

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

13th May 2021

Overnight News RoundUp

COVID pandemic was preventable, says WHO-commissioned report

- The COVID pandemic was a preventable disaster that need not have cost millions of lives if the world has reacted more quickly, according to an independent high-level panel, which castigates global leaders and calls for major changes to bring it to an end and ensure it cannot happen again.
- [The report of the panel, chaired by the former New Zealand prime minister Helen Clark and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a former president of Liberia, found 'weak links at every point in the chain.'](#)
- It said **preparation was inconsistent and underfunded**, the **alert system too slow** and too meek, while the **World Health Organization was underpowered**. It concluded the **response had exacerbated inequalities**. 'Global political leadership was absent,' the report said.
- Clark described **February 2020 as 'a month of lost opportunity** to avert a pandemic, as so many countries chose to wait and see.'
- 'For some, it wasn't until hospital ICU beds began to fill that more action was taken,' she said. 'And by then it was too late to avert the pandemic impact. What followed then was **a winner takes all scramble for PPE and therapeutics**. Globally, health workers were tested to their limits and the rates of infection, illness and death soared and continues to soar.'
- Sirleaf said: 'The situation we find ourselves in today could have been prevented. An outbreak of a new pathogen, SARS CoV-2 became a catastrophic pandemic that has now killed more than 3.25 million people, and continues to threaten lives and livelihoods all over the world. It is due to a myriad of failures, gaps and delays in preparedness and response. This was partly due to failure to learn from the past.'

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https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/12/covid-pandemic-was-preventable-says-who-commissioned-report?CMP=tw_t_gu&utm_source=Twitter&utm_medium#Echobox=1620813832-1

How the world failed to curb COVID

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The World Health Organization (WHO) was too cautious in communicating the risks of COVID-19 early last year, according to the first major investigation of the global pandemic response. Had it been bolder, and had nations heeded its guidance, the pandemic might have been curtailed, say the authors of the report. Last year, during the annual World Health Assembly, countries demanded that the WHO initiate an independent review of how the COVID-19 crisis unfolded, in order to draw lessons for the future. The resulting report, released on 12 May, was assembled by a panel of 13

global-health experts partly appointed by, but independent from, the WHO.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-01284-5>

Scale of Covid-19 catastrophe could have been prevented if WHO had sounded the alarm sooner and world leaders had not 'dithered' with their response, pandemic panel concludes

Covid pandemic could have been prevented, international panel of experts says 'Toxic cocktail' of dithering and poor global coordination meant disease was allowed to span the globe, infecting at least 160million people to date. Finger of blame pointed at WHO for failing to raise the alarm sooner, and 'science denying' world leaders for failing to take threat seriously. To end the pandemic, wealthy countries need to provide 1billion vaccines to poorest nations by September and 2billion more by year's end, experts add

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9570497/Scale-Covid-19-pandemic-prevented-panel-says.html>

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https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/12/covid-pandemic-was-preventable-says-who-commissioned-report?CMP=tw_t_gu&utm_source=Twitter&utm_medium#Echobox=1620813832-1

Panel details failures that unleashed COVID pandemic, urges bold steps

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An independent review panel tasked with evaluating the world's response to the COVID-19 pandemic issued its scathing findings today, outlining failures at every level, recommending steps to end the pandemic, and suggesting overhauls to better prepare for future threats. In other global developments, European officials weighed in with new assessments of the B1617 SARS-CoV-2 variant first detected in India, which they say may be more transmissible than the B117 variant first found in the United Kingdom.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/05/panel-details-failures-unleashed-covid-pandemic-urges-bold-steps>

Covid: Report finds serious failures in WHO and global response

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The Covid-19 pandemic was preventable, an independent review panel has said. The panel, set up by the World Health Organization, said the combined response of the WHO and global governments was a "toxic cocktail". The WHO should have declared a global emergency earlier than it did, its report said, adding that without urgent change the world was vulnerable to another major disease outbreak. More than 3.3 million people around the world have now died of Covid. While the US and Europe are beginning to ease restrictions and resume some aspects of pre-pandemic life, the virus is still devastating parts of Asia.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-57085505>

