

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

19th May 2021

Overseas NewsRoundUp

India's halt to vaccine exports 'very problematic' for Africa

- An extended halt to exports of COVID-19 vaccines from India, where authorities are battling a wave of domestic infections, risks derailing vaccination efforts already underway in Africa, one of the continent's top health officials on Tuesday.
- [India stopped vaccine exports a month ago and, according to a Reuters report earlier on Tuesday, is now unlikely to resume major exports before October, dealing a major setback to the global COVAX initiative on which many poor countries rely.](#)
- Africa has lagged far behind other regions due to supply issues and meagre financial resources but had planned to vaccinate 30-35% of its population by the end of the year and 60% within the next two to three years.
- 'This is very problematic as it means unpredictability of our vaccination programmes and a serious risk of not achieving our stated target....on time,' the director of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, John Nkengasong, wrote to Reuters.
- Those targets primarily relied on supplies from the global COVAX vaccine-sharing facility, which has depended heavily on AstraZeneca shots produced by the Serum Institute of India.
- 'Given India's huge challenges, it will be impossible to expect anything soon,' Nkengasong said.
- There have been at least 4,742,000 reported infections and 126,000 reported deaths caused by the novel coronavirus in Africa so far, according to a Reuters tally.
- And while the pandemic's impact has been less acute than in the United States, Europe and now India, Africa's largely unvaccinated population of over 1 billion remains vulnerable, experts say.

COVAX shipments running low

- COVAX has already begun distributing millions of doses of the two-shot AstraZeneca vaccine to countries across Africa, But those initial shipments have now been largely exhausted, with around 80% having been administered as a first dose, according to the World Health organization (WHO).
- Most countries using COVAX will now surpass the 12-week maximum interval recommended between the first and second doses of AstraZeneca unless 20 million doses are delivered by the end of June and another 5 million in July, the WHO said.
- 'The supply gap could be closed if countries with adequate supplies set aside a percentage of vaccines for COVAX' said Richard Mihigo, coordinator of the WHO's Immunization and Vaccines Development Programme in Africa.
- A deal negotiated with Johnson & Johnson by the African Union should supply Africa with 400 million vaccine doses beginning in the third quarter of this year.
- Several countries' health officials told Reuters they had yet to receive updated information on expected arrival dates for COVAX shots. Some are now weighing their options.
- Ethiopia, for example, has just received 2.2 million of the 7.6 million AstraZeneca shots it was due to get through COVAX by the end of April.
- 'We were expecting some delays, but not to this scale. As a country we must search other

options,' Muluken Yohannes, a senior adviser to Ethiopia's health ministry, told Reuters.

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<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/indias-halt-vaccine-exports-very-problematic-africa-2021-05-18/>

Macron hosts Africa summit on post-COVID-19 economic recovery

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French President Emmanuel Macron is hosting leaders of African countries and heads of global financial institutions for a summit that will seek to provide the continent with critical financing swept away by the impact of COVID-19. Some two dozen African heads of state are attending Tuesday's summit in Paris, one of the biggest in-person top-level meetings held during the pandemic. International financial leaders attending, included International Monetary Fund (IMF) chief Kristalina Georgieva as well as World Bank managing director of operations Axel van Trotsenburg.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/18/frances-macron-hosts-summit-on-post-covid-19-africa-finance>

India unlikely to resume sizable COVID-19 vaccine exports until October

EXCLUSIVE: India unlikely to resume sizable COVID-19 vaccine exports until October

India is unlikely to resume major exports of COVID-19 vaccines until at least October as it diverts shots for domestic use, three government sources said, a longer-than-expected delay set to worsen supply shortages from the global COVAX initiative. The Serum Institute of India (SII) responded by saying that it hoped to restart deliveries to COVAX and other countries by the end of this year. "We would like to reiterate that we have never exported vaccines at the cost of the people of India and remain committed to do everything we can in the support of the vaccination drive in the country," SII said

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/exclusive-india-unlikely-resume-sizable-covid-19-vaccine-exports-until-october-2021-05-18/>

Tanzanian experts say COVID-19 vaccines safe, recommend joining COVAX

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Experts appointed by Tanzania's new president have declared COVID-19 vaccines to be effective and recommended joining the COVAX facility that shares the inoculations, in the latest sign suggesting official scepticism about the pandemic is waning. The recommendations by a coronavirus committee formed in April by President Samia Suluhu Hassan were given by the chair of the group at a press conference at State House in Dar es Salaam on Monday.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/tanzanian-experts-say-covid-19-vaccines-safe-recommend-joining-covax-2021-05-17/>

