

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

14th Oct 2021

One Minute Overview

The Covid report lays bare Test and Trace failings – Dido Harding’s mistakes won’t be forgotten - When the damning Parliamentary report into the Covid pandemic was published today, there was quiet pride within the NHS that its own performance was largely the subject of praise. [Many of the best things about the state’s response to the virus, from the vaccine rollout to new treatments to agile management, were down to the health service.](#) But there was also a sense of relief, as most of the heaviest criticism was directed at not just the government and scientific advisers but also at ‘NHS Test and Trace’ (which should really have been called ‘DHSC Test and Trace’, as Matt Hancock’s Department of Health and Social Care ran it, not the NHS). Some in the health service, who have long resented their brand being used and abused by Dido Harding’s controversial unit, pointedly remarked today that she had tried – and failed – this summer to become chief executive of the NHS itself. Or, as one insider put it: “We dodged a bullet there.”

Belgium's Covid App Reports Data Breach Days Before Pass Rollout - Belgium’s app that verifies coronavirus vaccinations reported a data leak, just days before Brussels is set to require people to prove they’ve been jabbed in order to enter restaurants. [A potential leak of the CovidScan app may have exposed the sensitive health data of 39,000 people, the country’s data protection authority said in an emailed press release.](#) The app is used to read the QR codes -- usually on a phone -- that prove people have received a vaccine or have recently tested negative for the virus. From Friday the nation’s capital will mandate people to show a Covid pass to enter bars, restaurants, sports clubs and hospitals. The measure aims to stoke the local economy and spur vaccinations.

Australia's CSL reaffirms commitment to making AstraZeneca COVID vaccine - Australian biotech CSL said on Thursday it was committed to its agreement for the production of about 50 million doses of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine into 2022. The announcement came after a media report said the British drugmaker's vaccine, [Vaxzevria, will no longer be manufactured in Australia due to demand for vaccines of Pfizer and Moderna.](#) Pfizer and Moderna have established a market dominance by using mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccine technology to fight the pandemic.

COVID-19: Minister apologises for 'hurt and distress' suffered by bereaved families in wake of damning report on pandemic handling - A minister has apologised for the 'hurt and distress' suffered by families who have lost loved ones to coronavirus, the day after a colleague refused 11 times to say sorry for the government's handling of the pandemic. ['The prime minister apologised earlier this year for all the hurt and distress all those families have suffered and I share that and of course I offer that as well.'](#) Conservative Party chair Oliver Dowden told Kay Burley.

China to test thousands of Wuhan blood samples in Covid-19 probe - China is preparing to test tens of thousands of blood bank samples from the city of Wuhan as part of a probe into the origins of Covid-19, according to a Chinese official. [The move comes amid increasing calls for transparency over the emergence of the virus.](#) The store of up to 200,000 samples, including those from the closing months of 2019 were pinpointed in February this year by the World Health Organization's panel of investigators as a possible source of key information that could help determine when and where the virus first crossed into humans. The samples are kept in the Wuhan Blood Center, and are thought to span 2019, providing real-time tissue samples from a wide swathe of the population in the Chinese

city where SARS-CoV-2 is thought to have first infected humans.

Bill Gates Says World Must Increase Vaccine-Making Capacity - Bill Gates, whose foundation has focused efforts to fight the coronavirus pandemic, said Wednesday that government and industry leaders around the world need to “get serious” about increasing vaccine-making capacity so that they can respond faster in the future. [While changes to how the world allocates and shares doses can help, the ability to quickly make large volumes of mRNA vaccines can lessen the political tensions that can arise from scarcity.](#) Gates wrote in his blog. “The world should have the goal of being able to make and deliver enough vaccines for everyone on the planet within six months of detecting a potential pandemic,” Gates said. “If we could do that, then the supply of doses would not be a limiting factor, and the way they were allocated would no longer be a matter of life and death.”

US to reopen land borders in November for fully vaccinated - Beleaguered business owners and families separated by COVID-19 restrictions rejoiced Wednesday after the U.S. said it will reopen its land borders to nonessential travel next month, ending a 19-month freeze. [Travel across land borders from Canada and Mexico has been largely restricted to workers whose jobs are deemed essential.](#) New rules will allow fully vaccinated foreign nationals to enter the U.S. regardless of the reason starting in early November, when a similar easing of restrictions is set for air travel. By mid-January, even essential travelers seeking to enter the U.S., such as truck drivers, will need to be fully vaccinated. Shopping malls and big box retailers in U.S. border towns whose parking spaces had been filled by cars with Mexican license plates were hit hard by travel restrictions.