Covid pandemic should serve as 'Chernobyl moment' for global health reform, international experts say

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The Covid-19 crisis should serve as a “Chernobyl moment” for global pandemic preparedness,

triggering a series of actions to speed the end of this pandemic and to ensure it's the last of its kind the world ever faces, according to a report from an international panel of experts. The report by the panel, which was established at the behest of member states of the World Health Organization, calls on wealthy countries with Covid vaccine to share their supplies in large volumes and quickly, with 1 billion doses donated by September and another 1 billion by the end of the year. The report calls for swift negotiations to lift intellectual property protections for Covid vaccines — and an automatic waiver if the negotiations fail to deliver within three months.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/05/12/covid-pandemic-should-serve-as-chernobyl-moment-for-global-health-reform-international-experts-say/>

Indian health agency chief says most of country should remain locked down for 6-8 weeks

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The head of the main Indian health agency responding to the coronavirus has said districts reporting a high number of infections should remain locked down for another six to eight weeks to control the spread of the rampaging disease. Dr. Balram Bhargava, head of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), said in an interview that lockdown restrictions should remain in place in all districts where the rate of infection is above 10% of those tested. Currently, three-fourths of India's 718 districts have what is known as a test-positivity rate above 10%, including major cities like New Delhi, Mumbai and the tech hub of Bengaluru

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/indian-health-agency-chief-says-most-country-should-remain-locked-down-6-8-weeks-2021-05-12/>

Most of India should be locked down for 6-8 weeks: Top official

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<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/12/most-of-india-should-be-locked-down-for-6-8-weeks-top-official>

Scientists fear delay to lockdown end as India variant cases in UK 'triple in a week'

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UK cases of the highly transmissible Indian variant have more than tripled in a week, new figures are expected to confirm on Thursday, as scientists advising the government fear the final stage out of lockdown could be delayed due to the surge. Boris Johnson has warned that the strain, B1617.2, one of three mutations fuelling the devastating epidemic in India, is "of increasing concern here in the UK". Public health officials and ministers are stepping up efforts to curb infections of the variant in areas where there have been the greatest increases, including Bolton, Greater Manchester, where secondary school pupils could be told to continue to wear face masks after the policy is dropped for the rest of England from next Monday. Members of Sage have been called to an urgent meeting on Thursday to assess the threat.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/scientists-fear-delay-lockdown-end-24096843>

Coronavirus UK: Could spread of Indian variant jeopardise plans to ease lockdown?

Indian strain is now dominant in four local authorities in England, surveillance data show. Hotspots Bolton and neighbouring Blackburn with Darwen are now also seeing infections start to rise. But Public Health England has only launched surge testing in Bolton to root out cases of the strain. SAGE minutes reveal scientists fear it may be even more infectious than the Kent variant. Early reports suggest, however, that the current vaccines will still work against it and prevent disaster

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9566551/Coronavirus-UK-spread-Indian-variant-jeopardise-plans-ease-lockdown.html>

Covid: Bolton Indian variant surge leaves hospitality 'nervous'

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Hospitality businesses in a town experiencing a fresh spike in Covid cases have told of their concern as pubs and cafes prepare to open indoors. Bolton has one of the highest instances of the Indian variant in the UK and is seeing a particularly sharp rise in cases among unvaccinated under-25s. As lockdown rules prepare to ease on Monday, pubs and restaurants in the town are sounding a note of caution. Some are worried about a return to the surges seen in the area last year. Angela Baker, owner of Baker's cafe, said over the last week she was increasingly concerned about whether she will be prevented from reopening.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-manchester-57075618>

Scientists race to study variants in India as cases explode

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A potentially worrisome variant of the coronavirus detected in India may spread more easily. But the country is behind in doing the kind of testing needed to track it and understand it better. On Monday, the World Health Organization designated the new version of the virus a “variant of concern” based on preliminary research, alongside those that were first detected in Britain, South Africa and Brazil but have spread to other countries. “We need much more information about this virus variant,” said Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO’s technical lead for COVID-19. “We need more sequencing, targeted sequencing to be done and to be shared in India and elsewhere so that we know how much of this virus is circulating.”

