

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

11th Feb 2021

News Highlights

Annual vaccinations on the cards in the UK

The National Health Service is reportedly planning to vaccinate against COVID-19 annually, to fend off the emergence of future mutant variants. [Booster shots may start to be provided as early as the autumn, in a strategy similar to flu prevention efforts.](#) Vaccines minister Nadhim Zahawi said 'when you look at what variant of virus is spreading around the world, you can rapidly produce a variant of vaccine, and then begin to vaccinate and protect the nation.'

New Zealand approves Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine ahead of immunisation campaign launch

The vaccine developed by [drugmakers Pfizer and BioNTech has secured approval for use in New Zealand by the Cabinet.](#) after having earlier received provisional approval by the country's medical regulator Medsafe. [New Zealand's vaccine rollout will target frontline health workers, aviation staff and quarantine staff.](#) The country is thought to have virtually eliminated COVID-19, but pressure has been on the Jacinda Arden government to begin inoculations.

Obama urges Americans to get their shot

Former president Barack Obama has urged Americans to be vaccinated against COVID-19. [He explicitly reached out to African-Americans among whom vaccine hesitancy is higher.](#) Obama's missive comes as a recent poll found almost one-third of Americans will either definitely, or probably, [not be inoculated against COVID-19. President Joe Biden intends to vaccinate 1.5 million Americans per day and is providing 150 million vaccinations in his first 100 days in office.](#)

EU admits regret over vaccination approach

European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen has expressed regret over errors in the EU's vaccine rollout across the bloc. [She told members of the European Parliament that while seventy percent of adults in the bloc should be vaccinated by the end of the northern summer, 'we are not today where we want to be in the fight against the virus.'](#) She conceded mistakes, particularly with regard to late approval, plus overconfidence concerning mass production, and threats of export curbs.

Lockdown Exit

WA bans COVID hotel staff from second jobs

A ban on hotel quarantine security guards and other staff working second jobs in Western Australia is set to come into effect from next week. It comes as WA again recorded no new local COVID-19 cases after a breach involving a hotel guard plunged more than two million people into lockdown last week. The guard, who unwittingly roamed the streets of Perth while infectious, had also been employed as a rideshare driver, although authorities soon established that he had not worked in that job since becoming infected.

<https://7news.com.au/lifestyle/health-wellbeing/wa-bans-covid-hotel-staff-from-second-jobs-c-2134927>

Australia considers plan to quarantine arrivals in isolated rural camps

Australia is considering controversial plans to set up isolated rural quarantine camps for people entering from overseas as the country tries to plug the final gap in its efforts to combat Covid-19. The proposal to relocate quarantine facilities away from hotels in dense city centres was first raised by the state of Queensland, which imposed a three-day lockdown in Brisbane, after a cleaner at a quarantine hotel in the capital was infected with the contagious British strain of the virus. Following the lockdown, the state's Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk proposed setting up quarantine accommodation at mining camps in regional centres such as Toowoomba and Gladstone.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/australianz/australia-considers-plan-to-quarantine-arrivals-in-isolated-rural-camps>

Coronavirus lockdowns costing Australian economy millions

Australia's COVID-19 success is the envy of the world, with just 909 deaths more than 12 months after the deadly pandemic first reached our shores. That feat has been breathlessly praised by the international media, with the Washington Post reporting in November that we had "almost eliminated the coronavirus by putting faith in science" and The New York Times celebrating the fact our "short, sharp responses have repeatedly subdued the virus and allowed a return to near normalcy". It is undeniably a cause for celebration given how seriously the pandemic has devastated other nations, with the death toll in the US alone rapidly approaching 465,000.

<https://www.news.com.au/finance/economy/australian-economy/coronavirus-lockdowns-costing-australian-economy-millions/news-story/f9067f4694f0acf048aa609e1a0d9613>

New Zealand approves use of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine

New Zealand announced Wednesday it has approved use of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. Chris Hipkins, the COVID-19 response minister, told reporters during a press conference that the New Zealand Cabinet has confirmed formal approval for the administration of the vaccine developed jointing between U.S. pharmaceutical Pfizer and German biotech BioNTech. The approval came a week after Medsafe, the archipelago nation's medical regulator, gave the vaccine provisional approval. Hipkins said the Cabinet signed off for the vaccine to be administered to those 16 years of age and older and that information about the vaccine, including common side effects such as fever, muscle pain and fatigue, be provided. Patients undergoing some therapies should not receive the inoculation while pregnant women are being advised to discuss the vaccine's pros and cons with their physician, he said.

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/world/2021/02/683_303933.html

New Zealand to inoculate high-risk people first as COVID-19 vaccine gets full approval

New Zealand will first administer COVID-19 vaccines to quarantine personnel, front line health workers and airline staff, COVID-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins said, as the government formally approved its use on Wednesday. New Zealand's medicines regulator last week provisionally approved the use of the COVID-19 vaccine jointly developed by U.S. drugmaker Pfizer Inc and Germany's BioNTech. "Now we've reached the crucial stage of approval for the first vaccine, we are in a much better position to start having a conversation with New Zealanders about how we plan to proceed," Hipkins said in a statement. Authorities expect the Pfizer vaccine to arrive in the country by end-March but they had expressed concerns about export curbs.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-newzealand/new-zealand-to-inoculate-high-risk-people-first-as-covid-19-vaccine-gets-full-approval-idUSKBN2AA04L>

Australia tennis chief urges strict quarantine for Tokyo Olympics

Making the Olympics safe from coronavirus will be difficult for Tokyo without stiff quarantine measures that will also inspire athletes and spectators with the confidence to attend events, Australia's top tennis official said on Wednesday. The Japanese capital is expected to welcome 11,000 athletes at the end of July, when it holds the summer Games postponed from last year

because of the virus, but is not currently considering wholesale quarantine for them. Speaking on the sidelines of the Australian Open, the first major Grand Slam event to host crowds, the chief executive of Tennis Australia said his experience of organising the contest suggested the Olympics needed rigorous quarantine measures.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tennis-ausopen-olympics-idUSKBN2AA0ZU>

