

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

18th Jan 2021

News Highlights

Death toll crosses the two million mark

Recent days saw the number of Covid-19 fatalities surpass two million worldwide. [This milestone was reached as the death toll in European countries soared and the Covid-19 crisis deepened in the Americas.](#) The World Health Organization convened a sixth meeting of its emergency committee. It discussed concerns over different variants of the novel coronavirus and vaccine rollout, emphasizing the need for equitable distribution and its goal of inoculating a high percent of each population.

UK could ease restrictions in March as vaccine rollout continues

[The National Health Service chief executive said that England is delivering 140 Covid vaccinations a minute.](#) The UK government said it intended to vaccinate fifteen million people by mid-February and to offer a first vaccine dose to every adult by September. Ten mass vaccination centres are due to open in England today. [Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said the government hopes to lift some restrictions by March.](#)

Biden unveils vaccine distribution plan

President-elect Joe Biden has launched a five-step vaccine distribution plan for the U.S. and named David Kessler as the head of the successor agency to Operation Warp Speed. [His strategy includes mobilising the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Guard to scale up the vaccination rollout.](#) It will use a network of 100 federally-supported distribution centres and thousands of immunisation sites at the community level. Biden has earmarked U.S.\$40 billion to fight the pandemic, including U.S.\$20 billion to boost immunisation efforts.

India kicks off vaccination campaign

On Saturday, India launched its vaccination campaign. A group of healthcare workers and sanitation workers became the first in the country to receive their first dose. ['We are launching the world's biggest vaccination drive and it shows the world our capability.'](#) said Prime Minister Narendra Modi. However, he urged continued vigilance and adherence to safety measures as well as to beware of 'rumours about the safety of vaccines.'

Lockdown Exit

Despite Trump administration promise, government has no more 'reserve' 2nd vaccine doses

Hopes of a surge in Covid-19 vaccine shipments under a new policy to release second doses held in reserve appear to be evaporating -- with the revelation that those doses have already been distributed, contrary to recent indications by the Trump administration. A senior administration official told CNN that when the administration announced that it would be releasing reserved doses Friday, many of those reserves had already been released into the system starting last year as production was ramping up. When Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar was asked Friday

whether there is in fact a reserve of second doses left to release, he said, "No. There's not a reserve stockpile."

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/15/politics/coronavirus-vaccine-reserve-dose/index.html>

Coronavirus in London: 1,300-body mortuary opens

A temporary mortuary that can hold up to 1,300 bodies has been opened in Ruislip, west London, as the capital faces a growing coronavirus death toll. London recently exceeded 10,000 Covid-related deaths, a figure mayor Sadiq Khan described as "heartbreaking". Four temporary mortuary sites were set up in London during the first wave of coronavirus, but were put on standby. The use of the Ruislip site has been called "a visual, sobering reminder" of the continuing cost of the pandemic. Westminster City Council chief executive Stuart Love, who is leading the London-wide response, added: "We want to give people hope but we are not there yet. "From my point of view, we have built this really hoping it doesn't get used to its capacity.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-55670469>

African Union vaccines to be allocated according to population

Millions of coronavirus vaccine doses secured by the African Union (AU) will be allocated according to countries' population size, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said on Friday. Ramaphosa, who is the current AU chairman, said on Wednesday that vaccines from Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca would be available this year, but he did not specify how much each African country would get. No African countries have begun large-scale coronavirus vaccination campaigns and the AU's 270 million shots, if administered two per person, would still only cover around 10% of the continent's 1.3 billion people.

<https://www.cnbcfranca.com/article/2021/01/15/african-union-vaccines-to-be-allocated-according-to-population/>

Scotland Covid vaccine plan that included exact numbers taken offline

Scotland's plan for the distribution of coronavirus vaccinations has been taken offline after the UK government raised concerns that the document included sensitive details about vaccine supply. The plan, which was published on Wednesday evening but removed by Thursday morning, set out the exact numbers of vaccines from Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Moderna the Scottish government expected to receive on a weekly basis up to the end of May, revealing two weeks when no AstraZeneca vaccine would be available. The UK government is reportedly furious at the publication of such detailed figures, amid anxieties it could lead to suppliers coming under pressure from other countries.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/14/scotland-covid-vaccine-plan-that-included-exact-numbers-taken-offline>

India launches vaccine drive as scepticism mounts

Narendra Modi has kicked off one of the world's most ambitious inoculation drives in the midst of growing vaccine scepticism over the contentious approval of an indigenously developed jab. The Indian prime minister launched the campaign with an emotional live address on Saturday, saying "the nation has been desperately waiting for this moment" and warned against "false propaganda" about vaccine safety. India, a country of 1.4bn people, has the world's second-highest number of coronavirus infections at 10.5m. Lockdowns have had limited effect in controlling the spread of the virus and contact tracing has faltered, making a successful inoculation programme essential. The first phase of the vaccination rollout targets 30m healthcare and frontline workers, with the goal of inoculating 300m people by July.

<https://www.ft.com/content/491573e6-f7df-449a-9c38-3df1bfe734ae>

Covid: 10 new mass vaccination centres to open in England

Ten new mass Covid vaccination centres are to open in England from Monday, as the government bids to meet its target of offering 15 million people in the UK a dose by 15 February. Blackburn

Cathedral and St Helens Rugby Ground are among the venues chosen to join the seven hubs already in use. NHS England said the new centres would offer "thousands" of jabs a week. It comes as a further 324,233 vaccine doses were administered across the UK, taking the total above 3.5 million. As the latest figures were announced on Sunday, Prime Minister Boris Johnson tweeted his thanks to "everyone who is helping in this fantastic national effort".

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55692321>

COVID-19: Every UK adult could be offered a vaccine by mid-July - if these figures are anything to go by

For a few hours this week, we were given an insight into the closely-guarded secret at the centre of the UK's vaccination programme. It came courtesy of the Scottish government, which published its vaccination plan on Wednesday. The plan included detailed figures for the number of vaccines that would be supplied to Scotland by the UK each week until the end of May. The UK government objected, saying the publication of the figures would create difficulties for the pharmaceutical companies, and the offending page was quickly removed - but not before some clever internet users were able to save a copy.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-every-uk-adult-could-be-vaccinated-by-mid-july-if-these-figures-are-anything-to-go-by-12188909>

Spain rejects virus confinement as most of Europe stays home

While most of Europe kicked off 2021 with earlier curfews or stay-at-home orders, authorities in Spain insist the new coronavirus variant causing havoc elsewhere is not to blame for a sharp resurgence of cases and that the country can avoid a full lockdown even as its hospitals fill up. The government has been tirelessly fending off drastic home confinement like the one that paralyzed the economy for nearly three months in the spring of 2020, the last time Spain could claim victory over the stubborn rising curve of cases. Infection rates ebbed in October but never completely flattened the surge from summer. Cases started climbing again before the end of the year. In the past month, 14-day rates more than doubled, from 188 cases per 100,000 residents on Dec. 10 to 522 per 100,000 on Thursday.