<https://apnews.com/article/europe-india-coronavirus-pandemic-science-health-fab2f1d6d08fd2442acf6a7e737866c4>

COVID variant first detected in India found in 44 countries: WHO

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The World Health Organization (WHO) has said that a variant of COVID-19 behind the acceleration of India’s explosive outbreak has been found in dozens of countries all over the world. The UN health agency on Wednesday said the B.1.617 variant of the coronavirus, first found in India in October, had been detected in more than 4,500 samples uploaded to an open-access database “from 44 countries in all six WHO regions”.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/12/covid-variant-first-detected-in-india-found-in-44-countries-who>

COVID-19: Bodies wash up on banks of river Ganges as deaths pass 250,000 on India's deadliest day

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Bodies of COVID-19 victims have washed up on riverbanks in India as the country endured its deadliest day of the pandemic so far. Scores of corpses have been found on the banks of the holy Ganges river, as 4,205 people were declared dead from coronavirus yesterday. Grieving relatives, their villages stripped of firewood, have been forced to simply place their loved ones in the water, rather than cremate them in traditional Hindu style.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-bodies-wash-up-on-banks-of-river-ganges-as-deaths-pass-250-000-on-indias-deadliest-day-12304255>

Moderna says it has signed deal with Australia to supply 25m doses of Covid vaccine

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Australians will have another vaccine option after the pharmaceutical company Moderna announced it has signed a deal with the federal government to provide 25m doses of its mRNA-based vaccine to

the nation. The announcement was made overnight in a press release and has not yet been formally endorsed by the federal government. It is also subject to regulatory approval by the Therapeutic Goods Administration, but Moderna says it will lodge a submission shortly. The company says 10m doses could arrive in Australia by the end of the year and a further 15m would arrive in 2022.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/may/13/moderna-says-it-has-signed-deal-with-australia-to-supply-25m-doses-of-covid-vaccine>

Bahrain authorizes emergency use of one-shot Sputnik-Light COVID-19 vaccine

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Bahrain authorized on Tuesday the emergency use of Russia's one-shot Sputnik-Light COVID-19 vaccine, state news agency (BNA) said. It is the sixth vaccine Bahrain has authorized. It has previously authorized China's Sinopharm, Pfizer and BioNTech's vaccine, AstraZeneca's COVISHIELD, the J&J vaccine, and Sputnik.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/bahrain-authorizes-emergency-use-one-shot-sputnik-light-covid-19-vaccine-2021-05-11/>

Will China follow US support for waiving IP protections on vaccines?

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The debate over how to get enough supplies to vaccinate the world has pitted the Pope and the head of the World Health Organization against pharmaceutical executives, and seen developing countries resist the policies of wealthy nations. The issue is whether Covid-19 vaccine makers should lose intellectual property (IP) protections in a bid to ramp up global manufacturing and expand access to doses in poorer countries. In comments on Thursday, foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin hedged, saying China "looks forward to active and constructive discussions among all parties within the framework of the World Trade Organization in a bid to achieve an effective and balanced result".

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3133236/coronavirus-china-gives-nothing-away-whether-it-supports-waiving>

TRIPS waiver: US support is a major step but no guarantee of COVID-19 vaccine equity

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In a momentous shift, the US recently agreed to support a waiver of the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) agreement at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The waiver would suspend intellectual property rights, such as patents and trademarks, on products required to fight COVID-19 for the duration of the pandemic. Until the announcement, the US, alongside the European Union, Norway, Canada, Australia, the UK, Switzerland, Brazil and Japan, had been steadfast in their position that stringent patent protection is key to vaccine supply and the global effort to tackle COVID-19. But proponents of the waiver argued that the temporary suspension of intellectual property rights was key to achieving vaccine equity and global health security. India and South Africa, with the support of over 100 countries, have been passionately making this case from inside the WTO since October 2020

<https://theconversation.com/trips-waiver-us-support-is-a-major-step-but-no-guarantee-of-covid-19-vaccine-equity-160638>