Australia's Victoria keeps cap on arrivals after cluster at quarantine hotel

The Australian state of Victoria stepped back on Wednesday from plans to let more people return from abroad each week, following a cluster of cases linked to a hotel at Melbourne Airport used for quarantining arrivals from overseas. Eight COVID-19 infections were linked the hotel after two more people - one a guest in quarantine and the other a worker - tested positive in the past 24 hours, state authorities said. The remaining guests were transferred to another hotel to serve their quarantine and more than 100 workers were also placed in quarantine, authorities said. Everyone arriving in Australia has faced a mandatory 14-day quarantine period at a hotel, including tennis players competing in the Australian Open tournament that got underway in Melbourne earlier this week.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-australia/australias-victoria-keeps-cap-on-arrivals-after-cluster-at-quarantine-hotel-idUSKBN2AA0CN>

International CEO avoids medi-hotel lockdown in Adelaide

A high-powered international businessman who landed in Adelaide from COVID-stricken France will quarantine at a suburban home instead of a medi-hotel. He has been granted an exemption by authorities. Pierre-Eric Pommellet is the global CEO of Naval Group, the company contracted to build Australia's submarines in South Australia.

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/coronavirus-french-ceo-allowed-to-quarantine-outside-medi-hotel-in-adelaide/264d2dc1-7b1e-4383-b541-6f7fdad420df>

Exit Strategies

Bahrain authorises Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use - Bahrain TV

Bahrain has authorised Russia's Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use, Bahrain TV's twitter account said on Wednesday. Bahrain already uses the Pfizer/BioNTech, vaccine, one manufactured by Chinese state-backed pharmaceutical giant Sinopharm, and the Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-bahrain-vaccine-int-idUSKBN2AA1GW>

COVID-19: South Africa wants to swap 500,000-dose AstraZeneca order for another vaccine

South Africa wants to swap a 500,000-dose order of the AstraZeneca vaccine for a different treatment. The COVID jabs have yet to arrive in the country but the health minister said he hoped to arrange an exchange, or even sell the treatment on. It comes as scientists advising the World Health Organisation have recommended the use of the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine in adults of all ages. South African officials have suspended the rollout of the jab in their country after a small trial suggested it may offer less protection against the variant that originated there.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-south-africa-wants-to-swap-500000-dose-astrazeneca-order-for-another-vaccine-12214352>

Barack Obama makes direct appeal to Black Americans to get coronavirus vaccine

Former President Barack Obama took to Twitter Tuesday to urge Americans - especially Black Americans - to get the coronavirus vaccine as soon as they are eligible. Mr Obama addressed misinformation about the vaccine, and asked Americans to trust the science behind the drugs. "There is a lot of disinformation out there, but here's the truth: You should get a Covid vaccine as soon as it's available to you. It could save your life—or a loved one's," Mr Obama wrote on the tweet.

His tweet included a link to a New York Times opinion piece that included 60 Black health experts warning Americans about vaccine disinformation and the importance of the drugs in the fight against the coronavirus.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/barack-obama-black-americans-covid-vaccine-b1799982.html>

NHS plans for annual coronavirus vaccinations

The NHS is planning a mass campaign of booster jabs against new variants of coronavirus as early as the autumn, in what the vaccines minister suggested would become an annual effort to prevent Covid-19 as the virus keeps mutating. High-street pharmacists and retired doctors who were not enlisted in the first phase of the vaccination programme could be involved in the effort to protect the UK against new strains, according to people familiar with the logistics. Nadhim Zahawi, the vaccines minister, told the BBC's Andrew Marr Show that the government was expecting annual inoculations to take place every autumn in much the same way as flu prevention, adding: "Where you look at what variant of virus is spreading around the world, you rapidly produce a variant of vaccine, and then begin to vaccinate and protect the nation."

<https://www.ft.com/content/26b256d0-d021-46ac-ae3d-e3ea823c033d>

European Union admits errors in coronavirus vaccine rollout, 'deeply regrets' decision on export curbs

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has acknowledged failings in the EU's approval and rollout of COVID-19 vaccines. She was speaking to MEPs in the European Parliament following criticism of the slow rollout of vaccines and a plan to curb exports that initially sought to set up a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, causing an outcry in London and Dublin. "And yet it is a fact that we are not today where we want to be in the fight against the virus," she said. "We were late with the approval. We were too optimistic on mass production. And perhaps we were also too certain that the orders would actually be delivered on time."

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-02-10/eu-not-where-it-wants-to-be-in-coronavirus-vaccine-fight/13142124>

Nearly a third of US adults say they definitely or probably will not get a COVID-19 vaccine

Nearly one-third of U.S. adults say they are not likely to get a coronavirus vaccine when it becomes available to them, a new poll suggests. Conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, the report found that 67 percent of Americans plan to get vaccine or have already done so. However, 15 percent are certain they will not get the jab and 17 percent said they probably will not. Many expressed doubts about the vaccine's safety and effectiveness, suggesting that substantial skepticism persists more than a month and a half into the U.S. vaccination drive that has encountered few side effects.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-9245289/AP-NORC-poll-A-US-adults-skeptical-COVID-shots.html>

Covid-19: Robin Swann says NI must tread carefully to end lockdown

NI must "tread carefully" when it comes to easing the coronavirus lockdown and some restrictions may remain in place long term, Robin Swann has said. The health minister said that despite progress with vaccinations, serious uncertainties remain about the future. His comments came amid warnings from health officials that some restrictions could remain in place until next year. "If we want a better spring and summer, we need to make the utmost effort now," added Mr Swann. Northern Ireland re-entered lockdown on 26 December, as hospitals faced severe pressures in managing a third wave of the virus.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56011762>

COVID-19: Boris Johnson says 'we'll have to get used to idea' of autumn booster jabs

The prime minister has raised the prospect of people getting a coronavirus vaccine "booster" jab in the autumn. Boris Johnson said the move would likely be required as the UK battles the emergence

of new variants of COVID-19. "I think we're going to have to get used to the idea of vaccinating and then revaccinating in the autumn, as we come to face these new variants," he told the Commons during PMQs. Mr Johnson said a deal with pharmaceutical firm CureVac for 50 million doses would help in developing vaccines to respond "at scale to new variants of the virus".