Doubts over demand on eve of Indonesia's Bali reopening - Hours before Indonesia's top holiday destination Bali reopens to foreign tourists after 18 months of pandemic hiatus, the island is lacking one crucial ingredient: international flights. [Tourism-reliant Bali is scheduled to reopen on Thursday and though its Ngurah Rai international airport has carried out simulations preparing for the tourists to return,](#) it is not expecting much to happen soon. 'So far there is no schedule,' said Taufan Yudhistira, a spokesman for the airport.

Florida fines key county \$3.5 million for mandating vaccines - Florida has issued its first fine to a county it says violated a new state law banning coronavirus vaccine mandates and for firing 14 workers who failed to get the shots. [The Florida Department of Health on Tuesday issued the \\$3.5 million fine for Leon County, home to the state capital, saying the municipality violated Florida's "vaccine passport" law,](#) which prohibits businesses and governments from requiring people to show proof of COVID-19 vaccination. “These are people that, presumably, have been serving throughout this whole time and now all of a sudden they’re basically getting kicked to the curb,” Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said at a news conference in St. Pete Beach.

Panama approves Pfizer COVID-19 booster for high-risk people - Panama has approved a booster dose of Pfizer Inc's (PFE.N) COVID-19 vaccine for high-risk people, including healthcare workers, bedridden patients, nursing home residents and people over 55, health officials said on Tuesday. [The Central American country has reported 469,440 COVID-19 infections since the start of the pandemic and 7,275 deaths. More than 5.5 million vaccine doses have been administered since January,](#) covering most of the eligible population. 'We have decided to begin the process of applying a booster shot to the population with the Pfizer vaccine, starting tomorrow in public and private hospitals,' Health Minister Luis Sucre said.

Honeywell mandates COVID-19 shots at all U.S. offices - Honeywell International Inc said on Wednesday it will require employees at all its U.S. offices and some manufacturing locations to be vaccinated against COVID-19 under an executive order from President Joe Biden for federal contractors. [Other government contractors including Boeing Co, International Business Machines Corp \(IBM.N\) and](#)

[Raytheon Technologies Corp have also mandated vaccines](#), with the White House last month setting Dec. 8 as the vaccination deadline for millions of employees of federal contractors. 'The vaccination mandate applies to all Honeywell locations within the U.S. and its territories that support U.S. government contract work.

Lockdown Exit

English school return spurred COVID in children, but cases fell in adults - study

COVID-19 infections in children in England rose in September after schools returned from summer holidays, helping to keep cases high even as there was a fall among adults, a large prevalence study showed on Thursday. The REACT-1 study, led by Imperial College London, is the latest to find that more children are getting infected with COVID-19 following the reopening of schools at the start of September. Infection numbers in Britain are currently much higher than in other western European countries, with more than 30,000 new cases reported every day this month, but have not risen above summer levels following the return of schools in England despite the higher infection rates in children.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/english-school-return-spurred-covid-children-cases-fell-adults-study-2021-10-13/>

The Covid report lays bare Test and Trace failings - Dido Harding's mistakes won't be forgotten

When the damning Parliamentary report into the Covid pandemic was published today, there was quiet pride within the NHS that its own performance was largely the subject of praise. Many of the best things about the state's response to the virus, from the vaccine rollout to new treatments to agile management, were down to the health service. But there was also a sense of relief, as most of the heaviest criticism was directed at not just the government and scientific advisers but also at 'NHS Test and Trace' (which should really have been called 'DHSC Test and Trace', as Matt Hancock's Department of Health and Social Care ran it, not the NHS). Some in the health service, who have long resented their brand being used and abused by Dido Harding's controversial unit, pointedly remarked today that she had tried – and failed – this summer to become chief executive of the NHS itself. Or, as one insider put it: "We dodged a bullet there."

<https://inews.co.uk/opinion/covid-report-test-and-trace-failings-dido-hardings-mistakes-wont-forgotten-1245616>

Blackstone in London Sets Vaccine Rule to Work in Office

Blackstone, the giant private equity firm, will require employees who want to work in its London office to be vaccinated beginning next week, as the American company takes a more forceful approach to vaccinations than many other businesses in Britain. Across the United States, vaccine mandates, which require employees to be inoculated to remain in their jobs, are becoming increasingly common ahead of a rule by President Biden that will apply to companies with more than 100 employees. But in Britain, data protection and employment discrimination laws have prevented companies from mandating their own "no jab, no job" policies and have made it harder to physically separate unvaccinated workers. Instead, companies have been advised to encourage vaccinations rather than enforce them.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/13/business/blackstone-employees-in-london-must-be-vaccinated-to-work-in-the-office.html>

WHO Creates New Team to Study Covid-19 Origins

The World Health Organization established a new panel of scientists whose mandate will include attempting to revive a stalled inquiry into the origins of the coronavirus that caused a global pandemic. The 26-member team, drawn from countries including the U.S., China, India, Nigeria and Cambodia, is larger than a 10-member international group of scientists sent earlier this year to Wuhan, the Chinese city that was the site of the first confirmed Covid-19 outbreak in December