India's Serum Institute to start export of COVID-19 vaccine by year-end

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India's largest vaccine producer Serum Institute on Tuesday said it would continue to scale up its

production of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine and start exporting to other countries by the end of the year.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/indias-serum-institute-start-export-covid-19-vaccine-by-year-end-2021-05-18/>

'Entire Families' Wiped Out by Covid's Carnage in Rural India

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After devastating India's biggest cities, the latest Covid-19 wave is now ravaging rural areas across the world's second-most populous country. And most villages have no way to fight the virus. In Basi, about 1.5 hours from the capital New Delhi, about three-quarters of the village's 5,400 people are sick and more than 30 have died in the past three weeks. It has no health-care facilities, no doctors and no oxygen canisters. And unlike India's social-media literate urban population, residents can't appeal on Twitter to an army of strangers willing to help.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2021-05-17/-entire-families-wiped-out-by-covid-19-s-carnage-in-rural-india>

India reports record day of virus deaths as cases level off

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India's total virus cases since the pandemic began swept past 25 million on Tuesday as the country registered more than 260,000 new cases and a record 4,329 fatalities in the past 24 hours. The numbers continue a trend of falling cases after infections dipped below 300,000 for the first time in weeks on Monday. Active cases in the country also decreased by more than 165,000 on Tuesday — the biggest dip in weeks. But deaths have continued to rise and hospitals are still swamped by patients. India has recorded nearly 280,000 virus deaths since the pandemic began. Experts warn that both the number of deaths and total reported cases are likely vast undercounts.

<https://apnews.com/article/india-coronavirus-pandemic-health-af56b38fff1b4a3fd4ed5ca35d8f2619>

Covid-19 coronavirus: Vaccine rollout needs 'significant' work to succeed: Auditor-General

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Auditor-General John Ryan says a "significant scale-up" is needed if the Government is to hit its vaccination goals - and even if everything ran according to plan, the goal would only just be achieved. Published today, the Auditor-General's look at planning for the nationwide rollout of the Covid-19 assessed how ready the health sector was to meet the Government's goal of vaccinating as many people as possible, aged 16 and over, by the end of 2021. It found some good early progress, noting that at the time of the audit nearly 400,000 doses were administered.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/covid-19-coronavirus-vaccine-rollout-needs-significant-work-to-succeed-auditor-general/EIWOJDGSE4YVJTPANSOMNBUMJE/>

Singapore seeks COVID-19 vaccination for all adults by August

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Singapore is expecting to administer at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine to its entire adult population by early August, authorities said on Tuesday, after a decision to widen the gap between doses to inoculate more people faster. Close to two million of Singapore's 5.7 million people have received at least one dose, according to official data as of Monday. About 1.4 million recipients have completed the full two-dose regimen, authorities said. "Lengthening the interval to between six to eight weeks will enable us to cover more people with the first dose of the vaccine more quickly, who will then have some protection," the health ministry said.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/singapore-seeks-covid-19-vaccination-all-adults-by-august-2021-05-18/>

Over 200 million coronavirus vaccine doses administered in EU

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More than 200 million coronavirus vaccine doses have been administered in the European Union, and nearly 53 million Europeans have been fully vaccinated as of Tuesday morning. Across the EU's 27 member states, around 200.11 million doses have been administered to around 148 million people, according to data from AFP, tallying up all figures from the various countries. On 14 April, the EU reached the 100 million vaccine milestone, meaning the administering of vaccines has doubled in just over one month, and that the EU could be on track to fully vaccinate 70% of its adult population by late July.

<https://www.brusselstimes.com/news/world-all-news/169958/over-200-million-coronavirus-vaccine-doses-administered-in-european-union-eu-germany-france-spain-belgium-ema-european-medicines-agency/>

All people who refused coronavirus vaccine to be offered second chance

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All people who fail to turn up for their first coronavirus vaccination appointment will receive a second invitation to be vaccinated at the end of the campaign in Belgium, the Vaccination Task Force announced on Tuesday. Both doubters and those who initially refused the vaccine will get a second chance, Gudrun Briat, spokesperson for the task force said during a press conference held by health institute Sciensano and the National Crisis Centre.

