

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

13th Jan 2021

News Highlights

India begins shipping vaccines ahead of immunisation campaign

Ahead of a vaccination campaign against Covid-19 [described by officials as the world's largest](#), doses of Covid vaccines - specifically the Oxford/AstraZeneca candidate - are being dispensed to cities by the Serum Institute of India. [The mass inoculation drive will begin Saturday and aims to cover 300 million people in its first phase](#) - thirty million frontline workers and then 270 million at-risk people, including those over fifty and/or those with underlying conditions.

EU probing member states' compliance with vaccine plans

The European Commission is to write to the 27 EU member states urging transparency over their vaccine strategies, to ensure adherence to the centralised plan for inoculation. [This is amidst concerns that member countries will pursue deals themselves to prevent supply shortages](#), following difficulties in the early phases of the vaccine rollout. To date, two vaccines have secured approval from EU regulators, but concerns abound that not enough doses have been procured.

Google invests heavily in anti-misinformation campaign linked to Covid vaccines

With vaccine-related misinformation a major concern, Google has launched a U.S.\$3 million fund to support ['projects that aim to broaden the audience of fact checks,' with key attention paid to audiences 'disproportionately affected by misinformation.'](#) The tech giant drew attention to what is being described as an 'infodemic,' which it said is 'exacerbating a perennial problem of misinformation about immunisation.'

WHO scientists to finally arrive in China to investigate pandemic's origins

The long-awaited World Health Organization (WHO) investigation into the origin of the pandemic will begin on Thursday. [Zhao Lijan, a spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, made the announcement, though few other details were given.](#) This followed concerns at the WHO over delays to the trip. The objective of the visit is to 'conduct studies, which will begin in Wuhan, to identify the potential source of the infection in the early cases,' according to the WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Lockdown Exit

For many, COVID-19 has changed the world of work for good

The upheaval in global labour markets triggered by the coronavirus pandemic will transform the working lives of millions of employees for good, policymakers and business leaders told a Reuters virtual forum on Tuesday. Nearly a year after governments first imposed lockdowns to contain the virus, there is a growing consensus that more staff will in future be hired remotely, work from home and have an entirely different set of expectations of their managers. Yet such changes are also likely to be the preserve of white-collar workers, with new labour market entrants and the less well-educated set to face post-COVID-19 economies where most jobs growth is in low-wage sectors.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-futureofwork/for-many-covid-19-has-changed-the-world-of-work-for-good-idUSKBN29H0XX>

Retailers remove product limits on groceries after Brisbane lockdown ends

Retailers have removed product limits for popular grocery items in Brisbane after the end of its three-day lockdown. Shoppers descended on stores in large numbers on Friday after the Queensland government confirmed five local government areas would shut down for 72 hours to stop the spread of the UK strain of COVID-19. Punches were thrown and supermarkets stripped bare as residents defied advice to raid shelves and stock up on supplies. It prompted major retailers like Coles and Woolworths to reintroduce product limits on multiple items

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/breaking-news/retailers-remove-product-limits-on-groceries-after-brisbane-lockdown-ends/news-story/59febfae05cc25d7be0eca4aaf8a8ea0>

Australia clamps down in response to cases of UK coronavirus variant

Authorities in Australia have responded swiftly to contain potential outbreaks of the UK variant of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes covid-19. On Thursday 7 January, a cleaner for a hotel quarantine facility in Brisbane tested positive for the more contagious B.1.1.7 variant, first sequenced in the UK in September, which has now reached at least 45 countries. The following morning, with no further positive cases, Queensland state Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk announced a short, citywide circuit-breaker lockdown affecting some 2 million residents. The city, where life has been normal for months, hadn't locked down since the first wave in Australia in March. The lockdown began on Friday at 6pm Brisbane time, and ended on Monday 11 January at the same time. It included a strict mask mandate for anyone leaving their homes, including while driving and exercising.

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2264588-australia-clamps-down-in-response-to-cases-of-uk-coronavirus-variant/>

New Zealand to ask international travellers for negative virus test before flying in

New Zealand will ask international travelers from most countries to show negative COVID-19 test results before boarding flights to the country as new contagious variants of COVID-19 spread across globally. "Given the high rates of infection in many countries and evidence of the global spread of more transmissible variants, it's clear that most global air routes will be of critical concern for the foreseeable future," COVID-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins said in a statement. Hipkins said the pre-departure test requirement would soon expand to all countries and territories excluding Australia, Antarctica and some Pacific Island nations.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-newzealand/new-zealand-to-ask-international-travelers-to-show-negative-covid-19-results-idUSKBN29H077>

Exit Strategies

Pope Francis will receive Covid-19 jab this week and declares 'without a vaccine you are playing with life'

Pope Francis will receive his Covid-19 vaccine this week, days after his personal doctor died from complications with the virus. The pontiff said it was an 'ethical duty' for everyone to get inoculated as Vatican City prepares for its rollout of the jabs. He told Italian news outlet TG5: 'Everyone should get the vaccine. Without a vaccine, you are playing with health, life, but also with the health of others.'

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/pope-francis-will-receive-covid-19-jab-this-week/ar-BB1cGRCg>

COVID-19 vaccine tourism? Florida could be hot spot as governor discourages outsiders

While thousands of seniors in Florida are bleary eyed and angry after spending weeks trying unsuccessfully to get an appointment for a coronavirus vaccine, the former chairman and CEO of Time Warner told a national television audience on Friday that it was a breeze. Richard Parsons, who is also a former chairman of Citigroup, said he left his home of New York to travel to Florida

specifically because the Sunshine State made it so easy. While there is no evidence that Parsons pulled any strings; seniors who have experienced just how difficult it is to get an appointment said they worry that the business giant's words will encourage others

<https://www.indystar.com/story/travel/news/2021/01/12/covid-vaccine-tourism-florida-discourages-outsiders-seeking-shot/6626445002/>

Trump will reverse plan to hold back second COVID-19 vaccine doses and urge states to give jobs to all over-65s in an effort to speed up rollout that has seen fewer than 3% of ...