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-boris-johnson-says-well-have-to-get-used-to-idea-of-autumn-booster-jabs-12214246>

Covid-19: 10-year jail term for travel lies defended

In Britain, a maximum 10-year jail term for lying about recent travel history has been defended by the government. Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said the British public "would expect pretty strong action" and the maximum sentence reflects the seriousness of the crime. It was criticised by former Supreme Court judge Lord Sumption who said lower tariffs exist for sex offences. From Monday, people arriving in England from "red list" countries must isolate for 10 days in hotels, costing £1,750. It follows concerns that existing vaccines being rolled out in the UK may struggle to control new virus variants identified around the world.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-56007798>

Don't book summer holidays until lockdown eases, UK minister warns

The travel industry has criticised the UK government after ministers warned it was too soon for Britons to book holidays at home or abroad. Grant Shapps, transport secretary, said on Wednesday that people should not book holidays internationally or domestically until there was a clearer plan for exiting lockdown, due to be announced by prime minister Boris Johnson later in February. Britons should "do nothing at this stage," he said, adding that under current lockdown restrictions, anyone in the UK is currently banned from leaving the country for a holiday.

<https://www.ft.com/content/96b59a7a-e981-411a-a449-01c6c1b745c8>

Schools are safe to reopen next month if rest of country remains locked down, say scientists

A "cautious" reopening of schools from March 8 can be done without sparking another wave of Covid-19, researchers said today. The findings raise hope that Boris Johnson will be able to proceed with an easing of the lockdown from next month. The Prime Minister is due to set out his roadmap on February 22, with the reopening of schools said to be a priority. Experts from University College London, Oxford university and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine say there is "tentative evidence" that it will be safe to start reopening schools, with the best option being to start with primary schools and secondary pupils in exam years.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/schools-safe-reopen-march-uk-remains-lockdown-covid-b919259.html>

Poor support for self-isolation undermines the UK's Covid vaccination effort

The UK currently has no plan to eliminate coronavirus from our shores. Lockdown will minimise contacts and protect the NHS. Rapid distribution of vaccines will protect the vulnerable, until all adults receive the vaccine in the longer term. Then we can treat the virus like seasonal flu, with booster doses to protect against new variants. At Monday's press briefing, the deputy chief medical officer for England, Jonathan Van-Tam, confirmed as much. So the national strategy has not changed. In early February 2020, UK advisers on the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage), against World Health Organization advice, took the view that coronavirus, like influenza, could not be stopped. Ignoring UK coronavirus experts and effective country responses in Asia, they followed the rulebook for pandemic influenza.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/feb/10/support-self-isolation-uk-covid-vaccination-effort-virus-replicate-mutations-vaccines>

'The best shield': Peru launches inoculation drive with Sinopharm vaccine

Peru launched its COVID-19 vaccination campaign on Tuesday with newly arrived doses of China's

Sinopharm vaccine, as the South American country struggles to control a fierce second wave of infections that has forced a lockdown in the capital, Lima. Peruvian President Francisco Sagasti was vaccinated later in the day and urged vaccine skeptics to get inoculated. A survey by Ipsos Peru last month showed 48% of Peruvians would refuse to be vaccinated, citing fears of side effects.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-peru-vaccine/update-1-the-best-shield-peru-launches-inoculation-drive-with-sinopharm-vaccine-idUSL1N2KG019>

Britons should not book holidays at home or abroad - minister

British people should not book a holiday domestically or abroad until more is known about the success of Britain's COVID-19 vaccination programme, transport minister Grant Shapps said on Wednesday. Under new border restrictions, people arriving from countries where coronavirus variants are spreading will have to pay for 10 days of quarantine in hotels. Anyone who breaks the rules could face a heavy fine or a 10-year jail term. Addressing the "shrinking chance" that anyone was considering booking a holiday, Shapps said it would be the wrong thing to do as going on holiday is illegal under current restrictions, he said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain-shapps/not-yet-clear-whether-britons-can-take-holidays-this-year-minister-idUSKBN2AA0PY>

Cambodia launches COVID-19 vaccinations with shots for PM's sons, ministers

Cambodia launched its coronavirus inoculation drive on Wednesday, using 600,000 vaccine doses donated by China, with the sons of long-serving Prime Minister Hun Sen and government ministers among the first recipients. The Southeast Asian nation of about 16 million has managed to limit the spread of the disease, reporting just 478 infections and no deaths, although a rare cluster of cases emerged in November. Hun Sen had vowed to take the first dose, but later said that at 68 he was above the age to get the vaccine, made by Sinopharm. His sons and the justice and environment ministers were among the first to get it instead.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-cambodia-vaccine/cambodia-launches-covid-19-vaccinations-with-shots-for-pms-sons-ministers-idUSKBN2AA0D0>

Japan to discard millions of Pfizer vaccine doses because it has wrong syringes

Millions of people in Japan will not receive Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine as planned due to a shortage of specialist syringes - an oversight that could frustrate the country's inoculation programme. Standard syringes in use in Japan are unable to extract the sixth and final dose from each vial manufactured by the US drugmaker, according to the health minister, Norihisa Tamura. Japan has secured 144m shots of the Pfizer vaccine - enough for 72 million people - on the assumption that each vial contained six doses.