<https://apnews.com/article/spain-coronavirus-news-6186fece500a711d6180502f7c51998e>

Coronavirus: Texas becomes first US state to administer 1m vaccine doses

Germany's 2020 contraction shows economy in better shape than thought. Norwegian to abandon long-haul market as it fights for survival. France tightens Covid curfew and border controls.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/coronavirus/uk-vaccine-rollout-constrained-by-manufacturing-say-ministers/ar-BB1cj4fw?li=BB0PWjQ>

Exit Strategies

GPs 'forced to bin leftover vaccines' amid struggle to book exact number of Covid vaccine recipients

In the UK, GPs are being forced to bin leftover vaccines rather than give patients second doses or use them on staff, according to reports. Local NHS leaders are said to have issued the vaccine disposal instructions to doctors organising clinics. The revelation comes as Pfizer said there would be a short delay to UK orders of its vaccine. GPs are struggling to book the exact number of appointments to match the doses of the vaccine which needs to be kept at -70c, which adds another layer of difficulty.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/covid-vaccine-bin-leftover-nhs-b900001.html>

UK 'on home straight' as Covid vaccine rollout increases

Health Secretary Matt Hancock has said the UK is "nearly on the home straight" out of the pandemic as the vaccine rollout gathers pace. More than 324,000 doses of coronavirus vaccines were

administered in the space of 24 hours, new Government statistics showed, with 3.5 million people in the UK now receiving their first dose of a vaccine, with new vaccination centres opening from tomorrow. But Government sources have "dismissed as speculation" reports that every adult in Britain could be vaccinated by the end of June. Other reports state the government is looking at relaxing lockdown restrictions in March.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/coronavirus-uk-live-updates-latest-covid-vaccine-lockdown-ends-b900029.html>

COVID-19: More than half of over-80s have received vaccine as 140 jabs given a minute

More than half of over-80s in the UK have received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine, as the government has revealed that 140 jabs are being given out a minute. Sharing the news on Twitter, Health Secretary Matt Hancock said: "I'm delighted that over half of all over-80s have been vaccinated. "Each jab brings us one step closer to normal."

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-more-than-half-of-over-80s-have-received-vaccine-as-140-jabs-given-a-minute-12190563>

COVID-19: Some restrictions could go by March and vaccine should be offered to every adult by September

All UK adults should be offered the first dose of a COVID vaccine by September - with the hope some restrictions can be lifted by March, Dominic Raab has told Sky News. The foreign secretary said: "Our target is that by September to have offered all the adult population a first dose, if we can do it faster than that great but that's the roadmap." The target is more specific than the government's COVID-19 vaccine delivery plan, published a week ago, which said that level of protection should be provided "by the autumn".

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-all-uk-adults-will-be-offered-first-vaccine-dose-by-september-raab-says-12190336>

Covid-19: England delivering 140 jabs a minute, says NHS chief executive

People in England are being vaccinated four times faster than new cases of the virus are being detected, NHS England's chief executive has said. Sir Simon Stevens told the BBC that 140 people a minute were now being given the jab, usually the first dose of two. But he said the NHS had never been in a more precarious position, with 75% more Covid patients than at the April peak. It comes as a further 298,087 people received their first dose of the vaccine on Saturday. There were also 671 more deaths within 28 days of a positive Covid test, and another 38,598 positive tests. Sir Simon said some hospitals would open for vaccinations 24 hours a day, seven days a week on a trial basis in the next 10 days.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55694967>

Lifting lockdown in February would be 'disaster' for NHS, top scientist warns

It would be a 'disaster' to remove coronavirus restrictions at the end of February, even if the vaccine target is met, according to a leading expert. Epidemiologist Professor John Edmunds - who sits on the Government's Sage committee of scientific advisors - warned against lifting lockdown too soon because of the 'enormous pressure' it would place on the NHS. He also said it was 'likely' both variants of Covid first detected in Brazil have already made it to the UK before new travel restrictions were introduced.

<https://metro.co.uk/2021/01/16/covid-lifting-lockdown-in-february-would-be-a-disaster-says-expert-13914706/>

Greece starts COVID-19 vaccinations among the elderly

Greece kicked off COVID-19 vaccinations among the elderly on Saturday, after first inoculating tens of thousands of frontline workers to fight the spread of the coronavirus. More than 75,000 healthcare workers and nursing home residents and carers have received the shot of the vaccine produced by Pfizer/BioNTech since Greece rolled out the plan along with other EU countries last month.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-greece-vaccine/greece-starts-covid-19-vaccinations-among-the-elderly-idUSL8N2JQ48T>

German minister says COVID curbs should be eased for vaccinated people

People who have been vaccinated against COVID-19 should be allowed to go to restaurants and cinemas earlier than others, a German minister said, contradicting other cabinet members who have so far opposed special freedoms for those inoculated. Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said the state had massively restricted people's basic rights in order to contain infections and avoid overwhelming hospitals. "It has not yet been conclusively clarified to what extent vaccinated people can infect others," Maas told the Bild am Sonntag newspaper. "What is clear, however, is that a vaccinated person no longer takes a ventilator away from anyone. This removes at least one central reason for restricting fundamental rights."

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-germany-maas/german-minister-says-covid-curbs-should-be-eased-for-vaccinated-people-idUSL8N2JS039>

UK hopes to ease lockdown from March: minister

Britain's government hopes to ease some lockdown restrictions in March as it presses ahead with Europe's fastest rollout of COVID-19 vaccines, foreign minister Dominic Raab said on Sunday. The country, which also has Europe's highest COVID-19 death toll, has been under national lockdown since Jan. 5, with schools closed for most pupils, non-essential businesses shut and people ordered to work from home where possible. "What we want to do is get out of this national lockdown as soon as possible," Raab told Sky News television.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-britain/uk-hopes-to-ease-lockdown-from-march-minister-idUSKBN29M06H>

COVID-19: Second variant from Brazil 'likely' already in the UK, SAGE scientist says

The second of two new coronavirus variants from Brazil is likely to already be in the UK despite the government imposing a travel ban, a leading epidemiologist has warned. Eight cases of the first variant, which has a small number of mutations, have been identified in the UK. The second, which has been detected in the Brazilian city of Manaus and in travellers arriving in Japan, has not been detected in the UK so far.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-second-variant-from-brazil-likely-already-in-the-uk-sage-scientist-says-12189428>

From hard lockdown to tactful reopening: How China bounced back from Covid

The smell, salty and pungent, wafts through the freshly paved streets near the gleaming new factory. The factory is owned by a company called Laoganma, which makes a piquant chili-and-soybean sauce famous across China for its power to set mouths watering. In a time of global pandemic, when the jobs of working people around the world hang in the balance, the factory's scents signal opportunity. Since it opened in March, when China was still in the grip of Covid-19, the factory has struggled to find enough machinery operators or quality control technicians. Now workers are flocking to Changmingzhen, a once-quiet farming town ringed with green mountains and rice paddies, from which young people once fled for better jobs elsewhere.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/from-hard-lockdown-to-tactful-reopening-how-china-bounced-back-from-covid-121011600196_1.html

India Kicks Off A Massive COVID-19 Vaccination Drive

Cheers erupted in hospital wards across India on Saturday as a first group of nurses and sanitation workers rolled up their sleeves and got vaccinated against COVID-19, at the start of what's likely to become the biggest national vaccination campaign in history. India aims to vaccinate 300 million people by July, though it could take an additional two or more years to inoculate all nearly 1.4 billion Indians. The shots are voluntary. Hospitals and clinics have been setting up and rehearsing for weeks. "A proud moment indeed! This is what we've been waiting for," Dr. R. Jayanthi, dean of the

Omandurar Medical College in the southern city of Chennai, told local media moments after receiving her shot. "I'm truly a very privileged beneficiary today, and I'm feeling absolutely fine."