US will ship previously withheld second doses to states, reversing its policy. Manufacturing has ramped up such that having too few doses to give booster shots to everyone who got a first shot is not a concern, HHS Secretary said. Just 9.27 million Americans have received a first dose and 29 million doses have been distributed. Doses went first to health care workers, many of whom refused the shots. Trump administration is now urging states to vaccinate anyone 65 or older Dr Anthony Fauci criticized original roll-out plans for being 'too rigid,' delaying the vaccination process. Mass vaccination sites are now opening up across the nation, including at Disneyland and Dodger Stadium in California and in New York

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-9138329/Trump-administration-release-2nd-covid-shot-doses-people-65-older.html>

Brussels probes member states' compliance with EU Covid vaccine strategy

Brussels is to probe EU governments' compliance with its centralised buying of coronavirus vaccines, as concerns grow that member states will seek to make their own deals to avoid possible supply shortages. The European Commission is to write to the bloc's 27 countries to ask them to provide "all the necessary transparency" over any dealings with drug companies with which it has done deals or held talks. Tensions have grown over whether the commission has secured sufficient quantities of the vaccines made by BioNTech/Pfizer and Moderna, the only two so far to have won approval from the EU medical regulator. Germany has already reportedly placed several bilateral orders, including 30m doses with BioNTech/Pfizer and 20m doses with CureVac, which — like BioNTech — is a German company. Cyprus has asked for extra jab supplies from its Mediterranean neighbour Israel, which has the highest vaccination rate in the world.

<https://www.ft.com/content/1d358d9e-a89e-4f26-a4d9-ba04ea78008e>

CDC to recommend states give Covid vaccine to anyone 65 and older

States should expand access to Covid-19 vaccines to everyone 65 and older, as well as any adult with an underlying health condition that might raise the risk for complications of Covid-19, members of Operation Warp Speed recommended Tuesday. The guidelines are intended to prompt faster distribution of the vaccines by making more people immediately eligible for vaccination, as well as expanding the potential locations where people can receive it. Of the more than 25 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine that have been delivered nationwide, just under 9 million shots had been put into Americans' arms as of Tuesday

<https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/cdc-recommend-states-give-covid-vaccine-anyone-65-older-n1253887>

COVID-19: Government 'to look at' prioritising shop workers for vaccine, says Matt Hancock

In England, the government will look "very carefully" at prioritising shop workers - as well as teachers and police officers - for COVID vaccines, Health Secretary Matt Hancock has told MPs. The government and NHS are currently aiming to offer the first dose of a coronavirus vaccine to 15 million of the most vulnerable people by 15 February.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-government-to-look-at-prioritising-shop-workers-for-vaccine-says-matt-hancock-12185865>

EU's Covid vaccine chief defends procurement scheme

The head of the EU's multibillion-euro coronavirus vaccine-procurement scheme has denied the wrong products have been bought and that the programme risks falling apart as member states seek to secure their own supplies. Sandra Gallina, who is leading the European Commission's programme to order more than 2bn doses of seven inoculations, said Brussels had built a portfolio that would yield sufficient quantities and timely delivery. Her defence, in an appearance before MEPs on the European Parliament's environment and public health committee on Tuesday, is a riposte to critics, notably in Germany, who say the bloc has not purchased sufficient quantities of the leading vaccines approved by the European medical regulator, made by BioNTech/Pfizer and Moderna.

<https://www.ft.com/content/119cb18b-6b8a-4588-9d4a-b2cdce5aa8f6>

Sir David Attenborough receives Covid-19 vaccine

Sir David Attenborough has become the latest well-known name to receive the Covid-19 vaccine, his representative has confirmed. The news about the 94-year-old natural historian comes a few days after it was revealed the Queen had been vaccinated. It's not known which vaccine Sir David has been given or exactly when he had it. The Perfect Planet host is one of several stars to receive the first of two doses of the vaccine. They include The Great British Bake Off's Prue Leith, actor Sir Ian McKellen, choreographer Lionel Blair, actor Brian Blessed and actress Dame Joan Collins.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-55630861>

Covid-19: All doctors should be offered first vaccine dose by mid-February, government says

The UK government has promised that every adult in the UK will be offered a covid-19 vaccination by the autumn as it set out plans to rapidly scale up its mass vaccination programme. The UK covid-19 vaccines delivery plan, published on Monday 11 January to coincide with the opening of seven new regional vaccination centres, said England will have capacity to vaccinate at least two million people per week by the end of January. This will be delivered across 206 hospital sites, 50 vaccination centres, and 1200 local vaccination sites run by primary and community care teams, it says. The expansion of capacity means that everyone will live within 10 miles of a vaccination centre, or, in the case of a small number of highly rural areas, have access to a mobile unit delivering vaccinations, the plan says.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n88>

Asia Today: India starts shipping COVID-19 vaccine to cities

India has started shipping COVID-19 vaccines to multiple cities, four days ahead of a nationwide inoculation drive. The first consignment of vaccines developed by the Serum Institute of India left the city of Pune on Tuesday. The vaccines rolled out from Serum Institute of India's facility in temperature-controlled trucks to the city's airport, from where they were loaded into private air carriers for distribution all over the country. Civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri called the shipping of vaccines a "momentous mission."

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/asia-today-zealand-requiring-virus-test-visitors-75191742>

India delivers COVID jabs for 'world's biggest vaccination drive'

Indian airlines have started delivering batches of COVID-19 vaccines across the country, getting ready for the launch of a campaign to offer shots to 1.3 billion people in what officials call the "world's biggest vaccination drive". The vaccines rolled out from the Serum Institute of India's facility on Tuesday in temperature-controlled trucks to the city's airport from where they were loaded into private air carriers for distribution all over the country.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/12/india-delivers-covid-jabs-for-worlds-biggest-vaccination-drive>

Malaysia's Pharmaniaga buys 14 million doses of China's Sinovac COVID vaccine

Malaysia Pharmaniaga Bhd has signed an agreement with China's Sinovac to purchase 14 million

doses of ready-to-fill COVID-19 vaccines and later to manufacture the vaccine domestically, it said on Tuesday. Pharmacia said in a bourse filing that the company will carry out a fill-and-finish process of the vaccine in Malaysia, and will subsequently enter into local manufacturing, under license from Sinovac for its technology and know-how. Group Managing Director Zulkarnain Md Eusope said the company has a monthly fill-and-finish capacity of two million doses and that Sinovac's vaccine will be the first to be manufactured in Malaysia.

https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-malaysia-sinovac-idUSKBN29H0M5?taid=5ffd7db64156da0001be2160&utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter

US COVID-19 vaccine strategy pivots to target those 65 and up

Operation Warp Speed announced today a major pivot in the US COVID-19 vaccine strategy, one that will see the release of all current vaccines in the national stockpile and a new effort to vaccinate all those 65 and up as quickly as possible. The changes bring the total number of doses that have been made available for use in the United States to roughly 38 million. "We are now at an important juncture in the vaccine program where we're ready for a transition," said Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar during an Operation Warp Speed press conference today.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/us-covid-19-vaccine-strategy-pivots-target-those-65-and>