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/10/japan-pfizer-vaccine-doses-wrong-syringes?utm_term=Autofeed&CMP=tw_t_gu&utm_medium&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1612930967

Do the math: Vaccines alone won't get us out of this pandemic

As Covid-19 vaccines are being rolled out across the U.S., Americans seem to be heaving a collective sigh of relief. Yes, it will take months to get the vaccine to everyone. Yes, there were tremendous gaps in the Trump administration's plans to distribute the vaccines, including promising doses that didn't exist. But it seems as if there is light at the end of the tunnel. As long as we maintain social distancing, keep wearing masks, and washing our hands, it feels to many as though we can hold on until we get vaccinated. I'm sorry to be writing the words that follow, but here they are: We can't vaccinate our way out of this pandemic. And the myopic focus on achieving herd immunity through mass vaccination may even make it tougher for America — and the world — to defeat Covid-19.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/02/10/vaccines-alone-wont-end-pandemic/>

Partisan Exits

Leeds vaccine refusers speak on why they've decided to not have vital jab

Leeds residents have spoken out on their refusal to take the coronavirus vaccine once offered to them. A recent Leeds health watch survey found that only 77 per cent of people in the city would take the coronavirus vaccine, Leeds City Council has confirmed. In a press briefing held by Leeds City Council on last week to update the public on the city's continuing fight against Covid-19, the council confirmed it has now vaccinated over 100,000 people in Leeds. The Covid-19 vaccine has gone through rigorous testing to ensure it is safe, with extensive studies taking place before they are rolled out for public use. Approval for the vaccines we have are only given if the regulatory body is happy. It's an extremely regulated and safe process.

<https://www.leeds-live.co.uk/news/leeds-news/leeds-vaccine-refusers-speak-theyve-19805312>

Nearly 1 In 4 Republicans 'Definitely' Won't Get Covid-19 Vaccine, Survey Finds

Some 23% of Republicans said they would "definitely" not get vaccinated, while another 21% said they "probably" won't get the Covid-19 vaccine when it is made available to them. Four in ten non-college graduates also say they definitely or probably won't get immunized. Only 7% of Democrats said they would refuse to be vaccinated, with 82% having already been vaccinated or planning to do so.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/tommybeer/2021/02/10/nearly-1-in-4-republicans-definitely-wont-get-covid-19-vaccine-survey-finds/>

Covid-19: Care homes 'given only 10% of required PPE', and pubs plead for opening date

Care home staff were not given personal protective equipment (PPE) early in the pandemic because the government prioritised the NHS, MPs have said. The Commons Public Accounts Committee said care homes received only a fraction of the PPE needed. Between March and July 2020, the Department of Health and Social Care provided NHS trusts with 1.9 billion items of PPE, the equivalent to 80% of estimated need. The adult social care sector was given 331 million items - just 10% of its need. At the same time, about 25,000 patients were discharged to care homes from hospitals without being tested for Covid-19. Last month, our political editor Laura Kuenssberg interviewed a care home owner who said Covid "hit the home like a missile" last year.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-56006745>

Facebook and YouTube ban 'Planet Lockdown' film filled with coronavirus falsehoods, after it was shared by millions

While thousands of families grieved the loss of loved ones and the United States' coronavirus death toll surpassed 350,000 in early January and continued to rise, a film parroting false claims about the pandemic began to spread to millions of social media users. The video, called "Planet Lockdown," racked up more than 20 million views and engagements, according to the social media monitoring tool CrowdTangle, in late December and January. It went largely unnoticed by the social media platforms playing host to the misinformation until the liberal media watchdog group Media Matters for America published a detailed accounting of the film's spread on Monday.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/02/10/planet-lockdown-coronavirus-facebook-youtube/>

'Exercise in deliberate cruelty' Senior Tory aghast at lockdown restrictions

A senior Conservative MP has accused the Government of "ripping out" the goalposts on the timetable for lifting coronavirus restrictions in England. Sir Charles Walker, the vice chairman of the Tory backbench 1922 Committee, criticised Transport Secretary Grant Shapps for his comments advising against booking holidays. Asked if he thought the goalposts had been moved, he told BBC Radio 4's The World At One programme: "They have not so much moved as been ripped out and carried off to another playing field. It is just not acceptable behaviour. "This is becoming an extended exercise in almost studied and deliberate cruelty for a nation now that is increasingly anxious and under pressure. "People need to see their children, they need to see their parents, they

need to see the people that they love, they need to have something to look forward to.”

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/uk-news/exercise-deliberate-cruelty-senior-tory-19810504>

UK autumn Covid lockdown 'too late', Professor Neil Ferguson says

Professor Ferguson, a former Sage adviser, urged ministers to learn lessons He added face masks and social distancing would likely be in place all year Ex-top adviser was sacked after breaking social distancing to see married lover

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9244711/Britain-locked-late-autumn-Professor-Neil-Ferguson-says.html>

German anti-lockdown protests led to more coronavirus cases, study finds

Protests against the German government's coronavirus restrictions led to an increase in infections toward the end of the year, a study published on Tuesday has found. Since the summer, Germany has seen several major demonstrations against coronavirus measures, with participants often not respecting social-distancing and mask-wearing rules. The study, by the Leibniz Centre for European Economic Research (ZEW) and the Humboldt University of Berlin, looked at two rallies organized by the so-called Querdenken group in November 2020 — in Berlin, which attracted more than 10,000 people, and in Leipzig, which was attended by some 20,000 people.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/anti-corona-restrictions-protests-responsible-for-coronavirus-outbreak-study-shows/>

Doctors on strike in Bolivia to force coronavirus lockdown

Health care workers in Bolivia's region worst hit by the coronavirus pandemic began a 48-hour strike on Tuesday to demand a lockdown to battle the rise in infections. Emergency services and hospitals attending Covid-19 patients are not striking but all other specialist medical care has been suspended, said Luis Aguilera, the region's medical college president. "Our leaders have not listened to the request to reduce the Covid-19 epidemiological curve," said Aguilera, who is demanding a region-wide lockdown.