<https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2021/01/16/957593507/indias-massive-coronavirus-vaccine-effort-begins-today>

Coronavirus: EU anger over delayed Pfizer vaccine deliveries

Several EU countries are receiving significantly fewer doses of the Pfizer coronavirus vaccine than expected, after the US firm slowed shipments. Six nations called the situation "unacceptable" and warned it "decreases the credibility of the vaccination process". Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia urged the EU to apply pressure on Pfizer-BioNTech. Pfizer said the reduced deliveries were a temporary issue. In a statement on Friday, the drugmaker said shipments were being affected by changes to its manufacturing processes designed to boost production. "Although this will temporarily impact shipments in late January to early February, it will provide a significant increase in doses available for patients in late February and March," Pfizer said.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-55666399>

Care boss' frustration over coronavirus vaccine no-shows in Gwent

A care boss has been left frustrated by people in Gwent not turning up for coronavirus vaccines. Mary Wimbury, the chief executive of Care Forum Wales which represents nearly 500 independent providers, said it was particularly galling when many vulnerable care home residents in the Aneurin Bevan health board area are desperate to have them. There has been a significant number of no-shows across Wales at a time when vaccine supplies are limited. It was now, said Ms Wimbury, a race against time to get all 23,000 care home residents as well as the 12,000 staff in Wales vaccinated, with the Welsh Government promising that all of them will be given the jab before the end of January.

<https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/19016817.care-boss-frustration-covid-vaccine-no-shows-gwent/>

Biden details 5-step COVID vaccine plan, names new lead for vaccines

President-elect Joe Biden revealed details of his \$1.9 trillion stimulus plan, which includes an emergency vaccination and relief package to help see America through the COVID-19 pandemic, and today the former vice president presented a 5-point plan aimed at quickly ramping up vaccinations. "We're sparing no effort in getting Americans vaccinated," Biden said. "We remain in a very dark winter, the infection rate is up 34%, we see 3 or 4,000 deaths per day. Things will get worse before they get better." Biden named a new head for Operation Warp Speed, which promoted rapid vaccine development under President Donald Trump, though the Biden team will rename the effort. Biden said the Trump administration's efforts to roll out two approved COVID-19 vaccines, one from Pfizer and one from Moderna, was a dismal failure. He said he wanted to turn frustration into motivation and meet his goal of 100 million shots during his first 100 days in office.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/biden-details-5-step-covid-vaccine-plan-names-new-lead-vaccines>

Biden will mobilize FEMA, the National Guard, and pharmacies to ramp up vaccine distribution

President-elect Biden's newly released vaccine distribution plan promises to dramatically increase the number of vaccination sites in America by mobilizing the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Guard, relying on low-income community health centers, and pharmacies around the country. Biden unveiled the plan in a Friday afternoon speech in which he doubled down on his long-stated goal: Administering 100 million vaccine doses in his first 100 days in office. "Some wonder if we're reaching too far for that goal," Biden said. "Is it achievable? It's a legitimate question to ask. Let me be clear. I'm convinced we can get it done."

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/15/biden-mobilize-fema-national-guard-ramp-up-vaccines/>

EU countries decry 'very short notice' of delay in delivery of Pfizer vaccine

EU governments struggling with the slow rollout of coronavirus vaccines have hit out at plans by Pfizer to delay supplies to European countries, including the UK, from next week. Germany's health ministry said on Friday that it regretted the "unexpected and . . . very short notice" announcement, especially as the US pharmaceuticals company had promised "binding delivery dates" until the middle of next month. Health ministers from six Nordic and Baltic states also expressed "severe concern about the sustainability and credibility of the Covid-19 vaccination process" following the US company's decision.

<https://www.ft.com/content/e8177df6-04ae-4d20-8e62-ca76589c7653>

The Covid-19 Death Toll Is Even Worse Than It Looks

The recorded death count from the Covid-19 pandemic as of Thursday is nearing 2 million. The true extent is far worse. More than 2.8 million people have lost their lives due to the pandemic, according to a Wall Street Journal analysis of data from 59 countries and jurisdictions. This tally offers the most comprehensive view yet of the pandemic's global impact. Deaths in these places last year surged more than 12% above average levels. Less than two-thirds of that surge has been attributed directly to Covid-19. Public-health experts believe that many, if not most, of the additional deaths were directly linked to the disease, particularly early in the pandemic when testing was sparse. Some of those excess deaths came from indirect fallout, from health-care disruptions, people avoiding the hospital and other issues.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-covid-19-death-toll-is-even-worse-than-it-looks-11610636840>

Partisan Exits

In Tokyo's lockdown, some drink on even after authorities call time

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga declared a state of emergency for Tokyo and surrounding prefectures this month. He expanded it to 11 prefectures accounting for 55% of the population on Wednesday. Unlike in many other countries with mandatory lockdowns, Japanese authorities legally can only urge people to stay at home and businesses to close. While compliance has been high - most of Shimbashi's karaoke bars and izakaya taverns were closed on Friday night - more people appear to be ignoring the state of emergency this time than one last year. Authorities have worried about the potential spread of infection at bars and restaurants. In Shimbashi, many drinking spots are cramped and with poor ventilation.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-japan-restaurants/in-tokyos-lockdown-some-drink-on-even-after-authorities-call-time-idUSL1N2JS02B>

Migrants forced to travel 85 miles for Home Office appointments as coronavirus cases soar

People are being forced to travel as far as 85 miles to attend Home Office appointments during the lockdown, prompting critics to claim the government is prioritising "distrust" of migrants over public health. Ministers are being urged to act after it emerged vulnerable asylum seekers and visa applicants have had to take long journeys on public transport in recent weeks in order to comply with Home Office rules. In March, substantive asylum interviews - during which the Home Office gathers information to determine whether someone should be granted asylum in the UK - were paused in response to the pandemic. Biometric appointments, where UK visa applicants submit their fingerprints as part of the application process, were also suspended during the first lockdown as visa application centres closed.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/travel-home-office-appointments-asylum-seekers-visas-b1787997.html>

Thousands Take To Streets To Protest Over Vienna's New Lockdown Laws As Cases Spike Again

On Saturday, January 16, thousands of people marched through Vienna to protest against the restrictions kept in place to battle the novel coronavirus. According to the reports by CNA, the demonstrators chanted "Kurz Must Go" and "Make Influenza Great Again" during marches through the city centre. Also, the demonstrators were not seen wearing any mask. The protests began when Chancellor Sebastian Kurz and his government discussed extending the existing lockdown in Austria. The lockdown includes movement restrictions and the closure of all non-essential businesses. However, no official announcement has come as of now. People took to their social media handles and shared image and videos from the protest march. Let's have a look.

