and Drug Administration in treating patients with Covid who are at risk of more severe disease. An antibody cocktail made by the biotechnology firm Regeneron has also been authorized.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/21/eli-lilly-says-its-monoclonal-antibody-prevented-covid-19-in-clinical-trial/>

Antibody-assisted vaccination will speed the path to protection

The FDA has granted emergency use authorization for two safe and effective vaccines that science has delivered at record speed. The question now is: How do we best distribute them? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has published guidance that vaccinations should start with health care personnel and residents of long-term care facilities, followed by other essential frontline workers and those over 75 years old. Mentioned only as a subpriority is how a history of Covid-19 infection should affect one’s place in line: “HCP with documented acute SARS-CoV-2 infection in the preceding 90 days may choose to delay vaccination until near the end of the 90-day period in order to facilitate vaccination of those HCP who remain susceptible.”

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/21/antibody-assisted-vaccination-will-speed-the-path-to-protection/>

Moderna's COVID-19 given to first Japanese volunteer as Takeda starts trial

Moderna Inc’s COVID-19 vaccine was administered to the first test subject in Japan on Thursday, its distributor said, a critical step toward securing enough shots to inoculate the nation’s population. Takeda Pharmaceutical Co announced the start of a combined phase I and II study of 200 adult volunteers in Japan. The government has purchased 50 million doses of the vaccine, enough for 25 million people, contingent on its regulatory approval.

https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-japan-moderna-idUSKBN29Q0NI?taid=60096240947f630001ccd5ed&utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter

Coronavirus Resurgence

Israel coronavirus cases soar even as it pushes on with vaccine drive

Coronavirus infections in Israel are soaring among those yet to be vaccinated, straining hospitals

and forcing the government to extend a strict lockdown even as the country continues its breakneck vaccination drive.

<https://www.ft.com/content/80b3c8f7-7af7-4491-ad4a-d3056b46753e>

Biden takes charge as US Covid-19 deaths hit record high

Joe Biden has taken charge of the US response to the coronavirus pandemic as the country reported a record daily increase in deaths. One year to the day since the first Covid-19 case was diagnosed in the US, states attributed a further 4,409 deaths to the virus, according to data on Wednesday from the Covid Tracking Project. The latest figures came hours after Mr Biden in his inauguration speech reflected on a “deadly virus” that has claimed the lives of about 400,000 Americans, cost millions of jobs and closed businesses. He called for a unified response to address what he said “may well be the toughest and deadliest period of the virus”.

<https://www.ft.com/content/d01ff311-c997-4d12-bfc8-4685e0c01ec2>

COVID-19: Nearly 5 million people get first vaccine dose as UK records another 1,290 deaths

Almost five million people have been given a first dose of a COVID vaccine, as the UK recorded another 1,290 deaths and 37,892 cases, figures show. A total of 363,508 first coronavirus vaccinations were administered yesterday, the highest daily figure to date. As many as 4,973,248 first doses have now been given and 464,036 second doses, an increase of 3,411 on figures released the previous day.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-nearly-5-million-people-get-first-vaccine-dose-as-uk-records-another-1-290-deaths-12194383>

In U.K. Hospitals, a Desperate Battle Against a Threat Many Saw Coming

As a new and more contagious variant of the coronavirus pounds Britain’s overstretched National Health Service, health care workers say the government’s failure to anticipate a wintertime crush of infections has left them resorting to ever more desperate measures. Hundreds of soldiers have been dispatched to move patients and equipment around London hospitals. Organ transplant centers have stopped performing urgent operations. Doctors have trimmed back the level of oxygen being given to patients to save overloaded pipes.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/21/world/europe/uk-hospitals-covid.html>

100,000 more Americans could die from Covid-19 in next month, CDC forecasts

The United States could see an additional 100,000 deaths from Covid-19 within the next month, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) projected. Due to the current viral surge, the country hit the grim milestone of 400,000 coronavirus deaths this week. This milestone came as the US averaged more than 4,000 deaths per day, making it the daily leading cause of death in the country. The death toll currently stands at 406,196 as of Thursday morning, according to Johns Hopkins University.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/covid-death-toll-us-cdc-cases-b1790713.html>

COVID-19: Coffins stacked high in crematorium of German town ravaged by coronavirus