<https://www.brusselstimes.com/news/belgium-all-news/health/169973/second-chance-to-be-offered-to-people-who-refuse-coronavirus-vaccine-vaccination-task-force-belgium-wallonia-flanders-brussels-gudrun-briat/>

Biden Dips Into U.S. Vaccine Supply to Send 20 Million Doses Abroad

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President Biden, heeding widespread calls to step up his response to the pandemic's surge abroad, said on Monday that his administration would send 20 million doses of federally authorized coronavirus vaccine overseas in June — the first time he has pledged to give away doses that could be used in the United States. The donation is another step toward what Mr. Biden promised would be an “entirely new effort” to increase vaccine supplies and vastly expand manufacturing capacity, most of it in the United States. He also put Jeffrey Zients, the White House coronavirus response coordinator, in charge of developing a global strategy. “We know America will never be fully safe until the pandemic that’s raging globally is under control,” Mr. Biden said in a brief appearance at the White House. “No ocean’s wide enough, no wall’s high enough, to keep us safe.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/17/us/politics/biden-coronavirus-vaccine.html>

Mexico aims to give population at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose by October

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Mexico aims to ensure its population has had at least one COVID-19 vaccine shot by October before the onset of colder weather, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said on Tuesday. Mexico has so far distributed nearly 24 million vaccine doses to its population of 126 million, and Lopez Obrador said he was sure it would receive more shots from the United States. By July, health authorities will begin providing vaccinations to people as young as 40, he said. Over the next month and a half, the pace of vaccinations in the world's largest Spanish-speaking country should accelerate as tens of millions of new doses arrive, the government says.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/mexico-aims-give-population-least-one-covid-19-vaccine-dose-by-october-2021-05-18/>

UAE to offer booster shot to recipients of Sinopharm vaccine

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The United Arab Emirates announced Tuesday it will offer a third shot to recipients of the Chinese state-backed Sinopharm coronavirus vaccine six months after their initial two-dose regimen. The

move appears to make the UAE the first country worldwide to formally introduce the booster. The brief statement comes after some residents in the UAE reported receiving a third shot amid concerns about an insufficient antibody response. China's top disease control official acknowledged last month that the country's locally produced vaccines offer low protection against the virus, adding to growing questions over the shot's efficacy. The Sinopharm vaccine has become the linchpin of the UAE's vaccination campaign, among the fastest in the world per capita.

<https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-coronavirus-pandemic-health-8d517a96e6fcf585bda77d16ebad139a>

Martin McKee: What went wrong in the UK's covid-19 response?

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In May 2020, Sarah Wollaston, Mike Gill, and I called for a rapid inquiry into the British government's response to the covid-19 pandemic. This would have been an opportunity to learn lessons and not to repeat them. At that time we knew that the United Kingdom's response to the news of an emerging infection had been slow, leading to tens of thousands of avoidable deaths. We were anxious that this should not be repeated. Our call was ignored and the events of debris in March 2020 were repeated in December 2020, as the prime minister, anxious to be seen to "save Christmas," dithered as a new variant, B.1.1.7, spread rapidly. More recently, he delayed imposing a ban on travel from India until 23 April 2021.

<https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/05/18/martin-mckee-what-went-wrong-in-the-uks-covid-19-response/>

COVID-19: Vaccine surge in coronavirus hotspots may not stop Indian variant spread, scientists warn PM

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Boris Johnson is being warned by scientists that a surge in vaccinations in COVID hotspots may not be enough to halt the spread of the Indian variant - and that he should not have relaxed lockdown rules this week. The prime minister has said he is keeping the variant under close watch, adding "we'll know a lot more in a few days' time", suggesting he will not wait until the next review on 14 June if he needs to take further action. That review is due for a week before final step of the government's roadmap, when it's hoped all legal limits on social contact are lifted on 21 June.

<https://news.sky.com/story/vaccine-surge-in-covid-hotspots-may-not-stop-indian-variant-spread-scientists-warn-pm-12310347>

COVID-19: Sinopharm vaccine booster six months after second dose in UAE, says NCEMA

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UAE adopts proactive strategy to provide maximum protection against COVID-19 Abu Dhabi: As part of the UAE's proactive strategy to provide maximum protection for society, an additional supportive dose of Sinopharm is now available for people who have received the vaccine previously and who have completed more than six months since the second dose,

<https://gulfnnews.com/uae/covid-19-sinopharm-vaccine-booster-six-months-after-second-dose-in-uae-says-ncema-1.1621346145653>

COVID-19: Regulator increases time Pfizer jab can be stored in a fridge to one month

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The length of time the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine can be kept unopened in a fridge has been increased from five days to one month. The European Medicines Agency (EMA) previously advised that vials needed to be kept at an ultra-low temperature, between minus 70C and minus 80C, until a few days before use when it can be transferred to a standard medical fridge. But the EMA said in a statement it had extended the approved storage period for an unopened thawed vial when kept in a fridge between 2C and 8C from five days to one month.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-regulator-increases-time-pfizer-jab-can-be-stored-in-a-fridge-to-one-month-12309663>

Major new UK study shows overwhelming effectiveness of AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines

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A major new study of people who have received a coronavirus vaccine in the UK has found that a single dose of the AstraZeneca can lower the risk of death with coronavirus by 80%. The new report for Public Health England also shows protection against death from the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine rises from approximately 80% after one dose to 97% after two doses.