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210209-doctors-on-strike-in-bolivia-to-force-coronavirus-lockdown>

Continued Lockdown

Merkel, state governors to decide on lockdown extension

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the country's 16 state governors are to decide Wednesday whether to extend a lockdown beyond mid-February, as overall infection numbers are declining but concern is high over cases of new variants. Germany's second lockdown began in November and was extended and toughened before Christmas as numbers of COVID-19 patients threatened to overwhelm hospitals. It is set to end on Feb. 14, but authorities are expected to extend it again — keeping bars, restaurants and most stores closed, among other things.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/merkel-state-governors-to-decide-on-lockdown-extension-angela-merkel-lockdown-country-cases-ap-b1800183.html>

Germany set to extend lockdown on concerns over new coronavirus variants

A draft document emerged early Wednesday outlining plans between Chancellor Angela Merkel and state officials to maintain the lockdown. The reopening of schools is a priority for the German leadership, although the country's federal system means that individual states are expected to be able to decide how to do this. The reopening of shops and hotels could begin next month in areas where the infection rate is low, too.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/10/germany-lockdown-on-concerns-over-new-coronavirus-variants.html>

Germany plans to extend lockdown until March 14: draft document

Germany will extend restrictions to curb the spread of the coronavirus until March 7, though schools and hair salons may open sooner, Chancellor Angela Merkel and leaders of the 16 federal states agreed on Wednesday. The number of new daily infections in Germany has been falling, prompting some regional leaders to push for a timetable to ease the lockdown, which has been in place since

mid-December. But concerns are growing about the impact of more infectious variants of the virus on case numbers. "There is a lot of uncertainty around the mutants, and it is clear, they will gain the upper hand.... That is why we have to get the case numbers down, down, down," Merkel told journalists in a news conference.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-germany-idUSKBN2AA0VJ>

Scientific Viewpoint

Single dose of Pfizer vaccine shows signs of success in UK

Official data from the UK's vaccination campaign show that a single dose of the BioNTech/Pfizer jab offers good protection against Covid-19, boosting the government's approach of extending the gap between doses. Although not enough evidence is available to draw definitive conclusions about the impact of the vaccination campaign on deaths and hospitalisations, several people with access to government data said indications showed it was reducing cases in the groups prioritised to receive the jab.

<https://www.ft.com/content/eb311423-dd2f-48f8-af57-8d8f0103c313>

A lone infection may have changed the course of the pandemic

In each warm body it infects, the virus behind Covid-19 has the potential to change. It can become more deadly, more transmissible or more resistant to the vaccines on which we are all pinning so much hope. Mercifully, the biology of Sars-CoV-2 means that such changes happen slowly and almost always fail to catch on. But mutations, like pandemics, are a numbers game. Every new person infected provides another opportunity for the virus to adopt a new form. So far, Sars-CoV-2 has infected at least 106 million people worldwide and taken on many thousands of mutations. Most of those changes are slow and inconsequential - evolutionary dead ends that nobody will ever realise existed. But, in some people, the virus hits the jackpot.

<https://www.wired.co.uk/article/chronic-infection-uk-coronavirus-variant>

Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine could reduce Covid-19 viral load - what it means

New data gathered by researchers in Israel suggests that the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid vaccine is reducing the viral load of the virus. Israel has already vaccinated around one in three residents, after beginning its vaccine deployment program on 20 December. According to a paper which was published on Monday (8 Feb), positive test results of patients aged 60 and over had up to 60 per cent smaller viral loads on the swab, compared to the 40 to 59 age group. The paper explains that this is because, by this point, at least 14 days have passed since more than 75 per cent of the over-60s age group received their first dose, in comparison to the 25 per cent of 40 to 60 year olds.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/health/medical/pfizerbiontech-vaccine-could-reduce-covid-19-viral-load-what-it-means/ar-BB1dyHo7>

Teva Is in Discussions to Help Make Covid-19 Vaccines, CEO Says

Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd. is in talks with Covid-19 vaccine makers about helping to produce and distribute shots as demand rises for immunizations. The generic drug giant is offering to dedicate its manufacturing capacity in the U.S., Europe and beyond to aid with mass-immunization efforts geared at combating the pandemic, Chief Executive Officer Kare Schultz said Wednesday. "We have a large, worldwide network of manufacturing capabilities," from creating underlying drug substances to putting solutions into sterile vials, known as the fill-finish process, he said in an interview. "There are a limited number of facilities that can do this kind of manufacturing, and it takes time to build them."

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/finance/companies/teva-is-in-discussions-to-help-make-covid-19-vaccines-ceo-says/ar-BB1dzrIH>

Coronaviruses linked to Covid-19 circulating in bats and pangolins in Southeast Asia,

study finds

Coronaviruses similar to that which causes Covid-19 may be circulating in bats and pangolins in Southeast Asia, a study has found. In a breakthrough that provides clues for those investigating the origin of the pandemic, scientists said high levels of neutralising antibodies against coronaviruses were present in the animals in Thailand. A team from Singapore's Duke-NUS Medical School found SARS-CoV-2 – the virus that causes Covid-19 – neutralising antibodies in Rhinolophus bats in a Thai cave and in a pangolin at a wildlife checkpoint in the south of the country. The findings, published in the journal Nature Communications, indicate more coronaviruses are likely to be discovered across Southeast Asia, which has a large and diverse bat population, the researchers said. Such viruses have now been found across a wide expanse measuring 4,800 km, from Japan and China to Thailand.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/coronavirus-covid-bat-pangolin-china-b1800344.html>