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The European Union has exported about 200 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines, European Commission vice president Maros Sefcovic said in a tweet. "While we're open to discussing new solidarity proposals, our priority is to ramp up the EU vaccine production + to see others unblocking exports of vaccines and their components," he added in the tweet. In April, Reuters reported that the

European Union has exported about 37 million more doses of COVID-19 vaccines than it has shared out among its own 27 countries

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-has-exported-about-200-mln-doses-covid-19-vaccines-sefcovic-says-2021-05-11/>

U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson announces Covid-19 public inquiry

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British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Wednesday announced an inquiry next year into the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic that is likely to focus on why the United Kingdom suffered Europe's worst death toll and was so slow initially to impose a lockdown. Johnson and his ministers have admitted there are lessons to be learned from the worst public health crisis in decades, but point to the United Kingdom's swift vaccine rollout as evidence that there were also successes.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/u-k-prime-minister-boris-johnson-announces-covid-19-public-n1267067>

UK's Johnson backs public inquiry into handling of pandemic

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has announced that an independent public inquiry into the handling of the coronavirus pandemic will be held next year. He told politicians on Wednesday that the inquiry will have wide-ranging statutory powers and that the government has a responsibility to learn lessons from the pandemic after more than 127,500 people died as a result of the coronavirus, Europe's highest death toll.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/12/uks-johnson-backs-public-inquiry-into-handling-of-pandemic>

Boris Johnson warns of new Covid-19 surge this winter bringing more deaths

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Boris Johnson has warned there could still be another surge of Covid-19 this winter. The PM said there could still be another resurgence in deaths from the disease. Mr Johnson said there is "a high likelihood of a surge this winter when the weather assists the transmission of all respiratory diseases and when the pressure on our NHS is most acute." He added that the country has been through a trauma 'like no other' in the battle with coronavirus. His comments came as the PM announced a full independent inquiry into his Government's handling of the pandemic - but it won't start for a year.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/breaking-boris-johnson-warns-new-24092711>

COVID Variants and a Third Wave: Scientists Warn Government Is 'Sleepwalking into Disaster'

The Scientific Advisory Group on Emergencies (SAGE) has warned that, if the Government fails to contain new Coronavirus variants of concern, it could lead to a third wave of the pandemic three times as large as the second wave, documents released this week reveal. If this occurs, it could necessitate a third lockdown despite the success of the vaccine programme. Several top scientists have also warned that the new Indian variant could already have become the dominant form of COVID-19 in Britain, with the potential to cause infections in spite of vaccinations. According to Professor Ravindra Gupta, of the Cambridge Institute of Therapeutic Immunology and Infectious Disease, the Indian variant "likely will cause infections despite vaccination and we don't know how big that problem will be". Despite these sober warnings, newspapers such as The Times and Daily Mail have obfuscated SAGE's analysis by selectively reporting its new scientific findings and omitting to inform readers of the huge risks and uncertainties posed by new variants.

<https://bylinetimes.com/2021/05/12/covid-variants-and-a-third-wave-scientists-warn-government-is-sleepwalking-into-disaster/>

Samsung BioLogics, Pfizer deny report on COVID-19 vaccine production in S.Korea

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Samsung BioLogics Co Ltd and Pfizer Inc on Wednesday denied a report that they were working

together to produce in South Korea a COVID-19 vaccine developed by the U.S. drugmaker. The Korea Economic Daily reported earlier that the biotech arm of Samsung Group had been revamping production lines at its plant in Songdo to produce the Pfizer vaccine, which was jointly developed by the German BioNTech. The report quoted an unnamed high-level government official as saying the plant had the capacity to make up to 1 billion doses per year and production could start as early as in August.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/samsung-biologics-produce-pfizers-covid-19-vaccine-report-2021-05-11/>

Late-stage trial of Chinese mRNA Covid-19 vaccine to begin in Mexico

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Mexican foreign minister says 6,000 people will take part in phase 3 trial of experimental drug made by Walvax Biotechnology from May 30. It is the first shot developed in China using the same technology as the Pfizer and Moderna jabs

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3133200/coronavirus-late-stage-trial-chinese-mrna-vaccine-candidate>