<https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/europe/thousands-take-to-streets-to-protest-over-viennas-new-lockdown-laws-as-cases-spike-again.html>

More than 800 chain restaurants, bars and cafes close for good as Covid-19 lockdowns bite sector

More than 800 chain restaurants, bars and coffee shops have closed since the start of the Covid pandemic, research compiled for the Evening Standard has found. Covid has wrought havoc on cashflows of leisure sector operators as they have been repeatedly forced to close or only open under tough restrictions to ensure social distancing. Data compiled for the Evening Standard showed that when administrations and Company Voluntary Arrangements are included, chains with 6231 outlets have been affected. That compares with 593 closed during the two previous years, which included the one-off corporate shakeups at Patisserie Valerie and The Restaurant Group accounting for nearly 150 closures.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/business/more-than-800-chain-restaurants-bars-cafes-close-as-covid19-lockdowns-bite-b-899855.html>

Call on lockdown was not easy, assessed impact: PM

Recalling India's fight against Covid-19, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the decision to go in for a nationwide lockdown in March 2020 was not easy as the government had assessed its impact on the economy and people's livelihood and worked to devise welfare nets.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/call-on-lockdown-was-not-easy-assessed-impact-pm/articleshow/80309305.cms>

People from ethnic minorities far more hesitant to take coronavirus vaccine

Scientific advisers are concerned about the coronavirus vaccine uptake among black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, following the release of data from a new study. Research from the UK Household Longitudinal Study - which conducts annual interviews to gain a long-term perspective on British people's lives - showed 72 per cent of black people said they were unlikely to have the jab. A report from Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage) highlighted the persisting problems of structural, and institutional racism, and historic under representation in healthcare research, as driving the reduced levels of trust in the vaccination programme.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/health/familyhealth/people-from-ethnic-minorities-far-more-hesitant-to-take-coronavirus-vaccine/ar-BB1cNLwm>

Aviation industry risks collapse without 'urgent' support following travel curbs

The aviation industry risks collapse without "urgent" government support, industry groups have warned following the latest travel curbs. From Monday all travel corridors to the UK will be scrapped to prevent any further spread of the new strains of coronavirus.

<https://www.cityam.com/aviation-industry-risks-collapse-without-urgent-support-following-travel-curbs/>

Biden must find words for a wounded nation in inauguration like no other

Planners have been forced to be inventive after the deadly pandemic and now last week's Capitol insurrection dictated a pared-down event amid real fears of assassination

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/16/joe-biden-inauguration-wounded-nation>

Nigeria warns against fake COVID vaccines

Nigerian authorities have warned against fake coronavirus vaccines in the country where 10 million real doses of the shots are expected to arrive in March. "There are reports of fake vaccines in Nigeria," Director General of Nigeria's National Agency for Food Drug and Administration Control (NAFDAC) Mojisola Adeyeye said on Friday. "NAFDAC is pleading with the public to beware. No COVID vaccines have been approved by NAFDAC. Fake vaccines can cause COVID-like illnesses or other serious diseases that could kill." Nigeria's anticipated vaccines add to 100,000 expected doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine although it was not specified which type of jab would be used for the 10 million doses. It was also unclear whether the batch would be financed by the African Union (AU) or as part of COVAX, which links the World Health Organization (WHO) with private partners to work for pooled procurement and equitable distribution.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/15/nigeria-warns-against-fake-vaccines-as-10-mn-doses-expected>

COVID vaccine weekly: can the UK vaccinate 15 million people by mid-February?

The pandemic is the UK's worst ever health crisis and, tragically, it's been getting worse and worse. A more infectious variant of the coronavirus together with insufficient restrictions in December 2020 have sent COVID-19 cases soaring. The National Health Service is teetering on the brink, with hospitals close to capacity, and daily deaths are now in the thousands, surpassing April 2020's peak. The UK continues to have one of the worst COVID-19 death rates in the world. However, Britain has a solution in hand, having authorised three COVID-19 vaccines for use. It's started rolling out two (those developed by Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca) and has delivered the first dose to more than 2.4 million people - well ahead of most other countries

<https://theconversation.com/covid-vaccine-weekly-can-the-uk-vaccinate-15-million-people-by-mid-february-153155>

Continued Lockdown

Amid COVID-19 surge, South Africa delays reopening schools

Faced with a rapid resurgence of COVID-19 overwhelming the country's hospitals and driven by a more infectious variant of the virus South Africa has delayed reopening its schools. The variant is having far-reaching consequences for Africa's most developed nation as several countries trying to prevent its spread have stopped or reduced flights with South Africa. South Africa has the highest prevalence of COVID-19 in Africa with a cumulative total of more than 1.3 million confirmed cases, including 36,851 deaths.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/amid-covid19-surge-south-africa-delays-reopening-schools-south-africa-country-schools-schools-virus-b1788557.html>

Covid-19: Rise in suspected child abuse cases after lockdown

The number of reported incidents of children dying or being seriously harmed after suspected abuse or neglect rose by a quarter after England's first lockdown last year, figures indicate. The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel received 285 serious incident notifications from April to September. This is an increase of 27% from 225 in the same period the previous year. The data also includes children who were in care and died, regardless of whether abuse or neglect was suspected.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55682745>

Covid-19: Lockdown could 'lose a generation' of young people

A "whole generation of young people" could be lost to education during the Covid-19 lockdown because they do not have access to digital learning, a leading charity warned. Schools have been closed to most children, meaning remote-learning at home with lessons via the internet. Rae Tooth, of the Villiers Park Education Trust, is concerned about children without computers. The government said it was providing thousands of laptops for pupils. Ms Tooth, chief executive of the Trust, told BBC Politics East that "digital poverty" hits the ability of children to learn if they have no access to the internet, (or can only access if via smartphones with small screens).

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-55653458>

Austria extends COVID-19 lockdown, sees hard months ahead

Austria on Sunday extend its third COVID-19 lockdown into February, hoping to drive down infection rates despite an influx of variants that spread the coronavirus more easily. The goal is to let shops, museums and personal services like hairdressers reopen from Feb. 8, while the catering and tourism sectors will stay shuttered until at least March. "We have two to three hard months ahead of us," Chancellor Sebastian Kurz told a news conference, flanked by regional leaders and health officials in a show of unity a day after thousands marched in Vienna to protest against restrictions.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-austria/austria-extends-covid-19-lockdown-sees-hard-months-ahead-idUSKBN29M052>

France observes nationwide 6 p.m. curfew to slow coronavirus spread

Cities, towns and villages across France were practically empty on Saturday as residents stayed home and businesses shut to observe a nationwide curfew intended to help stem the spread of coronavirus, especially a more infectious variant. The virus has killed 70,000 people in France, the seventh highest toll in the world, and the government is particularly worried by the more transmissible variant first detected in Britain, which now accounts for about 1% of new cases. The curfew was brought forward two hours to 6 p.m. and will run until 6 a.m. In addition, from Monday anyone travelling to France from outside the European Union will have to show a negative test result and self-isolate for a week upon arrival.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-france/france-observes-nationwide-6-pm-curfew-to-slow-coronavirus-spread-idUSKBN29L0L2>

6pm curfew across whole of France for at least 15 days

All of France will be under a strict 6pm curfew for at least 15 days to fight the spread of coronavirus, the Prime Minister has announced. Jean Castex also revealed strict new controls for those arriving in France from countries outside the European Union. Starting on Monday, they must produce a PCR test with negative results and self-isolate for seven days followed by a new, negative test. France wants to coordinate a response with the European Union about arrivals from EU countries, he said. The French government is trying to avoid a third lockdown with partial measures like curfews which Mr Castex called both "preventative" and "reactive".