2019. The team will also have a broader mandate to lead investigations of future epidemics as well as Covid-19. It may encounter some of the same difficulties that hampered the first team's efforts earlier this year, global health experts have said, including blocked access to data on possible early Covid-19 cases and other potential evidence. WHO officials have said that time is running out to examine blood samples and other important clues in China regarding when, how and where the pandemic started.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/who-creates-new-team-to-study-pandemic-origins-11634156325>

Bill Gates Says World Must Increase Vaccine-Making Capacity

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<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-13/bill-gates-says-world-must-increase-vaccine-making-capacity>

U.K.'s Vaccine Passport App Fails, Spoiling Trips From Heathrow

The U.K.'s vaccine-passport app temporarily failed on Wednesday, in the latest outage of government-run technology to disrupt travel. "There are currently issues with accessing the Covid Pass on the NHS App and website," the National Health Service said in a tweet. "We are investigating the issue and will update as soon as we can." Two hours later, the app was up and running again, according to a subsequent tweet sent just after 4 p.m. London time. Officials at London's Heathrow and Gatwick airports said they saw no repeat of the backups that occurred twice in the past three weeks, when automated Border Force gates failed.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-13/u-k-s-vaccine-passport-app-fails-spoiling-trips-from-heathrow?srnd=prognosis>

Honeywell mandates COVID-19 shots at all U.S. offices

Honeywell International Inc said on Wednesday it will require employees at all its U.S. offices and some manufacturing locations to be vaccinated against COVID-19 under an executive order from President Joe Biden for federal contractors. Other government contractors including Boeing Co, International Business Machines Corp (IBM.N) and Raytheon Technologies Corp have also mandated vaccines, with the White House last month setting Dec. 8 as the vaccination deadline for millions of employees of federal contractors. "The vaccination mandate applies to all Honeywell locations within the U.S. and its territories that support U.S. government contract work.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/honeywell-mandates-covid-19-shots-all-us-offices-2021-10-13/>

Union Pacific to comply with COVID vaccine deadline for U.S. workers

Union Pacific Corp said on Wednesday it will require its 31,000 U.S. employees to be vaccinated under President Joe Biden's executive order requiring that federal contractors mandate vaccines by Dec. 8, except for employees who receive an approved exemption. "As a federal contractor who ships goods supporting our nation's armed services, ... all employees are required to report their vaccination status or have an approved medical or religious accommodation by the federally mandated deadline," Union Pacific, the top U.S. railroad operator, said in a statement.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/union-pacific-comply-with-covid-vaccine-deadline-us-workers-2021-10-13/>

U.S. COVID-19 vaccine rates up thanks to mandates; cases and deaths down -officials

Vaccination rates against COVID-19 in the United States have risen by more than 20 percentage

points after multiple institutions adopted vaccine requirements, while case numbers and deaths from the virus are down, Biden administration officials said on Wednesday. White House COVID-19 response coordinator Jeff Zients told reporters that 77% of eligible Americans had received at least one shot of a vaccine. Vaccination rates went up thanks to mandates put into place by private businesses, healthcare systems, social institutions and state and local governments, he said in a briefing.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/vaccine-requirements-raised-covid-19-vaccination-rates-by-20-percentage-points-2021-10-13/>

Malfunctioning NHS app for Covid vaccine status causes travel delays

Travellers have been blocked from boarding flights and ferries for trips abroad after a four-hour outage of England's NHS app left people unable to access a Covid pass to prove their vaccine status. Hundreds tried to download information that many countries require before departure - including a QR code and details about the jabs they have had - but were told to "try again later", sparking chaos and fury. The app and nhs.uk website began malfunctioning just before noon on Wednesday, and NHS Digital said the problem had been resolved by 4.30pm. It blamed the outage on "a technical issue with a global service provider that affected many different organisations".

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/13/nhs-app-proving-covid-vaccine-status-malfunctions-causing-travel-delays>

US ramps up vaccine diplomacy, China ramps up donations. What happens next?

Washington is ramping up international contributions but competition may not ease shortages in all developing countries. Poorer nations may receive vaccines from Beijing but not necessarily its influence, analysts say

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3152098/us-china-coronavirus-vaccine-diplomacy-heats-can-donations>

Back from the brink: how Japan became a surprise Covid success story

Just days after the Tokyo Olympics drew to a close, Japan appeared to be hurtling towards a coronavirus disaster. On 13 August, the host city reported a record 5,773 new Covid-19 cases, driven by the Delta variant. Nationwide the total exceeded 25,000. Soaring infections added to resentment felt by a public that had opposed the Olympics, only to be told they could not watch events in person due to the pandemic. Hospitals were under unprecedented strain, the shortage of beds forcing thousands who had tested positive to recuperate - and in some cases die - at home. The then prime minister, Yoshihide Suga, who had ignored his own chief health adviser in pushing ahead with the Games, was forced to step down amid stubbornly low approval ratings. A state of emergency in the capital and other regions that had been in place for almost six months looked likely to be extended yet again.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/13/back-from-the-brink-how-japan-became-a-surprise-covid-success-story>