U.S. plan to expand access to Covid-19 vaccine likely sets up new debacles

As health authorities across the country struggle to get Covid-19 vaccination programs up and running, outgoing Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar threw a new wrench into the works on Tuesday, telling states to expand priority access to tens of millions of additional people immediately. But it will be several months before there is enough vaccine available to meet that kind of demand. The move all but ensures the current narrative around the vaccine rollout — it's too slow — will shift, but not in a positive direction: The incoming Biden administration will likely face a groundswell of complaints about long lines, failed efforts to find vaccine supplies, and an inequitable distribution system as it tries to live up to its promise of seeing 100 million vaccine doses administered in the new president's first 100 days in office.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/12/u-s-plan-to-expand-access-to-covid-19-vaccine-likely-sets-up-new-debacles/>

ICE must provide Covid-19 vaccines to all detained migrants

After months of public health and political debates on vaccine prioritization for incarcerated populations, Covid-19 vaccination has begun in prisons and jails across the United States. Yet little is known about vaccination programs in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centers. Some states have said they will vaccinate incarcerated populations in Phase 1b or 2 of the vaccines rollout, either alongside correctional officers or after they have been vaccinated. The Federal Bureau of Prisons first planned to prioritize correctional officers, in line with recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. But after pushback from public health experts highlighted the growing rates of Covid-19 among inmates, the Bureau of Prisons began vaccinating staff members and selected prisoners simultaneously.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/12/ice-must-provide-covid-19-vaccines-to-all-detained-migrants/>

Partisan Exits

Google Launches \$3 Million Fund To Tackle Covid-19 Vaccine Misinformation

Amid an ongoing effort by Google to counter the deluge of misinformation and conspiracy theories about the coronavirus pandemic, the tech giant said Tuesday it will devote up to \$3 million to back fact-checking initiatives to counter vaccine misinformation, which it says has emerged as a particularly troubling phenomenon as global immunization efforts get underway.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/roberthart/2021/01/12/google-launches-3-million-fund-to-tackle-covid-19-vaccine-misinformation/>

COVID-19: 'Stubborn number' of people still refusing to follow coronavirus rules

A "stubborn number" of people are still refusing to follow the rules despite England entering a third coronavirus lockdown, the chairman of the National Police Chiefs' Council has said. Speaking at a Downing Street news conference, Martin Hewitt said forces across the UK have issued almost 45,000 fines for breaches of COVID-19 rules. Appearing alongside him was Home Secretary Priti Patel, who insisted the current restrictions were "very simple and clear" as well as being "tough enough".

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-stubborn-number-of-people-still-refusing-to-follow-coronavirus-rules-12186015>

Analysis: Boris's Sunday spin away from No 10 undermines UK Govt's tough lockdown message

Chris Whitty, the UK Government's chief medical brain, spent hours on the morning media shift urging people to "double down" on complying with the Covid-19 restrictions, Boris Johnson told people to "do the right thing" and stick to the rules.

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/19005541.analysis-boriss-sunday-spin-away-no-10-undermines-uk-govts-tough-lockdown-message/?ref=rss>

French far-right MEP investigated over lockdown party ruckus

The Paris prosecutor's office opened a preliminary investigation for "nighttime disturbance, public insults and death threats" after a December dinner party at French MEP Jérôme Rivière's Parisian apartment while the country was under strict lockdown. Rivière, an MEP for Marine Le Pen's National Rally (RN), invited a handful of guests to his apartment on December 13, according to French online outlet Mediapart, which first reported on the story Monday. Neighbors complained to him about the loud music coming out of his apartment. Videos published by Mediapart show the situation took a worse turn after a police patrol checked out the building. One of Rivière's guests was caught on camera filming a teenager who was filming him from outside, telling him: "This is for the headhunters. They're going to cut your hair. They're going to shave your head."

<https://www.politico.eu/article/french-far-right-mep-investigated-for-lockdown-party-ruckus/>

Coronavirus: Wetherspoon pub chain to remove lockdown-sceptic posters

The Wetherspoon pub chain says it will remove lockdown-sceptical posters from its venues as coronavirus continues to spread in parts of England. Last month bosses made pages from their company magazine, Wetherspoon News, available to download and put in pub windows. It was part of a campaign by chairman Tim Martin against government restrictions, which he said were "messing up the economy and also the health of the nation". One of the flyers was pictured still visible in some pub windows this month. It reproduces a news story from 20 November last year, which cast doubt on the dire warnings of government scientists about the threat posed by the second Covid-19 wave.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/covid-wetherspoon-pub-lockdown-poster-b1785537.html>

Boris Johnson blames China's traditional medicine for Covid pandemic

In a speech to world leaders at the One Planet Summit yesterday he attacked people who 'grind up the scales of a pangolin' in a bid to become more 'potent'.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9138117/Boris-Johnson-blames-Chinese-Covid-saying-pandemic-triggered-demented-traditional-medicine.html>

Mexico City restaurants open doors in defiance of COVID-19 ...

Several prominent restaurant chains and smaller eateries on Monday defied Mexico City's extension of a ban on dine-in service, in an act of civil disobedience against rules aimed at controlling a surge in COVID-19 cases. Fish restaurant Fisher's, steak house Sonora Grill and Potzollcalli, which sells a Mexican pork and corn soup, were among the outlets that flouted the ban. Between them, the three chains have dozens of outlets in the city area. Officials initially said a partial lockdown implemented on Dec. 19 would last until Jan. 11, but extended it after surging cases last week pushed hospitals to

their limit. Hospitals in the capital are 89% full, the highest peak of the pandemic, according to city data. Nationwide, Mexico has surpassed 1.5 million cases and 130,000 deaths.

<https://news.trust.org/item/20210112005243-4qak6>

The tourists who believe travel restrictions don't apply to them

As pandemic quarantines go, this might be the best: sprawling on a hotel balcony overlooking azure Caribbean waters as you bake gently in the sun. But it isn't enough for some. The past month has seen a slew of high-profile cases of tourists getting in trouble for breaking the rules while on a sun-and-sand vacation. In December, Skylar Mack, an American student, was jailed for two months when she flew to the Cayman Islands and, instead of quarantining for two weeks at her hotel as the law obliged her to do, popped out two days later to attend a jet ski competition in which her boyfriend was competing. In January, former British beauty queen and model Zara Holland and her boyfriend Elliott Love quarantined at her four-star hotel in Barbados for the required five days, before taking a second PCR test, as is required for travelers from high risk countries. So far, so good -- except that when Love's second test came back positive, rather than face further quarantine, the couple made a dash to the airport to try and catch a flight home.