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-vaccination-astrazeneca-pfizer-study-20619691>

New vaccine technology could prevent future coronavirus outbreaks

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Researchers are working on a vaccine that could protect against multiple coronaviruses. A new study found the shot to be highly protective against current coronavirus variants in monkeys. The technology could help avoid a future of seasonal booster shots.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/pan-coronavirus-vaccine-variants-future-pandemics-2021-5>

Scientists are working on a coronavirus super-jab for the 'pandemic age'

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DHVI researchers say their 'nanoparticle' vaccine triggered an immune response to several coronaviruses in tests on monkeys. Their aim is to develop a shot that can protect against a range of such viruses, both known and unknown, to prepare for future outbreaks

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3133925/us-scientists-are-working-coronavirus-super-jab-pandemic-age>

China's Clover says its COVID-19 vaccine candidate shows immune response in mice

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Chinese biotechnology company Clover Biopharmaceuticals said on Tuesday the modified version of its COVID-19 vaccine candidate showed a strong immune response against the original strain of the virus and some variants during animal testing. Clover said in a statement its vaccine candidate demonstrated a "neutralisation" against the South African, Brazilian and UK variants among mice. The company is testing a COVID-19 vaccine candidate containing an adjuvant, typically designed to boost the efficacy of vaccines, from Dynavax Technologies Corp

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/finance/companies/chinas-clover-says-its-covid-19-vaccine-candidate-shows-immune-response-in-mice/ar-BB1gQFHf>

Singapore approves COVID-19 vaccine for use in 12 to 15-year-olds

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Singapore has authorised the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for those aged 12 to 15 years old in a bid to extend protection to more groups as the country tackles a recent increase of infections, officials said on Tuesday. "The data showed that the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine demonstrated high efficacy consistent with that observed in the adult population," the health ministry said in a statement, adding "its safety profile is also consistent with the known safety profile in the adult population". The government will also extend the interval between two-dose COVID-19 vaccines to six to eight weeks, from three to four weeks currently, it said.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/other/singapore-approves-covid-19-vaccine-for-use-in-12-to-15-year-olds/ar-BB1gRmKA>

Covid-19: What should we do about B.1.617.2? A classic case of decision making under uncertainty

Covid-19: What should we do about B.1.617.2? A classic case of decision making under uncertainty

The new variant of concern has fundamentally changed the risk we face and therefore the government's criteria for moving ahead with the road map have not been met, argue Stephen Reicher and colleagues. There are many things we know and many things we don't know about the B.1.617.2 variant. We know that it is spreading fast (roughly doubling each week in the UK and nearly tripling last week from 520 to 1313 cases), that it is becoming established in a number of areas across the country, and that it is already the dominant variant in places such as Bedford, Bolton, and Blackburn. Compared to the dominant B.1.1.7 variant, we know that B.1.617.2 is very likely to be more transmissible and that it might be better able to transmit between people who are fully vaccinated

https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/05/17/covid-19-what-should-we-do-about-b-1-617-2-a-classic-case-of-decision-making-under-uncertainty/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_term=hootsuite&utm_content=sme&utm_campaign=usage

Rare COVID-19 response in children explained

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One of the enduring mysteries of the COVID-19 pandemic is why most children tend to experience fewer symptoms than adults after infection with the coronavirus. The immune system response that occurs in the rare cases in which children experience life-threatening reactions after infection may offer an important insight, a Yale-led study published in the journal Immunity suggests.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-05-rare-covid-response-children.html>

Long Covid symptoms ease after vaccination, survey finds

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Covid-19 vaccines tend to alleviate the symptoms of long Covid, according to a large survey of more than 800 people that suggests mRNA vaccines, in particular, are beneficial. Though Covid-19 was initially understood to be a largely respiratory illness from which most would recover within a few weeks, as the pandemic wore on increasing numbers of people reported experiencing symptoms for months on end. There is no consensus definition of the condition of these people who have symptoms ranging from chronic fatigue to organ damage, let alone a standardised treatment plan. As vaccines hit the mainstream, concerns arose that vaccination could precipitate relapses or a worsening of symptoms. But conversely, anecdotal reports suggested that vaccines helped some people with long Covid.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/may/18/long-covid-symptoms-ease-after-vaccination-survey-finds>