South Korea launches panel to debate 'living with COVID-19'

South Korea established a panel on Wednesday to debate a strategy on how to "live with COVID-19" in the long-term, as the country seeks to phase out coronavirus restrictions and reopen the economy amid rising vaccination levels. Under the strategy, the government aims to relax coronavirus restrictions for citizens who can prove they have been fully vaccinated, while encouraging asymptomatic and mild COVID-19 patients aged below 70 to recover at home, the health ministry said last week. The government will also focus on the number of hospitalisations and deaths rather than new daily infections, and will consider not publishing the latter on a daily basis, Yonhap news agency has reported.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/south-korea-launches-panel-debate-living-with-covid-19-2021-10-13/>

US to reopen land borders in November for fully vaccinated

Beleaguered business owners and families separated by COVID-19 restrictions rejoiced Wednesday after the U.S. said it will reopen its land borders to nonessential travel next month, ending a 19-month freeze. Travel across land borders from Canada and Mexico has been largely restricted to workers whose jobs are deemed essential. New rules will allow fully vaccinated foreign nationals to enter the U.S. regardless of the reason starting in early November, when a similar easing of restrictions is set for air travel. By mid-January, even essential travelers seeking to enter the U.S., such as truck drivers, will need to be fully vaccinated. Shopping malls and big box retailers in U.S. border towns whose parking spaces had been filled by cars with Mexican license plates were hit hard by travel restrictions.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-lifestyle-health-covid-19-pandemic-travel-4826edefa498139ebd37684e4f64d553>

Exit Strategies

Australia's CSL reaffirms commitment to making AstraZeneca COVID vaccine

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<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/australias-csl-reaffirms-commitment-making-astrazeneca-covid-vaccine-2021-10-13/>

Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 Booster Shot Bolsters Immune Defense, FDA Staff Say

Federal health regulators cautioned that data was limited and they had to rely on Johnson & Johnson's own analysis for some of the study findings, rather than conducting their own.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/johnson-johnson-covid-19-booster-shot-bolsters-immune-defense-fda-staff-say-11634137515>

Belgium's Covid App Reports Data Breach Days Before Pass Rollout

Belgium's app that verifies coronavirus vaccinations reported a data leak, just days before Brussels is set to require people to prove they've been jabbed in order to enter restaurants. A potential leak of the CovidScan app may have exposed the sensitive health data of 39,000 people, the country's data protection authority said in an emailed press release. The app is used to read the QR codes -- usually on a phone -- that prove people have received a vaccine or have recently tested negative for the virus. From Friday the nation's capital will mandate people to show a Covid pass to enter bars, restaurants, sports clubs and hospitals. The measure aims to stoke the local economy and spur vaccinations.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-13/belgium-s-covid-app-reports-data-breach-days-before-pass-rollout>

Ivermectin Demand Sends Sales Soaring for Foreign Generic Drugmakers

Before the pandemic, Taj Pharmaceuticals Ltd. shipped negligible amounts of ivermectin to Russia for veterinary use. But over the past year it's become a popular product for the Indian generic drug maker: Since July 2020, Taj Pharma has sold \$5 million worth of the pills for human use in India and overseas. That's a bonanza for a small family-owned company with an annual revenue of about \$66 million.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-13/ivermectin-demand-sends-sales-soaring-for-foreign-generic-drugmakers?srnd=businessweek-v2>

Biden's vaccine mandate for companies nears as proposed rule sent to White House

The U.S. Labor Department on Tuesday submitted to the White House the initial text of President Joe Biden's plan to require private-sector workers to be vaccinated against COVID-19 or get tested regularly. The department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration submitted the proposed rule for review. Some details could change, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters. The move indicates the proposed standard could be released soon. The mandate will apply to businesses with 100 or more employees and will be implemented under a federal rule-making mechanism known as an emergency temporary standard. It would affect roughly 80 million workers nationwide.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-labor-department-submits-initial-text-bidens-vaccine-mandate-white-house-2021-10-13/>

WHO chief urges COVID-19 vaccine sharing to make mass coverage 'reality'

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Wednesday urged countries and companies controlling the supply of COVID-19 vaccines to prioritize supply to the vaccine sharing program COVAX in order to meet vaccination targets. "We're working with leaders to support the prioritization and planning that's needed to make 40% coverage a reality with aggressive and ambitious action," he said at a media briefing.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/who-chief-urges-covid-19-vaccine-sharing-to-make-mass-coverage-reality/ar-AA1taVz>