<https://www.getsurrey.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/6pm-curfew-across-whole-france-19629647>

Italy suspends flights from Brazil in response to new coronavirus variant

Italy is suspending flights from Brazil, Health Minister Roberto Speranza said on Saturday, in response to a new coronavirus variant. Anyone who has transited Brazil in the last 14 days is also prohibited from entering Italy, he said on Facebook, while people arriving in Italy from Brazil will be required to take a test for the virus. "It is critical for our scientists to study the new strain. In the meantime, we are taking a very cautious approach", he said. Such rules will remain in place until Jan. 31, the order issued on Saturday by the health minister showed.

<https://news.yahoo.com/italy-suspends-flights-brazil-response-164015435.html>

Australian Open thrown into chaos as 47 players are forced into lockdown over coronavirus cases from charter flights

The Australian Open lead-up has been thrown into chaos with at least 47 players now confined to their hotel rooms for the next 14 days following three positive coronavirus tests from two separate charter flights into Melbourne. Two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka, three-time grand slam winner Angelique Kerber and 2019 US Open title holder Bianca Andreescu are among the players affected. Ms Andreescu's coach Sylvain Bruneau wrote in a media statement that he had been the source of the infection on the second flight from Abu Dhabi, having tested positive on arrival in Melbourne. "I am deeply sorry to share that I have just tested positive for Covid-19 upon

arrival after travelling from Abu Dhabi," he wrote.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/australian-open-thrown-into-chaos-as-47-players-are-forced-into-lockdown-over-coronavirus-cases-from-charter-flights>

Scientific Viewpoint

Bayer aims to help CureVac with COVID-19 vaccine output, says CEO

German pharmaceutical giant Bayer is examining whether it can help CureVac to produce its experimental COVID-19 vaccine, its chief executive was quoted as saying on Sunday. Though inoculation campaigns have started around the world using various COVID-19 vaccines, many countries say their ability to get shots into arms is being limited by lower than expected supplies owing to a shortage of production. "We are prepared to pull out all the stops for this," Werner Baumann told the Welt am Sonntag newspaper. "This is not primarily about financial considerations but about making the vaccine available as quickly as possible." Bayer agreed this month to help fellow German company CureVac with development of its COVID-19 vaccine candidate, which is in late-stage clinical trials and has not yet been approved.

https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-curevac-bayer-idUKKBN29M09P?fbclid=IwAR3dvTpwXxMj6_C2HeZfd9cygaxm8LB6DCsydj6MGwVtV2YnbnmQxgiV00jQ

Valneva says UK rollout of COVID-19 vaccine could start in July-September: report

French drugmaker Valneva hopes its COVID-19 vaccine can start to be used in Britain between July and September, the company's chief executive was quoted as saying. Valneva has agreed to provide Britain with 60 million doses of its vaccine, compared with 100 million doses of the shot from AstraZeneca and Oxford University. It is expected to need a two-dose regimen. "We are days away from starting the commercial manufacturing," Thomas Lingelbach told The Mail on Sunday newspaper.

<https://www.msn.com/en-au/lifestyle/wellbeing/valneva-says-uk-rollout-of-covid-19-vaccine-could-start-in-july-september-report/ar-BB1cPCF8>

Most hospitalized COVID-19 patients still have symptoms after 6 months

In their study, the researchers found that 76% of COVID-19 patients from a hospital in Wuhan, China, were still not symptom-free at a 6-month follow-up. The research, which appears in the journal The Lancet, identifies the most common symptoms that the study participants continued to experience. It also highlights the possible effects of COVID-19 on the participants' cardiopulmonary health and identifies potential risk factors associated with the long-term effects of COVID-19.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/most-hospitalized-covid-19-patients-still-have-symptoms-after-6-months>

Reeling again from COVID-19, Amazonas gets respirators, oxygen from Brazil Air Force and Venezuela

The Brazilian jungle state of Amazonas received more emergency supplies of oxygen and respirators on Saturday, as the military and neighboring Venezuela scrambled to alleviate an unfolding humanitarian crisis caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. The Air Force also said it had evacuated 12 patients from hospitals in the state capital Manaus to the northern city of Sao Luis overnight, with hospitals at breaking point with no oxygen supplies and overflowing intensive care wards. Mass graves were dug in Manaus during the first wave of the pandemic last year. Harrowing scenes are again emerging in the second wave, of doctors and relatives running out of supplies and equipment while trying desperately to keep patients alive. Brazil's Air Force said on Saturday a second flight had landed in Manaus with eight tanks of liquid oxygen, following an earlier emergency delivery of five tanks, and the Navy said in a statement that it is sending 40 respirators.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-brazil/reeling-again-from-covid-19-amazonas-gets-respirators-oxygen-from-brazil-air-force-and-venezuela-idUSKBN29L0KD>

The new Covid variant from Brazil may have been found in the UK - but is it more infectious?

Travellers from across South America have been banned from entering the UK amid growing concerns about a mutant coronavirus strain which has emerged in Brazil. The ban which, also covers Portugal (due to its strong travel links with Brazil), the Central American state of Panama, and the former Portuguese colony of Cape Verde, came into force at 4am on Friday. But what is the Brazil variant, and how worried should we be about the latest mutation of the virus?

<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/read-this/new-covid-variant-brazil-may-have-been-found-uk-it-more-infectious-3100276>

Brazil's health agency approves the use of two vaccines

Brazil's health regulator on Sunday approved the urgent use of coronavirus vaccines made by Sinovac and AstraZeneca, enabling Latin America's largest nation to begin an immunization program that's been subject to delay and political disputes. Brazil currently has 6 million doses of Sinovac's CoronaVac vaccine ready to distribute in the next few days and is awaiting the arrival of 2 million doses of the vaccine made by AstraZeneca and partner Oxford University. "This is good news for Brazil, but 6 million doses are still very few. It will not allow the entire population at risk to be fully immunized, nor is it clear how quickly the country will obtain more vaccines," said Ethel Maciel, an epidemiologist at the Federal University of Espirito Santo.

<https://apnews.com/50fb245ef2f73f38f25b43891b8a8cd3>

Sidelining experts, Brazil bungled its immunization plans

Like many Brazilian public health experts, Dr. Regina Flauzino spent most of 2020 watching with horror as COVID-19 devastated Brazil. When the opportunity to join the government's vaccination effort came, she was thrilled: She would be able to share her decades of on-the-ground experience. But her excitement quickly faded. Flauzino, an epidemiologist who worked on Brazilian vaccine campaigns for 20 years, became frustrated with what she described as a rushed, chaotic process. The government has yet to approve a single vaccine, and Health Ministry officials have ignored outside experts' advice. Shortly after the government presented its vaccination plan, more than a quarter of the roughly 140 experts involved demanded their names be excised.