More data needed before COVID-19 vaccine booster decisions -EU regulators

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More clinical and real-world data is needed on how well and for how long COVID-19 vaccines are protective before any decisions should be made on offering third or booster doses, Europe's drug regulators said on Wednesday. Speaking at a news briefing on the coronavirus pandemic, the European Medicines Agency's head of biological health threats and vaccines strategy Marco Cavaleri cautioned against making "premature" moves to deploy booster COVID-19 shots.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/more-data-needed-before-covid-19-vaccine-booster-decisions-eu-regulators-2021-05-12/>

WHO reviewing Seychelles COVID-19 data after fully vaccinated people test positive

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The World Health Organization said on Tuesday it was reviewing coronavirus data from Seychelles after the health ministry said more than a third of people who tested positive for COVID-19 in the past week had been fully vaccinated. Both the ministry and the WHO stressed that the majority of those who tested positive had not been vaccinated or had only received one dose, that no one who had died had been fully vaccinated and that nearly all of those needing treatment for severe or critical cases were unvaccinated.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/who-reviewing-seychelles-covid-19-data-after-fully-vaccinated-people-test-2021-05-11/>

Red Cross warns that coronavirus cases are exploding in Asia

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Coronavirus cases are exploding in Asia and the Pacific with over 5.9 million new confirmed infections in the past two weeks, more than in all other regions combined, the International Federation of the Red Cross said Wednesday. It warned that the surge is pushing hospitals and health systems to the brink of collapse. Seven out of 10 countries globally that are doubling their infection numbers the fastest are in Asia and the Pacific, it said. Laos took just 12 days to see its cases double, and the number of confirmed infections in India has doubled in under two months to more than 23 million, the Red Cross said in a statement.

<https://apnews.com/article/asia-coronavirus-pandemic-health-3e1403faeeb456510cfc2d6ffc55e89f>

Maldives bans travel from South Asia as COVID cases soar

Rich Indians can no longer escape their country's raging pandemic by holidaying in the Maldives,

after the island paradise said it would ban travel from South Asia as it battles a surge in COVID-19 infections. The Indian Ocean holiday destination southwest of India reopened its tourist resorts in July last year after halting international flights for more than three months at the start of the pandemic.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/12/maldives-bans-travel-from-south-asia-as-covid-cases-soar>

South Africa Covid Cases Climb, Though Officials Say It's Not a Third Wave

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Cases are rising fastest in the Northern Cape and Gauteng provinces, the department said in a statement on Wednesday. While deaths rose 18% in the week the number of hospitalizations has not increased, it said. "We have not yet hit the third wave however we are at risk," the department said. South Africa is the worst-affected nation on the continent by the coronavirus, with about 1.6 million infections and 55,000 deaths.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-05-12-south-africa-covid-cases-climb-though-officials-say-its-not-a-third-wave/>

Uber And Lyft Will Give Free Rides To COVID-19 Vaccination Spots, White House Says

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Anyone needing a ride to get a COVID-19 vaccine shot will be able to get a free trip from the ride-sharing companies Lyft and Uber, the White House announced Tuesday, in the latest push to encourage Americans to get vaccinated. "The feature will launch in the next two weeks and run until July 4," the White House said. People who want to use the program would need to select a vaccination site near them and then redeem the companies' offer of a free ride. The two ride-sharing firms will promote the offer in their apps. The initiative is a new facet of President Biden's push to ensure 70% of all U.S. adults get at least one vaccine shot by July 4.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2021/05/11/995882805/uber-and-lyft-will-give-free-rides-to-covid-19-vaccination-spots-white-house-say>

Taiwan tightens restrictions after new domestic COVID cases

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Taiwan's government on Tuesday tightened rules on public gatherings after reporting six new domestic COVID-19 cases with no clear source of infection, a rare rise on the island which has kept the pandemic well under control. Taiwan largely closed its borders early on in the pandemic and has a robust contact tracing and quarantine system, meaning its low case numbers - 1,210 infections to date including 12 deaths - have allowed life to carry on more or less as normal.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwan-tightens-restrictions-after-new-domestic-covid-cases-2021-05-11/>