'It's not Satanism': Zimbabwe church leaders preach vaccines

Apostolic groups that infuse traditional beliefs into a Pentecostal doctrine are among the most skeptical in Zimbabwe when it comes to COVID-19 vaccines, with an already strong mistrust of modern medicine. Many followers put faith in prayer, holy water and anointed stones to ward off disease or cure illnesses. While mandates — a blunt no vaccine, no entrance rule — is the way to go for some, there's a subtler approach for the Apostolic and other anti-vaccine Pentecostal groups, partly, but not only, because they are deeply suspicious of vaccines.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-zimbabwe-africa-southern-africa-health-f5869a5052ff91a53fbd1888d3300db>

United Airlines must hold off on its vaccine mandate

A federal judge in Texas ordered United Airlines to temporarily halt its plan to put unvaccinated employees on unpaid leave if they have requested an exemption from the company's COVID-19 vaccine mandate. United Airlines announced Aug. 6 that the Chicago-based airline was requiring all 67,000 of its U.S.-based employees to be vaccinated. At the time, the airline said about 90% of pilots and 80% of flight attendants had already been vaccinated. But for the small portion of employees that refused to get a coronavirus vaccine and requested either a medical or religious exemption from United, the company said it would place those workers on unpaid leave.

<https://www.npr.org/2021/10/13/1045536669/united-must-delay-vaccine-mandate-for-workers>

Putin says Russia needs to speed up vaccination for Covid-19

Russia must accelerate Covid-19 vaccinations, Russian President Vladimir Putin reiterated on Tuesday as the country recorded its highest daily death toll since the start of the pandemic. Addressing newly elected lawmakers of the State Duma -- Russia's lower parliament house -- Putin urged the deputies who had gathered in the Kremlin to convince the Russian public to get vaccinated as the situation continues to worsen across the vast country. "You know that the number of infections is growing in many regions and medical specialists are working in difficult conditions. We all know well that vaccination can save us from the virus and from a severe course of the disease. It is necessary to step up the vaccination pace," Putin said.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/12/world/putin-covid-19-vaccination-duma-intl/index.html>

Boeing tells workers they must get COVID-19 vaccine

The Boeing Co. has told employees they must be vaccinated against COVID-19 or possibly be fired.

The Seattle Times reports the deadline for workers at the aerospace giant is Dec. 8. "Compliance with these requirements is a condition of employment," states a Boeing internal presentation from Tuesday viewed by the newspaper. "Employees who are unable to meet these requirements ... may be released from the company." Employees can request exemptions "due to a disability or sincerely held religious belief." Any employee granted such an exemption will have to "undergo frequent testing for COVID-19" and be ready to "present a negative test result upon request."

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/boeing-seattle-employees-seattle-times-greg-abbott-b1937309.html>

Covid-19 vaccine boosters are 'immoral' and 'unfair', says WHO chief

Distributing Covid-19 vaccine booster shots in some countries while inoculations across Africa lag is "immoral," according to the director general of the World Health Organization (WHO). The increasing use of boosters is "immoral, unfair and unjust and it has to stop," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told CNN's Becky Anderson on Tuesday. "To start boosters is really the worst we can do as a global community. It is unjust and also unfair because we will not stop the pandemic by ignoring a whole continent, and the continent that doesn't have any manufacturing capacity of other means," he said.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/12/africa/vaccine-boosters-africa-intl/index.html>

Russia, EU to discuss terms for recognising COVID-19 vaccine certificates -Ifax

Russia and the EU will discuss terms for the mutual recognition of COVID-19 vaccine certificates for their respective shots at talks, the Interfax news agency cited Russia's health ministry as saying on Wednesday. The EU's ambassador to Moscow last week said Russia has repeatedly delayed inspections by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) necessary for the certification of its Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccine in the European Union

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-eu-discuss-terms-recognising-covid-19-vaccine-certificates-ifax-2021-10-13/>

Melbourne COVID-19 lockdown may lift early

Melburnians could know by the end of the week if lockdown will lift early, with Victoria on track to reach its 70 per cent double vaccination target ahead of schedule. The city was expected to exit its sixth hard lockdown on October 26, but the rate of people taking up COVID-19 vaccinations means the coverage target will be achieved earlier. "Just give me a few more days, and I'll give you as much clarity as I can about what next week looks like and the week after that and the week after that," Premier Daniel Andrews told reporters

<https://www.msn.com/en-au/news/australia/melbourne-covid-19-lockdown-may-lift-early/ar-AAPqkjo>