<https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/covid-tourist-rule-breakers/index.html>

Continued Lockdown

Rent Strikes Loom at British Universities

National lockdowns across the U.K. have left many college students who returned home for the holidays stuck there, on the hook to pay rent for empty rooms back at school. The added — and in many cases, expensive — frustration for British students is fueling threats of rent strikes. What has angered them is timing. In December, the government said it would relax Covid restrictions during the Christmas holiday. Many students followed safety protocols put in place by the government and their universities and returned home.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-12/rent-strikes-students-push-for-refunds-discounts-during-u-k-lockdowns>

With England in lockdown 3, it's time ministers got it right on face masks

Faced with a new, more infectious variant of the virus and a vaccination programme that won't reach everyone until the autumn, the prime minister has suggested the government may have to tighten restrictions during England's third lockdown. But ministers already have a simple tool at their disposal. Getting face masks right is one of the most important things we can do now to stop the spread of Covid-19. In England, the attitude to face masks has been inconsistent at best and negligent at worst. Masks are required in shared public spaces such as supermarkets, though many workers have complained that customers aren't wearing them, and enforcement has largely fallen on individual stores. In schools, the government inexplicably made masks mandatory in corridors but not in classrooms. To reduce transmission as much as possible, they should be worn throughout the school day.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jan/12/england-lockdown-3-government-face-masks-reduce-covid-transmission>

Merkel Warns Germany May Need Ten Week Lockdown Extension

German Chancellor Angela Merkel warned that the nation's lockdown may need to be extended due to risks posed by the Covid-19 variant from the U.K. Bloomberg's Arne Delfs reports on "Bloomberg Markets: European Close."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/videos/2021-01-12/merkel-warns-germany-may-need-ten-week-lockdown-extension-video>

Germany and Netherlands likely to extend Covid lockdowns

Germany's tough anti-Covid measures are likely to last a further eight to 10 weeks, Angela Merkel has warned, while the Dutch prime minister, Mark Rutte, has extended the Netherlands' national lockdown into next month. As Europe struggles to stem the number of cases and deaths and concerns mount about the new, more contagious UK variant, the German chancellor said infections could rise 10-fold by Easter if the country did not succeed in containing the virus's spread. Germany's lockdown, under which schools and non-essential shops and services have closed, was due to last until 31 January, but Merkel reportedly told a working group of her Christian Democratic Union: "We still need eight to 10 weeks of hard measures." The country has been recording record daily case numbers and deaths in the 900-1,000 range but the figures remain skewed due to under-reporting over the Christmas holiday and a true picture is not expected to be available until 17 January.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/12/germany-and-netherlands-likely-to-extend-covid-lockdowns>

Boris Johnson gathers Cabinet amid fears lockdown could get tighter

Boris Johnson is said to be considering tightening the coronavirus lockdown rules in England amid a surge in cases. Here are some of the options Mr Johnson could consider: Curbs on click and collect - At the moment non-essential shops are allowed to offer click and collect services but there are concerns that this still results in too much interaction between different households. The Government could opt to ban non-essential shops from offering click and collect services, restricting it to just supermarkets and other essential shops. Nicola Sturgeon said today she is considering such a move in Scotland. Takeaways - Restaurants are not allowed to physically open during lockdown but they are allowed to offer takeaway food. However, there are rising worries that picking up takeaway food is also leading to too many households mixing while they wait for food to be prepared. Rules could therefore be tightened to stop people waiting inside restaurants. Ms Sturgeon also said this is under consideration in Scotland. - Closing more work places

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9137859/amp/Boris-Johnson-gathers-Cabinet-amid-fears-lockdown-tighter.html>

Double-Dip Recession Beckons in Europe as Lockdowns Drag On

The euro-area economy is poised to shrink again at the start of this year as the resurgent pandemic plunges the region into a double-dip recession. Analysts at banks including JPMorgan Chase & Co. and UBS Group AG are downgrading forecasts to account for renewed lockdowns -- in some places tougher than ever -- and the prospect that the new coronavirus variant ravaging the U.K. will do the same on the continent. Add vaccination delays to trade disruptions because of Brexit, and the scene is set for a second straight quarter of falling gross domestic product. That would echo the downturn at the start of 2020, even if less severe, and increase pressure on indebted governments and the European Central Bank, which meets to set policy next week, to provide more financial support.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-12/euro-area-heads-for-double-dip-recession-as-lockdowns-drag-on>

Bubbles will be allowed if Covid lockdown tightens up

People living alone or with childcare needs would still be able to form a support bubble with one other household in a tougher lockdown, Matt Hancock has promised. However, the health secretary said that exercising outside with another person from a separate household could be banned if people kept breaching the exemption. Mr Hancock and Boris Johnson said that the rules would be tightened if necessary. The prime minister warned yesterday against "false complacency".

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/bubbles-will-be-allowed-if-covid-lockdown-tightens-up-fk8fcb6vs>

Covid in Scotland: Lockdown likely to extend to February

The first minister says there may not be any lifting of current lockdown restrictions at the end of January. Nicola Sturgeon said that despite early signs of hope that the situation may be stabilising,

restrictions would still be needed to stop coronavirus running "amok". She said it was very unlikely there would be any wholesale change to lockdown when measures are reviewed.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-scotland-55636820>

Lockdown leading to 'very difficult period' for UK economy, warns Bank governor

The UK economy is facing its "darkest hour" due the latest Covid-19 lockdown, which is likely to delay the recovery, the Bank of England governor has warned. In comments on Tuesday that echoed warnings from the chancellor, Rishi Sunak a day earlier that the economy "is going to get worse before it gets better", Bailey said the UK would bounce back, but only after the lockdown had ended and concerns about the spread of the virus had receded. Referencing Winston Churchill's use of the phrase in 1940 following the evacuation of Dunkirk, he said: "There's an old saying about the darkest hour is the one before dawn."

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jan/12/lockdown-leading-to-very-difficult-period-for-uk-economy-warns-bank-governor>

Lockdown fines 'increasingly likely' in police crackdown, top officer warns

Lockdown rule-breakers are 'increasingly likely' to face fines as forces move 'more quickly' to enforce Covid restrictions, Britain's most senior police officer has warned. Metropolitan Police Commissioner Dame Cressida Dick said it is 'preposterous' that anyone could be unaware of the stringent measures designed to curb Covid cases. Writing in The Times, she said: 'It is preposterous to me that anyone could be unaware of our duty to do all we can to stop the spread of the virus. 'We have been clear that those who breach Covid-19 legislation are increasingly likely to face fines.'