Study Links Four New Symptoms To Covid-19 Infection, Including Headaches And Loss Of Appetite

In a study of more than 1 million people in England between June 2020 and January 2021, researchers identified chills, loss of appetite, headaches and muscle aches as additional symptoms linked with having Covid-19. Some symptoms vary by age, with headaches most reported in children and teens (between 5-17 years old), who are less likely to report "classic" Covid-19 symptoms, and adults over 55 reporting appetite loss.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/roberthart/2021/02/10/study-links-four-new-symptoms-to-covid-19-infection-including-headaches-and-loss-of-appetite/>

CDC study finds two masks are better than one vs. COVID-19

US government researchers have found wearing two masks was better than one when preventing the spread of Covid-19, according to a Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study. In a lab experiment, two artificial heads were placed six feet from each other and studied on how many coronavirus-sized particles were expelled and inhaled while wearing a variety of face coverings. Researchers found that wearing one mask, either cloth or surgical, prevented 40 per cent of incoming droplets from being breathed in. When adding a surgical mask underneath a cloth mask, 80 per cent of incoming droplets were stopped.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/cdc-study-finds-two-masks-are-better-than-one-vs-covid19-masks-researchers-cdc-masks-us-b1800437.html>

AstraZeneca to build new Covid-19 vaccine facility in Germany

AstraZeneca has unveiled plans to build a new Covid-19 vaccine manufacturing facility in partnership with IDT Biologika at the German firm's Dessau site, in a move aiming to speed up production and defuse a row with the EU over vaccine supply.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/money/other/astrazeneca-to-build-new-covid-19-vaccine-facility-in-germany/ar-BB1dxxz9>

Covid-19: Sports equipment presents 'low risk'

The risk of coronavirus transmission from sharing sports equipment is "lower than once thought", a study suggests. Researchers, led by Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, applied live virus particles to nine types of sports equipment and a control material. They concluded it "seems unlikely" that sports balls and accessories are a major cause for transmission. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said last June that cricket balls are a "natural vector" of coronavirus. The Strike study found the virus was least transferrable on absorbent materials like cricket gloves and tennis balls, compared with non-porous equipment like racing saddles and rugby balls.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-56007908>

David Oliver: Mistruths and misunderstandings about covid-19 death numbers

I want to set the record straight about some serious misinformation surrounding covid-19 death

certification and mortality statistics. I will paraphrase some of the claims that I have heard repeatedly in the media: "People are not dying from, but with, covid-19." "Deaths classified as from covid-19 result from largely false positive polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test results," "deaths are mostly from other causes and underlying conditions," "death numbers are grossly inflated," "there is no excess mortality compared with other years or months," and this is "no different from a normal flu season." Let's see, shall we? According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the total number of deaths with covid-19 recorded on the death certificate in England and Wales has now passed 100 000. The government's daily press releases, however, report "deaths within 28 days of a positive test result"—a definition repeated faithfully by broadcast and print journalists and on social media. This approach probably under-recognises the real number of deaths from covid-19 by around 20%.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n352>

In Spain, patients with serious conditions left out of AstraZeneca early vaccination

The Covid vaccine made by AstraZeneca will for now only be administered to essential workers in Spain, including teachers, law enforcement officers, firefighters and members of the armed forces – but not supermarket workers. Although the treatment has been approved by European authorities for anyone over the age of 18, the Spanish government is taking a conservative approach: first it ruled out people over 80 years of age, then it further reduced the target group to those under 55. And on Tuesday, a committee of experts advising the National Healthcare System established that individuals under 55 with certain pre-existing medical conditions will also be left out, at least during the initial phase.

https://english.elpais.com/spanish_news/2021-02-10/in-spain-patients-with-serious-conditions-left-out-of-astrazeneca-early-vaccination.html

Japan suffers rise in female suicides during Covid-19 pandemic

A much-anticipated inquiry into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic wrapped up its mission in China on Tuesday with no breakthrough discovery, as investigators ruled out a theory that Covid-19 came from a lab while failing to identify which animal may have passed it to humans. It remains unclear which species first transmitted Covid-19 to humans, said Liang Wannian, who headed up the Chinese contingent of an inquiry carried out jointly with World Health Organization experts. The WHO mission -- which China repeatedly delayed -- was dogged by fears of a whitewash, with the US demanding a "robust" probe into the origins of the pandemic in late 2019, and China firing back with a warning not to "politicise" the investigation. During the closely monitored mission, which included a visit to an exhibition celebrating China's recovery, reporters were largely kept at arm's length from the experts.

<https://www.ft.com/content/e7f1d6a7-d56e-423f-a7c8-0803af9a6f02>

Covid origins still a mystery as WHO-China probe ends

A much-anticipated inquiry into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic wrapped up its mission in China on Tuesday with no breakthrough discovery, as investigators ruled out a theory that Covid-19 came from a lab while failing to identify which animal may have passed it to humans.

<https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/covid-origins-still-mystery-who-china-probe-ends-1687801>

Vaccine vs variant: Promising data in Israel's race to defeat pandemic

Israel's swift vaccination rollout has made it the largest real-world study of Pfizer Inc's COVID-19 vaccine. Results are trickling in, and they are promising. More than half of eligible Israelis - about 3.5 million people - have now been fully or partially vaccinated. Older and at-risk groups, the first to be inoculated, are seeing a dramatic drop in illnesses. Among the first fully-vaccinated group there was a 53% reduction in new cases, a 39% decline in hospitalizations and a 31% drop in severe illnesses from mid-January until Feb. 6, said Eran Segal, data scientist at the Weizmann Institute of Science in

Rehovot, Israel.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-israel-results-insigh-idUSKBN2AA0N0>