Doubts over demand on eve of Indonesia's Bali reopening

Hours before Indonesia's top holiday destination Bali reopens to foreign tourists after 18 months of pandemic hiatus, the island is lacking one crucial ingredient: international flights. Tourism-reliant Bali is scheduled to reopen on Thursday and though its Ngurah Rai international airport has carried out simulations preparing for the tourists to return, it is not expecting much to happen soon. "So far there is no schedule," said Taufan Yudhistira, a spokesman for the airport.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/doubts-over-demand-eve-indonesias-bali-reopening-2021-10-13/>

Partisan Exits

Florida fines key county \$3.5 million for mandating vaccines

Florida has issued its first fine to a county it says violated a new state law banning coronavirus vaccine mandates and for firing 14 workers who failed to get the shots. The Florida Department of Health on Tuesday issued the \$3.5 million fine for Leon County, home to the state capital, saying the municipality violated Florida's "vaccine passport" law, which prohibits businesses and governments from requiring people to show proof of COVID-19 vaccination. "These are people that, presumably,

have been serving throughout this whole time and now all of a sudden they're basically getting kicked to the curb," Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said at a news conference in St. Pete Beach.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-mlb-entertainment-sports-business-d56d052cffbf34f4d4887b4c87fee302>

Son whose father died of Covid-19 said he went to work wearing a scarf and gloves because he didn't have PPE

A man whose late father was forced to wear a scarf and gloves due to a lack of PPE at work has hit out at the Government over its treatment of Black and minority ethnic communities during the pandemic. Lobby Akinnola, 30, lost his 60-year-old father Olufemi "Femi" Akinnola, a Mencap support worker, to Covid-19 in April last year. Lobby said his father died at his home in Leamington Spa despite making multiple calls to 111 and his GP about his worsening condition. He described his father Femi as a "nurturing, caring and wickedly smart man," who "gave everything" and visited his clients outside of his shift pattern to ensure they were safe. But he did so wearing makeshift PPE fashioned from his scarf and gloves because he didn't have proper equipment.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/health/carer-father-died-scarf-gloves-covid-racial-inequality-government-report-1244989>

COVID-19: Minister apologises for 'hurt and distress' suffered by bereaved families in wake of damning report on pandemic handling

A minister has apologised for the "hurt and distress" suffered by families who have lost loved ones to coronavirus, the day after a colleague refused 11 times to say sorry for the government's handling of the pandemic. "The prime minister apologised earlier this year for all the hurt and distress all those families have suffered and I share that and of course I offer that as well," Conservative Party chair Oliver Dowden told Kay Burley.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-minister-apologises-for-hurt-and-distress-suffered-by-bereaved-families-in-wake-of-damning-report-on-pandemic-handling-12432761>

Neo-fascists exploit 'no-vax' rage, posing dilemma for Italy

An extreme-right party's violent exploitation of anger over Italy's coronavirus restrictions is forcing authorities to wrestle with the country's fascist legacy and fueling fears there could be a replay of last week's mobs trying to force their way to Parliament. Starting Friday, anyone entering workplaces in Italy must have received at least one vaccine dose, or recovered from COVID-19 recently or tested negative within two days, using the country's Green Pass to prove their status. Italians already use the pass to enter restaurants, theaters, gyms and other indoor entertainment, or to take long-distance buses, trains or domestic flights. But 10,000 opponents of that government decree turned out in Rome's vast Piazza del Popolo last Saturday in a protest that degenerated into alarming violence.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-europe-italy-rome-violence-2f61aafb5a9c219f5856c3ea4b3273aa>

W.H.O. Will Announce New Team to Study Coronavirus Origins

The position is unpaid. The world's scientists and internet sleuths will scrutinize every move. Completing the first assignment with the available tools, and to everyone's satisfaction, will be nearly impossible. Despite those considerable obstacles, more than 700 people have applied for spots on a new committee charged with breathing life into the World Health Organization's stalled inquiry into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic. The committee, expected to be announced this week, represents an attempt by the embattled global health body to reset its approach to determining how the pandemic began.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/12/health/covid-lab-leak-who-china.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage§ion=Science>

Scientific Viewpoint

J. & J. Recipients May Be Helped More by Other Brands' Booster, Study Says

People who received a Johnson & Johnson coronavirus vaccine may be better off with a booster shot from Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech, according to preliminary data from a federal clinical trial published on Wednesday. That finding, along with a mixed review of Johnson & Johnson's booster data from the Food and Drug Administration released earlier in the day, could lead to a heated debate about whether and how to offer additional shots to the 15 million Americans who have received the single-dose vaccine. The agency's panel of vaccine advisers will meet on Friday and vote on whether to recommend that the agency authorize the company's application for boosters for recipients of its vaccine.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/13/health/johnson-vaccine-booster-fda.html>

Covid-19 Vaccine Effects on Death Rates Differ by Country, Why?