<https://apnews.com/article/public-health-brazil-immunizations-health-coronavirus-pandemic-29c5d78c09a32151d80954fb9fc887f8>

Japan to study cases of people infected even after coronavirus vaccination

Japan plans to collect data from people who become infected with the novel coronavirus even after they receive vaccinations to assess how vaccines may help prevent the spread of the virus, sources close to the matter said on Sunday. Inoculations are expected to start in Japan possibly in February. The health ministry will create a system to gather vaccination records of all infected people by adding checkboxes to a document that doctors are required to submit to public health centres when they confirm coronavirus infections, the sources said. The formats for reporting rubella and measles, other major communicable diseases, also have checkboxes for vaccination records.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/3118112/coronavirus-japan-study-cases-people-infected-even-after>

Every adult in UK 'on track to get Covid jab by July', secret government data suggests

Every single British adult could have a Covid vaccine as early as July as the UK's race for immunisation picks up speed, secret Government data suggests. The Scottish Government came under fire earlier this week for publishing the closely guarded stats about the vaccine rollout on its website. The figures were deleted from the page after the UK Government complained that they created problems for pharmaceutical companies - but not before some quick-witted internet users saved a copy. They reveal Britain appears to be on target to deliver its promise of 15 million Covid vaccines for vulnerable people by mid-February.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/every-adult-uk-on-track-23329360>

French drugs firm 'days away' from making 60million doses of Britain's FOURTH coronavirus vaccine

Whitehall sources have set an ambitious target of vaccinating four to five million people a week in summer. Came as new state-of-the-art vaccine production factory said it was on standby to tackle any future variants. French drugs firm Valneva is just also 'days away' from kick-starting manufacture of its jab on British soil

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9155273/French-drugs-firm-days-away-making-60million-doses-Britains-FOURTH-coronavirus-vaccine.html>

COVID-19: Indonesia vaccine rollout bucks trend by targeting younger generations

With shaking hands, broadcast live to the nation, a doctor administered Indonesia's first COVID-19 vaccination. The recipient was President Joko Widodo, a man who hopes to get 181.5 million Indonesians vaccinated this year. It's a huge challenge, almost three times the population of the UK and so far one of the largest rollouts in the world. But the nation's vaccination drive, which started this week using CoronaVac, a jab from Chinese manufacturer Sinovac Biotech, bucks the current trend by injecting under-60s first.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-indonesia-vaccine-rollout-bucks-trend-by-targeting-younger-generations-12188490>

Progress reported on one-dose J&J vaccine; COVID-19 reinfections seen as rare

The following is a roundup of some of the latest scientific studies on the novel coronavirus and efforts to find treatments and vaccines for COVID-19, the illness caused by the virus. Johnson & Johnson vaccine advancing through clinical trials An experimental COVID-19 vaccine from Johnson & Johnson produced protective antibodies against the novel coronavirus in 90% of 805 volunteers by 29 days, and that increased to 100% by day 57, according to data from an ongoing mid-stage study. Side effects such as fever, muscle aches and injection site pain resolved quickly, researchers reported on Wednesday in the New England Journal of Medicine. To be approved by regulators, the J&J vaccine must show efficacy as reflected by a lower risk of infections and severe disease in study participants who receive it compared to those who do not. Efficacy data from a large late-stage trial on the vaccine is due by February

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-science/covid-science-progress-reported-on-one-dose-jj-vaccine-covid-19-reinfections-seen-as-rare-idUSL1N2JQ29Y>

Pakistan becomes latest to approve AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use

Pakistan on Saturday gave the green light to the country's first coronavirus vaccine with the approval of AstraZeneca's inoculation for emergency use. The country's health minister, Faisal Sultan, informed Reuters of the emergency approval, which the nation hopes will be the first of many as it battles a rising number of COVID-19 cases.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/pakistan-becomes-latest-to-approve-astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine-for-emergency-use/ar-BB1cOo5C>

COVID may cut US life expectancy, especially in blacks, Latinos

COVID-19 may shorten Americans' life expectancy at birth of by a median of 1.13 years, to 77.48 years—the largest single-year dip in at least 40 years and the lowest estimated lifespan since 2003, according to projections from a study published yesterday in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. The researchers, from the University of Southern California (USC) and Princeton University, also projected a decline in life expectancy at age 65 of 0.87 years. They caution that their projections are only best estimates and not definitive. The decline is especially steep for black Americans, who could expect to die 2.10 years sooner, at 72.78 years, and for Latinos, who could see their lives shortened by 3.05 years, to 78.77.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/covid-may-cut-us-life-expectancy-especially-blacks-latinos>

New coronavirus variant could become dominant strain in March, CDC warns

A new, more transmissible variant of the virus that causes Covid-19 could sweep the United States in coming weeks and become the dominant strain as soon as March, leading to a new surge of cases through the spring, the CDC warned. The CDC believes the variant, known as B117, is still circulating at low levels in the U.S. Only 76 infections caused by the new variant have been detected, in 12 states, though testing for it has not been routinely conducted. CDC officials acknowledge the variant is likely more widespread here than is currently recognized. Modeling work done by CDC scientists suggests that unless the pace of vaccination of the population increases dramatically and people adhere stringently to Covid-19 control measures, the new variant will spread rapidly

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/15/covid19-b117-variant-cdc/>

Are more people surviving Covid-19 because doctors are doing less?

Haider Warraich is a cardiologist and researcher at Brigham and Women's Hospital, associate director of the heart failure program at the VA Boston Healthcare System, and an instructor in medicine at Harvard Medical School. He writes about his experience of treating Covid-19 patients: "Physicians crave agency, a power they can use to turn around the course of an ailing patient's life. Yet for me and countless physicians, nurses, and other clinicians, Covid-19 has been a grim lesson in humility. While we have learned so much about this illness in such a short time, we still have almost no ability to change the fate of patients with severe Covid-19 infections." "There is now concern that some of the drugs we were giving to Covid-19 patients were more than just useless — they might, in fact, have been harmful."

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/15/are-more-people-surviving-covid-19-because-doctors-are-doing-less/>

The new Covid variants are a peril to us all

During every major epidemic I've worked on, there has been speculation about virus mutations. Mostly these mutations are innocuous, just random errors in a virus's genetic code that don't change how it infects or spreads. But every now and then, a collection of mutations crops up and dramatically changes the threat we face. In recent weeks, researchers have noticed three troubling new Sars-Cov-2 variants scattered among the various virus lineages circulating globally. Such variants could well change the pandemic's shape in 2021. The first new variant was detected in south-east England in autumn 2020. It sparked concern after spreading easily, despite the control measures in place during November, outpacing existing variants to become dominant in much of the UK by the end of December. Early analysis of contact tracing data and local epidemic growth suggested this variant could be 40 to 70 per cent more transmissible than earlier viruses. It has since been detected in other countries, with initial patterns in Denmark and Ireland consistent with its accelerated growth in the UK.