Luck is not a strategy: The world needs to start preparing now for the next pandemic

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As countries grapple with the worst global pandemic in a century, it's hard to think about preparing for the next one. But if we don't, it could be worse than Covid-19. Over the last 30 years, infectious disease outbreaks have emerged with alarming regularity. The World Health Organization lists an influenza pandemic and other high-threat viral diseases such as Ebola and dengue among the top 10 biggest threats to public health. The rate of animal-to-human transmission of viruses has been increasing, with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimating that 75% of new infectious diseases in humans come from animals. These zoonotic infections can have profound effects on human life. The overall infection fatality rate is around 10% for severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), between 40% and 75% for Nipah virus, and as high as 88% for Ebola.

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/05/18/luck-is-not-a-strategy-the-world-needs-to-start-preparing-now-for-the-next-pandemic/>

Thailand reports youngest victim among record tally of COVID-19 deaths

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Thailand reported on Tuesday 35 new coronavirus deaths, a record daily number that included the country's youngest victim up to now, a two-month-old baby, as authorities struggle to contain a third wave of infections. The Southeast Asian country's latest COVID-19 outbreak has seen infections more than triple and deaths increase six fold since it started in April, following a year of success in containing earlier outbreaks. The new deaths included a two-month-old baby with a heart condition, the COVID-19 task force said.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/thailand-reports-youngest-victim-among-record-tally-covid-19-deaths-2021-05-18/>

Tokyo doctors call for Olympics to be cancelled over COVID surge

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A top medical organisation in Japan has thrown its weight behind calls to cancel the Tokyo Olympics, saying hospitals are already overwhelmed as the country battles a spike in coronavirus infections less than three months from the start of the Summer Games. In an open letter to Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, dated May 14 and posted online on Monday, the Tokyo Medical Practitioners Association said hospitals in the host city "have their hands full and have almost no spare capacity".

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/18/tokyo-doctors-call-for-cancellation-of-olympic-games-over-covid>

Malaysia mulls shutdown of richest state amid COVID-19 surge

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Malaysia's health ministry on Monday said it may push for a total lockdown of the country's most industrialised state if current coronavirus curbs are unable to rein in a spike in new cases. The government banned social activities and travel between districts and states two weeks ago, as part of a Movement Control Order (MCO) imposed before the Eid al-Fitr holidays, as it grapples with a surge in COVID-19 infections that experts have said may involve highly contagious variants

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/malaysia-mulls-shutdown-richest-state-amid-covid-19-surge-2021-05-17/>

Australian PM spurns industry pleas to reopen border before 2022

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Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Tuesday said it was still not safe to allow residents fully-vaccinated for COVID-19 to travel overseas, as industries hit hard by the pandemic press for a faster reopening of international borders. "I understand that everyone is keen to get back to a time that we once knew. But the reality is we are living this year in a pandemic that is worse than last year," Morrison told reporters.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australian-pm-stands-firm-border-closure-due-covid-19-industries-plea-reopening-2021-05-18/>

As Greece reopens to tourists amid pandemic, some shift strategy

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For the past 14 years, Eleni Chrysikopoulou has raised her children selling trinkets to tourists. Her shop is well situated at the intersection of two main streets in the heart of Corfu town, but that also means she pays a hefty rent. Last year nearly ruined her. COVID travel restrictions meant that Corfu received just 28,000 visitors from cruise ships, down from 850,000 in 2019. The 1.5 million visitors who arrived by air in 2019 dropped by three quarters. "A lot of shops have closed. I know of many instances, people who've been in business for years. I've no idea what happened to them. Perhaps

they went back to their villages,” Chrysikopoulou told Al Jazeera.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/18/as-greece-reopens-to-tourists-amid-pandemic-some-shift-strategy>

Disparities in US COVID vaccine distribution spotlighted

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Two studies today describe US COVID-19 vaccination disparities, one evaluating vaccine allocation plans aimed at reducing distribution differences, and the other revealing urban versus rural inequities. The first study, led by University of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia researchers and published in Nature Medicine, involved analysis of COVID-19 vaccine allocation plans provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) 64 jurisdictions, which consist of 50 states, five large cities, eight territories, and Washington, DC. In the second study, published in Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, CDC researchers examined COVID-19 vaccination disparities in rural and urban US counties from Dec 14, 2020, to Apr 10, 2021. Specifically, they assessed county-level vaccine administration information on adults who received their first dose of either the Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna coronavirus vaccine or a single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine in 49 states and Washington, DC.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/05/disparities-us-covid-vaccine-distribution-spotlighted>