Ohio underreported as many as 4,000 COVID-19 deaths

Ohio will add as many as 4,000 previously unreported COVID-19 deaths to the state's tally during the next week after the Ohio Department of Health discovered reporting errors dating back to October. Most of these deaths occurred in November and December, the agency said in a news release, already the deadliest two months of the pandemic with 1,574 and 2,859 deaths, respectively. The correction will result in a few days of higher-than-average death totals, the agency warned. The actual date of death will be reflected on the state's coronavirus dashboard.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/ohio-underreported-as-many-as-4000-covid-19-deaths/ar-BB1dAaeM>

WHO recommends use of Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine for all adults

The World Health Organization has recommended the Oxford/AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine for use worldwide by all adults, including the elderly, in a boost for the jab after a series of setbacks. The WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (Sage) said the vaccine could be used by all people over the age of 18 in all countries, including places such as South Africa where the circulation of new variants had raised some concerns over its efficacy. Some countries, such as France and Sweden, have restricted use of the shot to younger adults, citing a lack of sufficient trial data for the elderly, but WHO officials stressed on Wednesday that not all nations had a choice of which vaccine to use.

<https://www.ft.com/content/be33aa38-5eff-4069-b104-ba7bdb735c72>

AstraZeneca agrees German manufacturing deal to fill vaccine gap

AstraZeneca has enlisted German drug manufacturer IDT Biologika to help boost production of its Covid-19 vaccine and tackle supply shortages in Europe. Relations between the EU and AstraZeneca deteriorated after the pharma group announced last month that it would fall far short on its promise to deliver the bloc at least 100m doses of the vaccine, developed with Oxford university, in the first quarter. AstraZeneca has since revised its first-quarter delivery forecast up from 31m to 40m doses, and announced that it would expand manufacturing capacity in Europe.

<https://www.ft.com/content/f654d813-5c4c-4d86-827f-c6a73eea9a30>

Did we underestimate Russia's vaccine?

Not long ago, talk of the Russian-made coronavirus vaccine provoked mockery. "There's no way in hell the U.S. tries this on monkeys, let alone people," a Trump administration official told CNN in August, referring to initial reports about Russia's development of the Sputnik V drug — which bypassed traditional steps in testing before its release. Even at home, where a history of political opacity and bureaucratic incompetence has left a lingering distrust of authority, many ordinary Russians shied away from getting the jab once it was made available to the public in December.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/02/10/russia-sputnik-vaccine-underestimated/>

Feds focus on mask upgrades, COVID-19 vaccine sites

Today the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released new data showing the fit of face masks—both cloth and surgical—can significantly reduce COVID-19 transmission, by as much as 96.5% if both infected and uninfected people wear them properly. "What we know now is everyone needs to be wearing a mask when they are in public or inside with people from outside their households," said Rochelle Walensky, MD, director of the CDC during a press briefing today.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/02/feds-focus-mask-upgrades-covid-19-vaccine-sites>

WHO advisors recommend AstraZeneca COVID vaccine for emergency use

The World Health Organization (WHO) vaccine advisory group today recommended the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine for emergency use, a key development that clears the way for lower- and middle-

income countries to receive their first deliveries from the COVAX program. In other global developments, the WHO said in a weekly update that overall cases and deaths show more signs of decline, a promising development, though cases are rising in some nations and more countries are reporting the detection of variant SARS-CoV-2 viruses.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/02/who-advisors-recommend-astrazeneca-covid-vaccine-emerge-ncy-use>

COVID deaths 3 times higher in nursing homes with more non-white residents

Residents of US nursing homes with more than 40% non-white residents died of COVID-19 at 3.3 times the rate of those of those with higher proportions of white residents, a study today in JAMA Network Open shows. Using the Nursing Home COVID-19 Public File from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, University of Chicago researchers found that nursing homes with the lowest shares of white residents reported a mean of 5.6 deaths, compared with 1.7 in those with the highest proportions, as of Sep 13, 2020.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/02/covid-deaths-3-times-higher-nursing-homes-more-non-white-residents>

BioNTech gets rolling with mRNA production at former Novartis site in Marburg

BioNTech, under pressure with its COVID-19 vaccine partner Pfizer to manufacture as many doses as possible this year, has started production at a former Novartis site it acquired in Germany. The drugmaker has started making messenger RNA at the site, kicking off the manufacturing process for its Pfizer-partnered COVID-19 vaccine. BioNTech expects to produce up to 250 million doses of its vaccine there in the first half of 2021, and up to 750 million doses annually when the site is fully online. The first vaccines produced there will be ready in early April, BioNTech said.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/biontech-underway-mrna-production-at-former-novartis-site-marburg>

Eli Lilly scores FDA nod for COVID-19 antibody cocktail, aims to make 1M doses by midyear

Two weeks after Eli Lilly unveiled data showing its COVID-19 antibody cocktail of bamlanivimab and etesevimab slashed the risk of death and hospitalization for high-risk patients, the cocktail has won its emergency FDA authorization. Tuesday, the FDA authorized the combo for patients who have mild to moderate cases of COVID-19 but are at high risk of progressing to severe disease. The company and its manufacturing partner Amgen aim to produce up to 1 million doses of the cocktail by the middle of the year. In the trial of more than 1,000 high-risk patients with newly diagnosed COVID-19, just 11 patients who received the bamlanivimab-etesevimab combo were hospitalized and none died. That compared with 36 hospitalizations and 10 deaths among placebo patients, which translates into a 70% reduction in the risk of a COVID-19 hospitalization or death.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/lilly-scores-fda-nod-for-covid-19-antibody-cocktail-aims-to-make-1m-doses-by-mid-year>

Could a Single Vaccine Work Against All Coronaviruses?