<https://www.ft.com/content/5691b1bb-0f9f-4410-9ade-84f4d55ea778>

Coronavirus Resurgence

UK daily coronavirus cases rise above 50,000 for first time this week as 1,280 deaths reported

The number of daily coronavirus cases has rise above 50,000 for the first time in five days, despite hopes that the outbreak is slowing in parts of the UK. A further 1,280 deaths of people within 28 days of testing positive for Covid-19 were also reported on Friday. It is the first time daily infections have topped 50,000 since Sunday, and brings the total number of confirmed cases in the UK to 3,316,019. Earlier on Friday, the Government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies said the UK's coronavirus reproduction rate — the R number — had narrowed to between 1.2 and 1.3.

https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/uk-covid-cases-deaths-latest-b899948.html?itm_source=Internal&itm_channel=banner&itm_campaign=breaking-news-ticker&itm_content=2

Covid-19: Tamil Nadu reports less than 600 new cases, 7 deaths

The Covid-19 vaccine was administered to 3,225 persons today. New coronavirus cases in Tamil Nadu declined to less than 600 to 589 in the last 24 hours to take the total number of infections in the State to 8,30,772. After 770 Covid-19 patients were discharged, the number of active cases declined to less than 6,000 to 5,940. There were seven deaths registered and 52,213 samples tested.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/tamil-nadu-reports-less-than-600-covid-19-cases-7-deaths/article33593976.ece>

China reports 109 new COVID-19 cases to keep concerns simmering before Lunar New Year

Worries simmered in mainland China about a potential fresh wave of coronavirus cases ahead of the Lunar New Year next month as authorities on Sunday reported 109 new COVID-19 cases, most of them in Hebei province surrounding Beijing. Though the Jan. 16 tally of new cases was less than the previous day's 130, China has in the past week seen the number of daily cases jump to an over 10-month high. The unsettling trend has emerged while a World Health Organization-led (WHO) team of investigators remained in quarantine in the city of Wuhan, where the disease was first detected in late 2019. The team aims to investigate the origins of the pandemic that has now killed over 2 million people worldwide.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-china-toll/china-reports-109-new-covid-19-cases-to-keep-concerns-simmering-before-lunar-new-year-idINKBN29M038>

CDC warns more infectious Covid-19 variant could dominate US by March

The new coronavirus variant first discovered in the UK could become the predominant strain in the US by March, according to a new model from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC warned on Friday the B.1.1.7 variant was likely to spread rapidly across the US in the coming months. So far, 76 cases were identified in 10 US states, but scientists warn the actual number of B.1.1.7 cases is likely to be higher, as the US lags behind many other countries with its genomic sequencing to identify the variants. The CDC is now trying to expand sequencing to track the variant and other possible mutations.

<https://www.ft.com/content/48acaaf1-8f0b-4d30-b032-5d7637d4105f>

Covid-19: Critical care wards are full in hospitals across England

Ten hospital trusts across England reported having no spare critical care beds for most of last week. It comes as hospital waiting times, coronavirus admissions and patients requiring intensive care rises. Across all England's acute trusts the total number of critical care beds available is 5,503, with 4,632 in use on 10 January. NHS England has not yet commented. Last year, hospitals added 39% more beds for seriously ill patients. The latest figures from NHS England show the number of trusts who were, on average, at full capacity in adult critical care rose from four to ten in the week to 10 January.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-55672901>

Covid-19: Further 1,295 deaths recorded in the UK

A further 1,295 deaths within 28 days of a positive Covid test have been reported in the UK, the third-highest daily total since the pandemic began. It brings the total number of deaths by this measure to 88,590. There have also been a further 41,346 lab-confirmed cases, and 4,262 more people have been admitted to hospital. Dr Yvonne Doyle, medical director for Public Health England, said the "continuous rise in cases and deaths should be a bitter warning for us all". "We must not forget the basics," she added. "The lives of our friends and family depend on it. "Keep your distance from others, wash your hands and wear a mask."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55690720>

Covid-19: Is Northern Ireland winning the battle against the virus?

The coronavirus pandemic has brought with it an intense interest in the statistics and figures that can be used to try to understand what's happening with the virus. While numbers can't reflect the real human cost of the pandemic, they can give us an insight into how we are doing in our battle against Covid-19. Deaths are counted in different ways by authorities in Northern Ireland. The Department of Health counts the number of people who die within 28 days of a having a positive Covid test. This is published daily on the department's dashboard. The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (Nisra) counts the number of death certificates that mention Covid-19, regardless of whether that person had a test for the virus. This is usually published on Friday mornings.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-55691168>

Small coronavirus cluster emerges in Sydney suburb

A cluster of new coronavirus cases has emerged in Australia's New South Wales State, health officials said on Sunday, just as the country appeared on the verge of snuffing out all community transmission. Health authorities were still investigating a mystery case in a man who tested positive on Friday in the western Sydney suburb of Berala. All six locally acquired cases registered on Sunday were close contacts of the man. Australia, which has managed the coronavirus better than many other nations through targeted lockdowns and high rates of testing and contact tracing, last week recorded a day of zero locally acquired cases, raising hopes that outbreaks in three states over the summer holidays had been brought under control. The latest outbreak shows how easily the virus can spread, New South Wales state leader Gladys Berejiklian told reporters in Sydney as she called for more people to come forward for testing.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-australia/small-coronavirus-cluster-emerges-in-sydney-suburb-idUSL8N2JS005>

Portuguese hospitals under pressure as COVID-19 cases reach record

Portugal's fragile health system is under growing pressure due to a worrying rise in coronavirus infections, with the country reporting 10,947 new cases and 166 deaths on Saturday, the worst surge since the pandemic started last year. The cases, which come a day after a new lockdown was put in place, bring the total number of cases in a country of just over 10 million people to 539,416, with the death toll increasing to 8,709. The number of infections per 100,000 people measured over the past 14 days is 901, nearly double that in hard-hit neighbouring Spain, data from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control showed.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-portugal/portuguese-hospitals-under-pressure-as-covid-19-cases-reach-record-idUSL8N2JR0B6>

UK sees third-highest daily death toll with new cases at three-week low

Britain reported its lowest number of daily new coronavirus infections since the start of the year on Saturday, adding to signs that a national lockdown is slowing the spread of a more infectious variant of the disease. However the effect of the recent surge in cases remains clear in the death toll, which was the third-highest on record. Health experts have warned it has further to rise. Government figures showed the number of people testing positive was 41,346, compared with 55,761 on Friday. It was the lowest daily reading since Dec. 27, when fewer people were getting tested over the festive holiday period.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-britain-cases/uk-sees-third-highest-daily-death-toll-with-new-cases-at-three-week-low-idUSKBN29L0M0>

Denmark logs 256 cases of more contagious coronavirus variant

Denmark on Saturday found its first case of a more contagious coronavirus variant from South Africa, and saw a rise in the number of infections with the highly transmissible B117 variant first identified in Britain, health authorities said. The Nordic country extended a lockdown for three weeks

on Wednesday in a bid to curtail the spread of the new variant from Britain, which authorities expect to be the dominant one by mid-February. Denmark has become a front-runner in monitoring coronavirus mutations by running most positive tests through genome sequencing analysis.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-denmark/denmark-logs-256-cases-of-more-contagious-coronavirus-variant-idUSKBN29L0HY>