<https://metro.co.uk/2021/01/12/lockdown-fines-increasingly-likely-in-police-crackdown-top-officer-warns-13887371/>

UK retailers call for police help to enforce mask rules

British retailers called on the police to help enforce the wearing of masks to limit the spread of COVID-19, with one of the biggest supermarkets saying on Monday it would no longer allow entry to those flouting the rules. With infection numbers rising sharply the UK government has expressed concern about the spread of the virus in supermarkets, with people breaching rules by not wearing masks while shopping in them. Non-essential retail, restaurants and bars are shut across Britain, leading to a high level of demand for supermarkets and other food stores. "People have got to follow the guidance in supermarkets, people need to be keeping their distance, making sure that they're wearing masks, doing the right thing," Prime Minister Boris Johnson told reporters.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-britain-supermarkets/update-4-uk-retailers-call-for-police-help-to-enforce-mask-rules-idUSL8N2JM1EK>

Dutch government expected to extend lockdown by three weeks

The Dutch government is expected to announce a three-week extension of COVID-19 lockdown measures on Tuesday evening, national broadcaster NOS reported. Prime Minister Mark Rutte was scheduled to announce the latest social curbs to fight the coronavirus pandemic during a live press conference at 7 p.m.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-netherlands/dutch-government-expected-to-extend-lockdown-by-three-weeks-idUSL8N2JN3U6>

Lockdown impact on Germany economy not too severe - Scholz

The impact of Germany's current lockdown on the economy is not too severe and Berlin will use its fiscal firepower, which is adequate, where support is needed, Finance Minister Olaf Scholz said on Tuesday. Berlin is forecasting economic growth to rebound by 4.4% this year after an estimated 5.5% contraction in 2020, though some private forecasters regard the official outlook as optimistic given the country is once again in grip of lockdowns. Last month, Germany's Ifo institute cut its 2021 growth forecast to 4.2% from 5.1%. Germany unveiled a 130-billion euro stimulus package last June, the centrepiece of a fiscal response to COVID-19 that is among the largest of any Western

nation.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-scholz/lockdown-impact-on-germany-economy-not-too-severe-scholz-idUSKBN29H1I2>

Merkel sees coronavirus lockdown until early April: Bild

Germany plans to tighten controls on people entering the country as part of efforts to bring under control a surge in coronavirus cases which is leading to record numbers of deaths in the European Union's most populous country. The proposal, due to be approved by ministers on Wednesday, will require people arriving from countries with high case loads or where a new, more virulent strain of the virus is circulating to take a test for the disease. Mobile phone operators will have to send information to arriving passengers as soon as their phones are switched on in Germany after a period of absence, according to the proposal, seen by Reuters.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-germany-merkel/merkel-sees-coronavirus-lockdown-until-early-april-bild-idUSKBN29H14T>

UK police to get tougher on COVID lockdown rulebreakers

British police will get tougher on those who flout rules aimed at stopping the spread of COVID-19 and stricter measures could be brought in, the country's top officer and the minister responsible for policing said on Tuesday. Hit by a new highly transmissible strain of the coronavirus, Britain is battling a surge in new infections, hospitalisations and deaths. In parts of London, one in 20 people are now thought to have the disease.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain/uk-police-to-get-tougher-on-covid-lockdown-rulebreakers-idUSKBN29H00L>

Scientific Viewpoint

Australia's chief medical officer defends AstraZeneca's Covid vaccine amid efficacy concerns

Australia's chief medical officer Professor Paul Kelly and infectious diseases experts have defended securing 54m doses of a Covid-19 vaccine made by Oxford University and pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca, amid concerns the vaccine will not be effective enough to achieve herd immunity. The president of the Australian and New Zealand Society for Immunology, Prof Stephen Turner, told Nine media that Australia should halt the AstraZeneca vaccine rollout because it has "lower efficacy". "You cannot rely on it to establish herd immunity," he said. The head of the Western Australian branch of the Australian Medical Association, Dr Andrew Miller, who is an anaesthetist, echoed the comments to the Australian, saying: "We need to pause and look at what the outcomes are going to be before we take any further steps."

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jan/13/australias-chief-medical-officer-defends-astrazenecas-covid-vaccine-amid-efficacy-concerns>

Oral COVID-19 vaccine beckons, as ImmunityBio licenses iosBio tech

ImmunityBio has licensed technology underpinning a COVID-19 vaccine that could be administered orally rather than by injection from UK biotech iosBio. Approvals for injectable vaccines for COVID-19 are starting to build, but non-injectables like oral and intranasal vaccines could be required if the pandemic is to be fought across all areas of the globe, according to Wayne Channon, the UK firm's chairman. "Non-injectables remove the need for health professional-led immunisation programmes, making widespread vaccine roll-outs quicker and easier and more affordable," Channon told pharmaphorum.

<https://pharmaphorum.com/news/oral-covid-19-vaccine-beckons-as-immunitybio-licenses-iosbio-tech/>

How can countries stretch COVID vaccine supplies? Scientists are divided over dosing strategies

Amid skyrocketing coronavirus infections, some countries are attempting to stretch limited supplies of COVID-19 vaccines by reducing doses or changing vaccination schedules from those shown to be effective in clinical trials. But data are scarce on the impact of such measures, and scientists are split over whether they are worth the risks. "It might be fine," says virologist Dan Barouch at Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts. "But we should stick with what's been proven to work, because we want it to work. We don't want to be creative for some unclear benefit and then have an unexpected problem."

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-00001-6>

A simple Fitbit could detect Covid-19 days before symptoms appear

A Fitbit device may be able to give its wearer an early warning over a coronavirus infection before symptoms begin to appear. That's the thesis from a group of researchers at Stanford University who are currently studying whether wearable technology could help fight the pandemic. Modern Fitbit devices (as well as similar gadgets made by Apple and Garmin) track heart rates and could indicate abnormalities that show up after infection. Although a Covid-19 victim may not show obvious symptoms – such as a cough or loss of smell – for up to five days there is a 'presymptomatic' period. During this phase, their body may give off signals that suggest they caught the virus.

<https://metro.co.uk/2021/01/12/a-simple-fitbit-could-detect-covid-19-days-before-symptoms-appear-13889200/?ico=related-posts>

Scientists try to understand COVID-19 variant

The coronavirus is changing and taking on new characteristics that can make it harder to fight. New variants found in South Africa and the UK are more contagious, and it's unclear if they are more deadly.