A crematorium is a sobering place to visit during a pandemic. Especially the one in the town of Meissen, eastern Germany, where coffins are stacked on top of each other in every available space. Attached to each simple wooden casket is a small piece of paper giving the basic details about the body inside. The name of the deceased, date of birth and death. And chalked on to the side of so many is the word COVID. We are standing amongst the victims of a virus which has hit Meissen hard. In the basement, vast furnaces and workers are operating around the clock. They need to, such is the demand for cremations in a town which has experienced one of the highest COVID-19 rates in Germany.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-coffins-stacked-high-in-crematorium-of-german-town-ravaged-by-coronavirus-12>

[194517](#)

Portugal suffers surging Covid-19 deaths after mastering first wave

Marta Temido, health minister and one of the best-known figures of Portugal's fight against coronavirus, stood outside a beleaguered hospital near Lisbon this week and made an impassioned plea. "We are mobilising every health resource at our disposal," she said. "But there is a limit, and people have to know that we are very close to that limit." Her appeal for the country to respect the rules of a second national lockdown was made as record numbers of new cases and hospital admissions threatened to overwhelm a national health service struggling to find more beds and more staff. After infection rates began soaring in early January, Portugal this week became the country with the highest seven-day average of new coronavirus cases per 100,000 inhabitants in the world, according to Johns Hopkins University.

<https://www.ft.com/content/fbeb622e-0a69-4f5c-a6fe-6653a72d2377>

UK hits new daily record for Covid-19 deaths as 3rd lockdown fails to slow spread

In the United Kingdom, the coronavirus situation remains bleak, with the government's chief scientific advisor saying that some hospitals "now resemble to war zones" due to the influx of Covid-19 patients. 1,820 deaths were confirmed on Wednesday, the highest daily toll in the country so far. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been under criticism for not acting sooner, particularly regarding the new variant of the coronavirus. But Johnson called on British to remain home wherever possible.

<https://www.france24.com/en/video/20210121-uk-hits-new-daily-record-for-covid-19-deaths-as-3rd-lockdown-fails-to-slow-spread>

Sweden registers 4,702 new COVID-19 cases, 206 deaths on Wednesday

Sweden, which has spurned a lockdown throughout the pandemic, registered 4,702 new coronavirus on Wednesday, Health Agency statistics showed. The country of 10 million inhabitants registered 206 new deaths, taking the total to 10,797. The deaths registered have occurred over several days and weeks. Sweden's death rate per capita is several times higher than that of its Nordic neighbours but lower than several European countries that opted for lockdowns.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-sweden-cases/sweden-registers-4702-new-covid-19-cases-206-deaths-on-wednesday-idUSL8N2JV3JT>

France reports 26,784 new COVID-19 cases, highest since November 18

The French health ministry reported 26,784 new confirmed COVID-19 cases over the past 24 hours, up from 23,608 on Tuesday and 23,852 last Wednesday. Wednesday's tally was the highest since Nov. 18, when 28,383 infections were registered during France's second lockdown that month. A record 86,852 cases were recorded on Nov 7. France also reported 310 new coronavirus deaths in hospitals in the past 24 hours, from 229 last Wednesday. The seven-day moving average of coronavirus deaths in hospitals and retirement homes rose to 374, from 363 on Tuesday. Four weeks after Christmas - when the government eased a curfew so French families could gather - the number of people in hospital with the virus increased by 119 to 25,686. The seven-day moving average of new hospital admissions rose to 131, its highest level since Nov. 18. At the start of the second lockdown, that average stood over 1,000 for nine days.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-france-casualties/update-1-france-reports-26784-new-covid-19-cases-highest-since-nov-18-idUSL1N2JV26Q>

Sweden extends pandemic curbs amid tentative signs of slowing outbreak

Sweden extended distance learning for high school students and told public employees to continue to work from home, renewing measures to limit the spread of the coronavirus pandemic despite signs that infections are beginning to slow. Sweden has avoided the kind of lockdown seen across much of Europe, but has gradually tightened restrictions after being hit by a second wave of

COVID-19 infections in autumn last year. Those measures seem to be bearing fruit with authorities cautiously optimistic that, in some parts of the country, the situation is improving. The government said it nevertheless needed to extend many of the measures aimed at social distancing.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-sweden/sweden-extends-pandemic-curbs-amid-tentative-signs-of-slowng-outbreak-idUSKBN29Q0SE>