It's one of the great puzzles of the pandemic. Most developed economies are now highly vaccinated with some of the most effective shots on offer, so why are the latest Covid-19 outbreaks more deadly in some places than in others? While it's clear vaccines led to a drop in fatalities during the most recent delta variant-driven waves compared with earlier bouts with the virus, some countries saw deaths fall to a greater degree than others, an outcome scientists still don't have answers for. Countries like Germany, Denmark and the U.K. have seen Covid deaths fall to roughly a tenth of previous peaks, according to Bloomberg calculations using data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. In Israel, Greece and the U.S., fatalities fell but remained more than half of the previous peaks.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-12/why-some-nations-have-deadlier-outbreaks-with-the-same-vaccines>

Fifth death in Scotland due to Covid-19 vaccine complications is recorded

A further person has died in Scotland due to underlying adverse effects from the Covid-19 vaccine. The National Records of Scotland has confirmed that the fifth person in the country has now died as a result of complications stemming from receiving the jab. The statistics also show that 4.2 million people had been given the first dose of the vaccine as of September 30. A total of 11,262 have now died from the virus in Scotland, it added. The latest data shows that during the week of October 4-10, 126 registered fatalities included the cause was Covid-19 on their death certificate, a decrease of 17 on the previous week.

<https://www.edinburghlive.co.uk/news/edinburgh-news/fifth-death-scotland-due-covid-21847614>

Do COVID vaccines prevent transmission of the virus?

But do vaccines actually limit the spread of the virus? A large study, not yet peer-reviewed, led by a team at Oxford University and looking specifically at the Delta variant has shown that both the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines do indeed reduce transmission of the disease. The study looked at almost 150,000 contacts who were traced from nearly 100,000 initial cases of COVID. The initial COVID-positive cases contained a mix of vaccinated and unvaccinated people and the aim was not only to see which groups were most likely to pass on the virus, but also which of the Pfizer or AstraZeneca vaccines were most effective in reducing transmission.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/10/13/do-coronavirus-vaccines-prevent-transmission-of-the-virus>

BRIEF—Russia recommends RA drug olokizumab for COVID-19 of any severity

The Russian Ministry of Health has issued the 12th version of the Temporary guidelines for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19. This time the expert analysis resulted in a significant expansion of olokizumab usage in clinical practice. Olokizumab is the first in Russia novel genetically engineered biological drug developed by R-Pharm, one of the country's leading biotechs. In the new document, olokizumab is additionally included in treatment regimens for mild and critical COVID-19 patients in hospital setting.

<https://www.thepharmaletter.com/in-brief/brief-russia-recommends-ra-drug-olokizumab-for-covid-19-of-any-severity>

Russia to test COVID-19 vaccine in form of nasal spray

Russia will test a nasal spray form of its Sputnik V vaccine against COVID-19 among adult volunteers, according to a state document published on Tuesday, as the country struggles to rein in rising numbers of infections and deaths. Russia was quick to develop and launch its Sputnik vaccine when the coronavirus pandemic struck last year, but take-up has been slow, with many Russians citing distrust of the authorities and fear of new medical products. The nasal spray is to be applied in two doses in a clinic in St Petersburg, according to the document published on the state register of medicines, which did not provide the planned timing of the clinical tests.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/russia-test-covid-19-vaccine-form-nasal-spray-2021-10-12/>

China to test thousands of Wuhan blood samples in Covid-19 probe

China is preparing to test tens of thousands of blood bank samples from the city of Wuhan as part of a probe into the origins of Covid-19, according to a Chinese official. The move comes amid increasing calls for transparency over the emergence of the virus. The store of up to 200,000 samples, including those from the closing months of 2019 were pinpointed in February this year by the World Health Organization's panel of investigators as a possible source of key information that could help determine when and where the virus first crossed into humans. The samples are kept in the Wuhan Blood Center, and are thought to span 2019, providing real-time tissue samples from a wide swathe of the population in the Chinese city where SARS-CoV-2 is thought to have first infected humans.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/12/asia/china-wuhan-blood-samples-covid-19-probe-intl-cmd/index.html>

Panama approves Pfizer COVID-19 booster for high-risk people

Panama has approved a booster dose of Pfizer Inc's (PFE.N) COVID-19 vaccine for high-risk people, including healthcare workers, bedridden patients, nursing home residents and people over 55, health officials said on Tuesday. The Central American country has reported 469,440 COVID-19 infections since the start of the pandemic and 7,275 deaths. More than 5.5 million vaccine doses have been administered since January, covering most of the eligible population. "We have decided to begin the process of applying a booster shot to the population with the Pfizer vaccine, starting tomorrow in public and private hospitals," Health Minister Luis Sucre said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/panama-approves-pfizer-covid-19-booster-high-risk-people-2021-10-13/>