<https://www.dw.com/en/scientists-try-to-understand-covid-19-variant/av-56205611>

Pfizer Says It Can Quickly Develop Vaccines for Covid-19 Variants

The Big Pharma company Pfizer is digging in for a long fight against Covid-19. In an interview on Tuesday morning, the company's chief scientific officer, Mikael Dolsten, said that Pfizer (ticker: PFE) is working on a more stable formulation of its Covid-19 vaccine that will be easier to distribute, and is thinking through how to update the vaccine if new strains of the virus emerge that evade the current version. Dolsten said that the Covid-19 problem, and the problem of new coronaviruses in general, isn't going away.

<https://www.barrons.com/articles/pfizer-is-ready-for-a-long-battle-against-covid-19-51610474547>

Bacteria in your GUT 'affects Covid-19 severity'

South Korean study reviewed pre-existing research on role of gut microbiome Hong Kong-based scientists examined blood and stool samples from patients Both studies indicate a gut microbe imbalance is key in severe Covid-19

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-9137823/Bacteria-GUT-affects-Covid-19-severity.html>

Japan's Chugai soars nearly 6% after UK says its drug reduces hospital time for Covid patients

The U.K. government said patients receiving the drugs, typically used to treat rheumatoid arthritis, "left intensive care between 7 to 10 days earlier on average." A government-funded clinical trial showed tocilizumab was among two drugs that "reduced the relative risk of death by 24% when administered to patients within 24 hours of entering intensive care." Shares of Chugai closed 5.91% higher on Tuesday. Earlier in the session, Chugai's stock soared as much as 16.26%.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/01/12/chugai-soars-after-uk-says-its-drug-is-effective-for-covid-treatment.html>

WHO experts to visit Wuhan in Covid-19 origins probe, says China

World Health Organisation experts will visit the city of Wuhan, where the coronavirus was first

detected in late 2019, at the start of their investigation into the origins of the pandemic, China has said. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said the experts will arrive in Wuhan on Thursday. Other details of their schedule have not been announced and the central government's National Health Commission offered no further information. The visit has been expected for months. WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus expressed frustration last week that arrangements were taking so long to finalise.

<https://www.irishnews.com/news/worldnews/2021/01/12/news/who-experts-to-visit-wuhan-in-covid-19-origins-probe-says-china-2184781/>

Third time's the charm? Brazil scales back efficacy claims for COVID-19 vaccine from China

A more detailed analysis that included trial participants who tested positive but had symptoms so mild they did not seek help found 167 cases of COVID-19 in the placebo group and 85 in people who received the vaccine, for an estimated efficacy of 50.34%. Even allowing for statistical uncertainties, that is considerably below the greater than 90% efficacies of three other already authorized COVID-19 vaccines. But Esper Kallas, a study investigator based at the University of São Paulo's main campus who spoke at the press conference, notes that because definitions of a positive case have varied among trials, "There may not be an accurate comparability between the studies." In the Brazil trial, the liberal definition of a case "put things to the most difficult test," said Ricardo Palácios of Butantan, who served as the clinical director of the study. "It is like comparing someone who runs a kilometer on paved ground versus someone running 1 kilometer with obstacles."

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2021/01/third-time-s-charm-brazil-scales-back-efficacy-claims-covid-19-vaccine-china>

US child COVID hospital rates vary widely by state, time

Rates of pediatric COVID-19 hospitalizations have varied dramatically across US states and more than tripled from May to November, raising concerns that specialized medical resources for children may not be available at the time and place they are needed, according to a research letter published yesterday in JAMA Pediatrics. A team led by researchers from the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis used state-level hospitalization data and US Census information to assess COVID-19 hospitalization trends among patients 19 years and younger in 22 states. From May 15 to Nov 15, 2020, a total of 301,102 Americans were hospitalized with COVID-19, 5,364 of them children. In mid-May, the average cumulative hospitalization rate per 100,000 children was 2.0, which increased to 7.2 by mid-November.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/us-child-covid-hospital-rates-vary-widely-state-time>

Fierce JPM Week: Will the first COVID-19 vaccines deter future launches? Not at all, experts say

Typically in drug and vaccine development, first-to-market products command a big advantage that can deter follow-up products. Not so with COVID-19 vaccines, experts said Tuesday. There's still plenty of need for new entrants. Even as the first COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and AstraZeneca are deploying in the U.S. and other countries, more programs will need to succeed to vaccinate the entire world, Swati Gupta, Ph.D., vice president and head of emerging infectious diseases and scientific strategy at IAVI, said on a Fierce JPM Week panel. IAVI, a nonprofit research group, is partnered with Merck & Co. on an early-stage candidate based on the same technology used in Merck's Ebola vaccine. The ongoing COVID-19 vaccine launches will hopefully "help us to end the acute phase of the pandemic," Gupta said, but, because COVID-19 is likely to become endemic, "we also need to plan for longer-term management of the disease."

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/as-first-covid-19-vaccines-roll-out-a-second-wave-candidates-waiting-wings>

JPM: Gilead's Veklury, now used in half of hospitalized U.S. COVID-19 patients, delivers

multibillion-dollar revenue bump

Gilead Sciences unveiled a surprise Monday: It enjoyed a bigger-than-expected sales boost from COVID-19 therapy Veklury, better known as remdesivir. But what changed since October, when Gilead last predicted 2020 sales? Hospitalizations are up fourfold, for one—and Veklury use is way up, too. “One in two patients hospitalized now is treated with Veklury in the United States,” CEO Dan O’Day said during Gilead’s Monday presentation at the annual J.P. Morgan healthcare conference, noting that Veklury use in hospitalized COVID-19 patients is up from 30% in October to around 50% to 60% today.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/jpm-gilead-s-veklury-now-used-half-hospitalized-u-s-covid-patients-delivers-big-revenue-bump>

JPM: 'Very soon,' says Johnson & Johnson CEO as world waits for its COVID-19 vaccine data

Johnson & Johnson's one-dose COVID-19 vaccine regimen could jump-start an immunization push that's faltering in spite of the millions of doses Pfizer, BioNTech, AstraZeneca and Moderna are rolling out around the world. And the J&J shot is on the verge of its next big step forward. The pharma giant is in the “final stages” of data analysis for its phase 3 trial, CEO Alex Gorsky said Monday at the annual J.P. Morgan healthcare conference. The company hopes “to have that information very soon,” he added.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/jpm-j-j-hopes-to-share-phase-3-coronavirus-vaccine-data-very-soon-ceo-says>

JPM: Regeneron execs say 'it's a problem' how few COVID-19 patients are getting antibody treatments