Portugal's COVID-19 cases hit record, health service pushed to limit

Daily coronavirus cases in Portugal rose 40% on Wednesday from the day before to a record 14,647, with the national health system (SNS) on the verge of collapse and the government pondering tougher lockdown measures to tackle the surge. "The situation is serious and the government will not fail to do everything to protect the Portuguese," Health Minister Marta Temido told reporters. "We have the SNS at its extreme limit." The European Union country of 10 million people, where authorities implemented a 15-day lockdown last week to fight the spread of the virus, also hit a record of 219 new deaths on Wednesday from 218 the day before, health authority DGS said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-portugal/update-2-portugals-covid-19-cases-hit-record-health-service-pushed-to-limit-idUSL1N2JV1HX>

'No evidence of decline' in COVID-19 rates in England's third lockdown

A third pandemic lockdown appears to be having little impact on rates of COVID-19 in England, researchers warned on Thursday, with prevalence of the disease "very high" and "no evidence of decline" in the first 10 days of renewed restrictions. Until rates of COVID-19 are reduced substantially, health services "will remain under extreme pressure" and the number of deaths will continue to rise rapidly, researchers leading Imperial College London's REACT-1 prevalence study said. "The number of COVID-19 in-patients (in hospital) is extremely high at the moment, and we can't expect that to drop unless we can achieve lower levels of prevalence," said Steven Riley, a professor of infectious disease dynamics who co-led the work. "The fact that (prevalence) is not going down has potentially serious consequences"

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-england-prevalence-idUSKBN29Q00H>

Biden says 'help is on the way' with national COVID-19 strategy

"Help is on the way," said President Joe Biden today as he unveiled his 200-page national COVID-19 strategy and signed 10 executive actions aimed at tackling the pandemic, including ensuring the safe opening of schools, new guidance for foreign travel, and ensuring the National Guard in all 50 states is involved in the pandemic response. "Things will get worse before they get better," Biden said, flanked by Vice President Kamala Harris, Anthony Fauci, MD, chief medical advisor to the president and the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and Jeff Zients, the Biden administration's COVID czar.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/biden-says-help-way-national-covid-19-strategy>

New Lockdown

China barricades part of capital as COVID-19 outbreak escalates

Beijing has imposed a lockdown of 1.7 million people in part of the Chinese capital as officials race to prevent a COVID-19 resurgence in the country's northern region from seeping into its most important city. Daxing district in southern Beijing, where its new airport is located, has been sealed off from the rest of the country after six infections were found there. The total number of cases in Beijing stood at 23 on Wednesday, while over a thousand infections have been found nationwide since early January, mostly in China's vast rural northern provinces. While the number of cases is small compared to outbreaks in western countries, the flareup — fueled by an unusually cold winter — is China's biggest coronavirus challenge since the Wuhan crisis a year ago given its potential to spread to the capital of over 20 million people

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/01/21/asia-pacific/beijing-coronavirus-lockdown/>

China to test Lunar New Year travellers amid partial lockdown in Beijing

Beijing residents have been banned from leaving the capital after the UK virus strain was found in the city. Two cases linked to the new UK strain was detected in Beijing's Daxing district. The UK strain is believed to be 70 per cent more transferable than the earlier version. Residents in Daxing area have been barred from leaving Beijing unless they get special permission from authorities and get a negative test result. The local Daxing government said meetings of 50 or more people in the area has been banned with weddings postponed and funerals simplified. Schools have also been shut with students asked to study from home.

<https://www.msn.com/en-in/news/world/china-to-test-lunar-new-year-travellers-amid-partial-lockdown-in-beijing/ar-BB1cX40a>

China is back in emergency mode, racing to contain COVID surge before holiday

China is rushing to build a massive quarantine camp with more than 4,000 isolation suites in Hebei Province, a region just outside Beijing at the center of a resurgent coronavirus epidemic. Ahead of a holiday that normally sparks the biggest mass-movement of humans on the planet, authorities have put tens of millions of people under strict lockdown in a bid to stem the spread of COVID-19 a year after it first surfaced. The new isolation center spans more than 108 acres on the outskirts of Shijiazhuang city, the provincial capital of Hebei Province, which surrounds Beijing. It will temporarily house close contacts and secondary contacts of confirmed COVID-19 patients so they can be kept under medical observation for any signs of infection.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/covid-china-surge-lockdown-hebei-lunar-new-year-holiday/>