Covid-19: Brazil hospitals 'run out of oxygen' for virus patients

Hospitals in the Brazilian city of Manaus have reached breaking point while treating Covid-19 patients, amid reports of severe oxygen shortages and desperate staff. The city, in Amazonas state, has seen a surge of deaths and infections. Health professionals, quoted by local media, warned "many people" could die due to lack of supplies and assistance. Brazil has recorded more than 205,000 virus deaths - the second-highest tally in the world, behind the US. A new coronavirus variant has recently emerged in Brazil, with several cases in travellers arriving in Japan traced back to the Amazonas region.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-55670318>

Brazil rushes to save premature babies as Covid-19 swamps Manaus hospitals

Authorities in the Brazilian Amazon are reportedly racing to save dozens of premature babies after a surge in coronavirus cases caused a catastrophic breakdown in the oxygen supply to hospitals and clinics. On Friday, CNN Brasil reported that the northern state of Amazonas was seeking to transfer at least 60 babies from neonatal units in its capital, Manaus, to hospitals elsewhere in the country.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/15/brazil-premature-babies-manaus-coronavirus-covid-19>

Covid-19 positives on Australian Open flights put 47 players into isolation

As the 15 chartered planes transporting more than 1,000 players and team members began to land in Australia this past week, many athletes punctuated their arrivals with a stream of statements expressing deep gratitude towards Tennis Australia, the Victorian Government and the Australian Open tournament director, Craig Tiley, for making the event possible. That heartwarming honeymoon did not last long. There were no positive messages on Saturday morning as two groups of players were confined to their rooms for 14 days. The tournament begins on 8 February, meaning those players on the affected flights will be restricted to little more than a week of practice.

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/jan/16/tennis-covid-19-positives-australian-open-flights-47-players-isolation-coronavirus>

Pandemic deaths top 2 million; crisis deepens in Americas

The world's death toll from COVID-19 today topped 2 million, with yesterday marking the deadliest day of the pandemic, with 16,056 fatalities logged, amid reports of collapsing health systems in parts of Brazil and exponential spread in some of its neighbors. Death levels are still soaring in hard-hit parts of Europe, and health officials say human behaviors, including those that occurred over the holiday season, are the main driver of virus surges, though they are worried about the potential impact of new, more transmissible SARS-CoV-2 variants.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/pandemic-deaths-top-2-million-crisis-deepens-americas>

Brazilian airforce transport patients with covid-19 from Manaus to other states due to services being overwhelmed

The Brazilian Air Force flew the first shipment of patients with covid-19 in Manaus to other states. Nine patients and five doctors boarded the flight to Teresina. Two C-99 aircraft from the First Squadron of the Second Transport Group (1st / 2nd GT) - Condor Squadron, carried out patient transfers with the objective of minimizing the impact on the Amazonas state health system

<https://noticias.uol.com.br/saude/ultimas-noticias/redacao/2021/01/15/fab-transporta-primeiros-pacientes-com-covid-19-de-manaus-a-outros-estados.htm>

Health care in Brazil's Amazonas state in 'collapse' as Covid-19 infections surge

Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro said Friday that "all means" are being made available to help the country's largest state, Amazonas, where hospitals are running out of beds and oxygen tanks amid soaring coronavirus infections. His claim came a day after Brazilian Health Minister Eduardo Pazuello described the healthcare system in the Amazonas state capital, Manaus, as being in "collapse." "I would say yes, there is a collapse in healthcare in Manaus. The line to get a hospital bed has grown a lot, today we have about 480 people waiting in line. And the reality is that there is a lower supply of oxygen -- not an interruption, but a lower supply of oxygen," he said during a Facebook live with Bolsonaro on Thursday.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/15/americas/brazil-manaus-coronavirus-crisis-intl/index.html>

NHS heroes fear Government are using them as coronavirus vaccine 'guinea pigs'

NHS heroes have blasted the Government for using them as "guinea pigs" by denying them an early booster vaccine. Doctors, nurses and paramedics fighting Covid must wait three months like the rest of us for a second jab - instead of the three weeks recommended after manufacturer trials. But calls are growing for frontline heroes to get the booster within the 21 days vaccine maker Pfizer deems vital for best protection. The UK's chief medical officers recommended the 12-week gap so more of the population can get some immunity from the first jab. Currently, the NHS is under severe strain with record numbers of Covid patients.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/nhs-heroes-fear-government-using-23332219>

New Lockdown

What's life like for the 20 million Chinese back in lockdown?

More than 20 million people across China are in lockdown as the country battles a spike in Covid-19 infections, the worst flare-up since last summer. China reported 135 new locally transmitted cases for Thursday, of which 90 were in the northern province of Hebei, 43 in the northeastern province of Heilongjiang, one in the southern region of Guangxi and one in the northwestern province of Shaanxi. A total of 66 asymptomatic cases were also reported. As of the end of Thursday, 1,001 Covid-19 patients were receiving treatment in hospital and 618 asymptomatic cases, which are not included in the tally, were under medical observation.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3117958/coronavirus-whats-life-20-million-chinese-back-lockdown>

China builds hospital in 5 days as COVID-19 cases rise in Beijing

China on Saturday finished a five-day construction project on a 1,500-room hospital as clusters of COVID-19 spread in Beijing and the surrounding provinces. The state of play: The facility is the one of six hospitals with a total of 6,500 rooms in the works in Nangong, the Xinhua News Agency said Saturday per AP reporting. They are all expected to be completed next week. China reportedly put roughly 28 million people on lockdown this week in the the Hebei provincial capital of Shijiazhuang.

<https://www.axios.com/china-hospital-surge-coronavirus-581cf7c5-da96-44f6-940b-8f076bf0e1f2.html>

Covid-19: France PM Castex announces tighter curfew

French Prime Minister Jean Castex has announced a new evening curfew will begin nationally across France starting at 18:00 (17:00 GMT) on Saturday. The move is a tightening of a curfew already in place since December, which restricts movement from 20:00-06:00. Announcing the measure on Thursday, Mr Castex described the country's situation as "worrying" with infections remaining at a "high plateau". He also announced new restrictions for people arriving into the country. France has so far recorded more than 69,000 coronavirus deaths - the seventh-highest death toll in the world.

https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55669172?fbclid=IwAR23Eahc4POvYv_cX0AVbGMa98WWExc8FvloQH4e8IFobs32oCuK_JgMbvq

Between home confinements and evacuations, stories of lockdown in China's Hebei

province after Covid-19 outbreak

The January 2 discovery of a cluster of coronavirus infections in Shijiazhuang, the capital of China's northern Hebei province, has led to China's most severe Covid-19 outbreak in five months, with 463 reported active infections in the province as of January 14 and one death. Authorities have placed the province's three major cities, Shijiazhuang, Xingtai and Langfang, under lockdown starting from last week. However, videos posted on Chinese social media reveal differing quarantine experiences, as the authorities proceed with a more localised lockdown approach.

<https://observers.france24.com/en/asia-pacific/20210115-covid19-hebei-china-shijiazhuang-lockdown>