To Regeneron, there’s no question about it: “We as a society have to do a much better job” of getting antibody therapies—such as the company’s own—to patients, R&D chief George Yancopoulos said Monday at the J.P. Morgan Healthcare Conference. Like Eli Lilly’s single-antibody treatment, Regeneron’s antibody cocktail bears an emergency use authorization in mild-to-moderate COVID-19 patients at least 12 years of age who aren't hospitalized but are at high risk of progressing to severe COVID-19. But while the treatments are available, they’re not seeing anywhere near the level of use they would be if all eligible patients were receiving them. And “it’s a problem,” Yancopoulos said. “Every day, there are hundreds of thousands of people getting infected that fit the profile where they could benefit from the antibody therapies. They could slow down very significantly the progression of these people into hospitals and into more severe states.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/jpm-regeneron-exec-say-it-s-a-problem-how-few-covid-19-patients-are-getting-antibody>

Immunological characteristics govern the transition of COVID-19 to endemicity

We are currently faced with the question of how the CoV-2 severity may change in the years ahead. Our analysis of immunological and epidemiological data on endemic human coronaviruses (HCoVs) shows that infection-blocking immunity wanes rapidly, but disease-reducing immunity is long-lived. Our model, incorporating these components of immunity, recapitulates both the current severity of CoV-2 and the benign nature of HCoVs, suggesting that once the endemic phase is reached and primary exposure is in childhood, CoV-2 may be no more virulent than the common cold. We predict a different outcome for an emergent coronavirus that causes severe disease in children. These results reinforce the importance of behavioral containment during pandemic vaccine rollout, while prompting us to evaluate scenarios for continuing vaccination in the endemic phase.

<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/early/2021/01/11/science.abe6522>

Japan has found a new Covid variant. Here's how it compares to virus strains in the UK, South Africa

The identification of a new Covid variant comes as countries scramble to contain two other

contagious strains that have emerged in the U.K. and South Africa. Public health experts have expressed concern the fresh strains could pose a threat to inoculation efforts. In recent weeks, optimism about the mass rollout of coronavirus vaccines appears to have been tempered by the resurgent rate of virus spread worldwide.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/11/japan-covid-variant-how-it-compares-to-strains-in-uk-south-africa.html>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Covid-19 cases 'unlikely to peak for weeks'

Pressure on the NHS is unlikely to peak until next month as cases surge far beyond London, a health service chief has claimed. The comments by Chris Hopson, chief executive of NHS Providers, came as <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/covid-19-cases-unlikely-to-peak-for-weeks-jcxgttsws>

UK Covid-19 death toll rises by 1,243 in second deadliest day of pandemic so far

The UK has recorded its second deadliest day since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, with a further 1,243 lives lost to the virus. The Department of Health also confirmed that 45,533 people had tested positive for the virus in 24 hours. Only once, last Friday, has the daily death toll been higher, when 1,325 fatalities were announced. It brings the UK's official coronavirus death toll to 83,203. There have been 6,898 Covid deaths in the past seven days - a 45 per cent rise compared to the previous week. It comes as NHS staff struggle to cope with the surge in Covid-19 hospital admissions and Home Secretary Priti Patel backs police forces taking a tough stance on rule breakers.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/breaking-uk-covid-19-death-23306489>

3rd House lawmaker tests positive for COVID-19 after lockdown during Capitol attack

A third House lawmaker has tested positive for COVID-19 after being exposed to the virus while in lockdown with some Republican members who refused to wear masks during the attack on the Capitol last week, bringing the total number who have so far tested positive to three. The announcements from Democratic Representatives Brad Schneider, Bonnie Watson Coleman and Pramila Jayapal come days after the attending physician for the Capitol warned members they may have been "exposed to another occupant with coronavirus infection." Congressman Brad Schneider announced he had tested positive for COVID-19 in a statement on Tuesday, and blamed Republicans for spreading the virus.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/brad-schneider-pramila-jayapal-bonnie-watson-coleman-covid-19-capitol-riots/>

Third Democrat tests positive for COVID after riot lockdown

Democrats have proposed a \$1,000 a day fine on lawmakers who refuse to wear masks while in the Capitol complex. Rep. Debbie Dingell is leading the charge on the issue and blasted Republicans for 'laughing off' requests to wear one. Democratic Rep. Brad Schneider became the third lawmaker to test positive for COVID after being in lockdown with lawmakers last week. About 100 lawmakers were huddled in a poorly-ventilated room together during the MAGA riot on the Capitol with many Republicans refusing to wearing masks. He slammed Republicans: 'I was forced to spend several hours in a secure but confined location with dozens of other Members of Congress,' he said. 'Several Republican lawmakers in the room adamantly refused to wear a mask' He is isolating at home in Illinois and not yet showing symptoms. Democratic Rep. Pramila Jayapal, 55, also tested positive for COVID-19. And Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman, 75, announced earlier on Monday that she had tested positive for the coronavirus and was suffering mild symptoms. Both Jayapal and Coleman blame their infections on being trapped with Republicans who refused to wear face masks Jayapal says she believes it will turn out to be a 'superspreader event'

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9139297/Third-Democrat-tests-positive-COVID-riot-lockdown.html>

S.Korea daily virus cases under 500 for first time since record highs in Dec -KDCA

South Korea reported fewer than 500 new coronavirus infections on Monday for the first time since record high daily case numbers over the Christmas holiday period. The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) reported 451 new cases as of midnight on Sunday, driven by a lull in testing as well as an apparent easing in infections. The country reported a record 1,241 cases in one day during the Christmas holiday, the peak of the country's largest wave of infections yet. South Korea stopped short of a complete lockdown or stay-at-home order, but has imposed unprecedented restrictions for weeks, including banning private gatherings of more than four people. In the capital Seoul and surrounding areas a number of high-risk businesses such as bars and gyms were ordered to close and coffee shops can only offer takeaway service.

<https://www.theguardian.pe.ca/news/skorea-daily-virus-cases-under-500-for-first-time-since-record-highs-in-dec-kdca-539337/>

3 new Covid-19 strains that are leading to fresh lockdowns

Japan's health ministry has declared a new coronavirus variant in the country. The new strain features 12 mutations, including one that was found in England and South Africa. Both the UK variant — which is significantly more transmissible — and a second strain in South Africa have raised concerns about whether a vaccine-resistant version could eventually develop.