The invention of Covid-19 vaccines will be remembered as a milestone in the history of medicine, creating in a matter of months what had before taken up to a decade. But Dr. Kayvon Modjarrad, the director of Emerging Infectious Diseases Branch at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in Silver Spring, Md., isn't satisfied. "That's not fast enough," he said. More than 2.3 million people around the world have died, and many countries will not have full access to the vaccines for another year or two: "Fast — truly fast — is having it there on day one."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/09/health/universal-coronavirus-vaccine.html>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Vaccine nationalism is worsening Covid-19 in Malawi

A second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, mainly driven by the South African variant, is bringing hospitals in Malawi to the brink. CNN's David McKenzie goes inside a hospital in Blantyre, Malawi, where the doctors are working around the clock to battle the pandemic amid a shortage of vaccines. <https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/vaccine-nationalism-is-worsening-covid-19-in-malawi/vi-BB1dtY6a>

COVID-19: Vaccination total passes 13m as another 1,001 COVID-related deaths reported

The total number of people to have received a first dose of the coronavirus vaccine in the UK has passed 13 million, as another 1,001 deaths were reported. Today's official government figure compares to the 1,053 deaths recorded on Tuesday. And 13,013 new cases of COVID-19 were reported, up on the 12,364 yesterday.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-vaccination-total-passes-13m-as-another-1-001-covid-related-deaths-reported-12214342>

Surging virus in French African outpost reveals inequalities

Mayotte's main tourist office stands nearly empty, a lonely tropical outpost overlooking a people-less port. Its only hospital, however, is overwhelmed. The demand for intensive care beds is more than quadruple the supply, as medical workers fight to contain the French Indian Ocean territory's worst coronavirus outbreak yet. The Mayotte islands are the poorest corner of the European Union, tucked between Madagascar and the mainland coast of Mozambique in southern Africa - and were the last spot in France to receive any coronavirus vaccines. Local authorities feel forgotten and say their difficulties in fighting the virus reflect long-standing inequalities between France's majority-white mainland and its far-flung multiracial former colonies.

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/surging-virus-french-african-outpost-reveals-inequalities-75795805>

France Stalls Between Slow Covid Vaccine Rollout and High Infection Rates

In the town of Pontoise, which gently slopes upward from the Oise River about 15 miles northwest of Paris, Mayor Stéphanie Von Euw is laser-focused on her new vaccination center — a blocky, sand-colored recreational facility where up to 450 shots are administered daily to those over 75 or otherwise at high risk. Ms. Von Euw was energetic on a recent visit, chatting with doctors and vaccine recipients. But here in Pontoise, as in many other parts of France, there is no hiding that a winter of pandemic doldrums has set in. "To keep my chin up, I try to follow this rule: I take one day at a time," Ms. Von Euw said across a table covered with chocolate boxes left by recent vaccine recipients. "If I look to the future, I lose myself."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/10/world/europe/france-covid-vaccine.html>

Denmark says cases of more contagious British coronavirus variant on rise

The share of people infected with the more contagious coronavirus variant first identified in Britain is on the rise in Denmark, authorities reported on Wednesday, citing preliminary data. In the first week of February, 27% of positive cases analyzed for their genetic material were carrying the B117 variant, up from 20% the week before, the State Serum Institute (SSI) said in a report.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-denmark/update-1-denmark-says-cases-of-more-contagious-british-coronavirus-variant-on-rise-idUSL1N2KG18D>

France's daily new COVID-19 cases hold steady on average

France reported 18,870 new confirmed COVID-19 cases on Tuesday, up from Monday's 4,317 but well down from the previous Tuesday's 23,337, and hospital numbers fell again after a two-day rise. The seven-day moving average of new infections, which evens out daily reporting irregularities, stands at 19,348, a low since Jan. 20. The total cumulative number of cases increased to 3.36 million, the sixth highest in the world. This seven-day moving average has now stayed in a tight 19,200-20,700 range for almost three weeks, a trend that seems to warrant the government's decision not to resort to a third lockdown despite health experts calling for it.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-france-infections/french-new-covid-19-cases-steady-on-average>

[e-and-hospitalisations-down-idUSKBN2A92SF](#)

Sweden registers 4,070 new COVID-19 cases, 138 deaths on Wednesday

Sweden, which has spurned a lockdown throughout the pandemic, registered 4,070 new coronavirus cases on Wednesday, Health Agency statistics showed. The country of 10 million inhabitants registered 138 new deaths, taking the total to 12,326. 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-4070-new-covid-19-cases-138-deaths-on-wednesday-idUSL8N2KG4XT>

Covid-19 cases are falling in the U.S. It could be a calm before a variant-driven storm

If the U.S. Covid-19 epidemic were a marathon, the country might have made it to Mile 20. It's been through a lot, and already, there are signs things are getting better. But there are building leg cramps that could make this last push, which isn't actually all that short, really painful. The two existing vaccines are reaching more people, and soon, the country will likely have a third, from Johnson & Johnson, that's just one dose and comes with easier transport and storage requirements. Cases and hospitalizations have fallen precipitously since their peaks last month, and now deaths — which are a lagging indicator — have turned downward as well. That will ease the burden on health systems and offer a reprieve from what had for months been worsening infection and death data.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/02/10/covid-19-cases-are-falling-variant-driven-storm/>

New Lockdown

Greek premier orders full lockdown in Athens after surge in coronavirus cases

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis on Tuesday announced a full lockdown in the capital Athens and the surrounding region to curb a resurgence in coronavirus cases and ease pressure on badly stretched health services. The new restrictions in the Athens region, where half of Greece's population of 11 million lives, include closing non-essential shops and schools from Feb. 11 until the end of the month, Mitsotakis said in a televised address. "I will not hide: In the next two months, restrictions may be imposed and lifted depending on the level of alarm," he said after chairing an emergency meeting with ministers and health experts. "But this is also the last mile towards freedom." Authorities registered 1,526 infections on Tuesday, more than double the number recorded a day earlier - half of them in the wider Athens area, with COVID-19 related deaths reaching 6,017 since the coronavirus was first detected.

<https://cn.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-greece-idCNL1N2KF2B1>