FDA says Moderna does not meet all criteria for Covid-19 boosters

Scientists at the US Food and Drug Administration said that Moderna has not met all of the agency's criteria to support use of booster doses of its Covid-19 vaccine, possibly because the efficacy of the shot's first two doses has remained strong. FDA staff said in documents that data for Moderna's vaccine showed that a booster does increase protective antibodies, but the difference in antibody levels before and after the shot was not wide enough, particularly in those whose levels had remained high. The documents were released on Tuesday ahead of a meeting later this week of the FDA's outside expert advisers to discuss booster doses of the vaccine.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/moderna-covid-boosters-criteria-fda-b1937536.html>

Watch: Merck's Covid pill could transform treatment. Here's how it works

Earlier this month, study results showed that molnupiravir, Merck's investigational antiviral pill, cut hospitalization rates of Covid-19 patients by about half. Molnupiravir is the first oral treatment that has shown promise in treating Covid-19. Another antiviral, remdesivir, can only be administered intravenously. "Having an oral option will be a big change," said Benjamin Gewurz, associate director of the Ph.D. program in virology at Harvard Medical School. "Some people could just take a pill rather than having an IV or injection of some sort. And that's what would be a huge, huge

advance.”

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/10/13/molnupiravir-merck-covid-pill-how-it-works/>

WHO advisers recommend 3rd COVID vaccine dose for highest-risk groups

The group, called the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE), said people in the immunocompromised groups should be offered an additional dose in the vaccine series, since they are less likely to respond adequately to vaccination with the standard series and are at high risk for severe disease. WHO leaders have previously urged countries to postpone broader use of booster doses to free up more vaccine for countries that had much less access to supplies. SAGE said its third-dose recommendation applies to all vaccines that the WHO has approved for emergency use. They include Pfizer-BioNTech, AstraZeneca-Oxford, Johnson & Johnson, Moderna, Sinopharm, and Sinovac. For Sinopharm and Sinovac, two inactivated vaccines from China, SAGE said a third dose should be offered to people ages 60 and older as part of an extended primary series. It added that a third dose of a different vaccine could be considered, based on vaccine supply and access. However, SAGE urged countries to prioritize 2-dose coverage in that age group, then administer third doses, starting with the oldest age groups.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/10/who-advisers-recommend-3rd-covid-vaccine-dose-highest-risk-groups>

FDA scientists neutral on Moderna Covid-19 vaccine booster ahead of key meeting

Food and Drug Administration scientists did not take a clear position as to whether the agency should authorize booster doses of the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine in documents released Tuesday. Posted ahead of a two-day meeting convened by the FDA on booster shots of both the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines, the documents laid out the case for authorizing Moderna’s proposed booster — a half dose of the existing vaccine — but also noted that data so far make it unclear that the third dose is needed. “Some real world effectiveness studies have suggested declining efficacy of Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine over time against symptomatic infection or against the Delta variant, while others have not,” FDA scientists wrote in a briefing document. However, they wrote, current data suggest that Covid vaccines that are available in the U.S. still protect against severe Covid-19 disease and death.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/10/12/fda-scientists-moderna-covid-vaccine-booster/>

Coronavirus Resurgence

COVID-19 cases in Australia's Victoria hit record daily high

COVID-19 infections in Australia's Victoria hit a pandemic record on Thursday as Melbourne, the state capital, looks to exit its lockdown next week, several days ahead of plan, helped by a faster-than-expected vaccine uptake. The surge in daily cases comes as Victoria nears the 70% threshold for double-dose vaccinations among eligible adults, when authorities have promised to end a months-long lockdown, against the original Oct. 26 forecast.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/covid-19-cases-australias-victoria-hit-record-daily-high-2021-10-13/>

Russia sets new daily COVID-19 deaths record

Russia on Wednesday reported a new record of daily coronavirus deaths amid a slow vaccination rate and authorities' reluctance to tighten restrictions. The government coronavirus task force reported 984 coronavirus deaths over the past 24 hours, the pandemic's new high. The country has repeatedly marked record daily death tolls over the past few weeks as infections soared to near all-time highs, with 28,717 confirmed new cases reported Wednesday. The Kremlin has attributed the mounting contagion and deaths to a laggard vaccination rate. Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said Tuesday that about 43 million Russians, or about 29% of the country's nearly 146 million people, were fully vaccinated.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/russia-moscow-covid-vladimir-putin-kremlin-b1937525.html>

New Zealand reports 55 new local COVID-19 cases

New Zealand on Wednesday reported 55 new locally acquired cases of COVID-19, the majority in the country's largest city of Auckland, up from 43 a day earlier. New Zealand had been largely virus-free, excluding a small cluster of cases in February, until a Delta outbreak in mid-August forced officials to impose a lockdown in Auckland. Officials are looking to end strict lockdown measures once 90% of the country's population over 12 is fully vaccinated. Some 2.49 million, or 59%, have had two doses so far.

<https://news.yahoo.com/zealand-reports-55-local-covid-011940135.html>