<https://www.khaleejtimes.com/coronavirus-pandemic/3-new-covid-19-strains-that-are-leading-to-fresh-lockdowns>

WA coronavirus cases will likely end in snap lockdown, Chief Health Officer warns

The "hard and fast" snap lockdown used to manage COVID-19 outbreaks in other states is the "likely outcome" if WA were to also experience an outbreak, the state's Chief Health Officer Andrew Robertson says. Dr Robertson said there appeared to be a "very good rationale" for cities to impose hard, snap lockdowns in the event of a coronavirus outbreak. "It would depend ... on the circumstances," Dr Robertson told ABC Radio Perth. "How many cases we had, how much community spread, whether it's one outbreak.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-01-12/wa-coronavirus-cases-will-likely-end-in-snap-lockdown/13050386>

Australia records handful of new coronavirus cases as national frictions grow

Australia recorded a handful of new locally acquired coronavirus cases on Tuesday, with frictions increasing between state leaders over the best approach to manage and contain the outbreaks. The northern state of Queensland recorded one new case, in the quarantined partner of a cleaner who was found to have the highly infectious UK strain last week, which triggered a three-day lockdown over the weekend to Monday. The country's most populous state of New South Wales logged five new locally acquired infections, including two mystery cases that caused the emergency department at Sydney's Mount Druitt hospital to close for deep cleaning on Monday.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-australia/australia-records-handful-of-new-coronavirus-cases-as-national-frictions-grow-idUSL1N2JN03H>

French new COVID cases at seven-week high

France's new COVID-19 infections are on average increasing by more than 18,000 a day, a seven-week high, and the number of people hospitalised is rising again as the country grapples with the more infectious variant of the virus first found in Britain. These latest trends, published on Monday, will be discussed in the coming days by the government which is pondering whether to impose a third national lockdown and extend a 6 pm curfew, now enforced in some areas, to all of France.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-france-infections/french-new-covid-cases-at-seven-week-high-idUSKBN29G2I3>

New Austrian COVID cluster: mainly British group on ski teacher course

Austria said on Tuesday it has identified a new cluster of 17 COVID-19 cases, a mainly British group on a ski teacher training course, despite the country being on lockdown and having banned flights from Britain over fears of a new coronavirus variant. The Alpine province of Tyrol, which suffered

Austria's worst outbreak to date at the ski resort of Ischgl, said the cluster in the town of Jochberg was suspected to be of the new, more infectious variant first pinpointed in Britain in September that has spread to dozens of countries including Austria. The fact such a training course was allowed to happen despite lockdown restrictions, which include closing schools to all but daycare, stunned many Austrians.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-austria-britain/new-austrian-covid-cluster-mainly-british-group-on-ski-teacher-course-idUSKBN29H1RR>

Lebanon tightens lockdown, imposes 24-hour curfew, as hospitals buckle

Lebanon announced a tightening of its lockdown on Monday, introducing a 24-hour curfew from Thursday as COVID-19 infections overwhelm its medical system. The new all-day curfew starts at 5 a.m. (0300 GMT) on Thursday and ends at 5 a.m. on Jan. 25, a statement by the Supreme Defense Council said. Lebanon last week ordered a three-week lockdown until Feb. 2 that included a nighttime curfew from 6 p.m. to 5 a.m. But tighter measures were now necessary as hospitals run out of capacity to treat critically ill patients, President Michel Aoun said in the statement.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-lebanon/lebanon-tightens-lockdown-imposes-24-hour-curfew-as-hospitals-buckle-idUSL1N2JM1XH>

As Canada battles rising COVID-19 cases, lack of sick leave fuels transmission

As Canadian provinces struggle to contain rising COVID-19 infections, a lack of adequate paid sick leave for front-line workers is fuelling transmission, doctors and advocates say. While political leaders and health officials advise sick people to stay home, many people can't afford to. Some 58% of workers in Canada lack enough paid sick leave, according to the Decent Work and Health Network, and that percentage rises as wages drop. One morning last spring, 67-year-old part-time support worker Susan woke up feeling "a hurt in my heart like a knife." She went to work at a Toronto rehabilitation home anyway -- she said it was the only way to pay the bills. Susan, who is using an pseudonym for fear of professional repercussions, had no sick days and couldn't afford to miss even a day's pay.

https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-canada-sickleave-idUSKBN29H1AW?taid=5ffd98ae5dad480001ae0dea&utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter

COVID surges press health systems in several nations

Fresh surges in COVID-19 activity triggered strengthened measures in several parts of the world, as soaring death levels in part of England led to the use of a temporary morgue. Health officials expected a surge of cases from holiday gatherings, but the emergence of at least two more transmissible variants is amplifying new surges in part of Europe and South Africa, as more countries brace for their potential impact. Daily cases in the United Kingdom are down bit from record highs reported last week, but hospitals in the hardest-hit areas are struggling, and deaths—which typically lag cases—are up 45.6% over the last 7 days, according to the latest government data.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/covid-surges-press-health-systems-several-nations>

New Lockdown

Lockdown adds to suffering of vulnerable Lebanese: charity

A total lockdown set to start this week will exacerbate the suffering of vulnerable Lebanese families struggling to make ends meet unless the government offers assistance, a charity has warned. "We recognise the importance of taking thorough measures... but we are very concerned that vulnerable families and their children will be left to deal with a catastrophe on their own," Jennifer Moorehead, Save the Children's Lebanon director, said late Monday. Lebanon, a country of more than six million, is grappling with its worst economic downturn since the 1975-1990 war.

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210112-lockdown-adds-to-suffering-of-vulnerable-lebanese-charity>

Coronavirus: China locks down a third city and moves 20,000 from new COVID-19 epicentre to isolation

Chinese authorities locked down the city of Langfang in Hebei Province near Beijing on Tuesday, putting its 4.9million residents under quarantine for seven days while conducting mass testing.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9137871/amp/Coronavirus-China-locks-city-moves-20-000-new-COVID-19-epicentre-isolation.html>

Millions in China lockdown over new COVID-19 threat

China imposed new coronavirus curbs in areas near Beijing on Tuesday, putting 4.9 million people under lockdown as new infections raised worries about a second wave in a country that has mostly contained the disease. Lauren Anthony reports.

<https://www.reuters.com/video/watch/idOVDUWMOKR>

Another Chinese city goes into lockdown amid new COVID-19 threat

The Chinese city of Langfang near Beijing went into lockdown on Tuesday as new coronavirus infections raised worries about a second wave in a country that has mostly contained COVID-19. The number of new cases in mainland China reported on Tuesday remained a small fraction of those seen at the height of the outbreak in early 2020. However, authorities are implementing strict curbs whenever new cases emerge. The National Health Commission reported 55 new cases on Tuesday, down from 103 on Monday. Hebei province, which surrounds Beijing, accounted for 40 of the 42 locally transmitted infections. In a village in the south of Beijing that shares a border with Hebei, residents were stopping vehicles and asking to see health-tracking codes on mobile phones.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-china/another-chinese-city-goes-into-lockdown-amid-new-covid-19-threat-idUSKBN29H07C>