

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

13th Oct 2021

One Minute Overview

Bangladesh plans to vaccinate 80 mn people against Covid by next January - Bangladesh aims to administer Covid-19 vaccines to nearly half of its population by next January. [Health Minister Zahid Maleque said the Bangladeshi government is working to vaccinate 80 million people by December and January, Xinhua news agency reported](#), citing the Bangladesh's state-run news agency BSS. The minister said the government is considering vaccinating children aged between 12 and 17 years. Bangladesh has already announced a target of vaccinating 80 per cent of its population by 2022. The South Asian country has so far got nearly 70 million doses of the Covid-19 vaccine.

Moderna's search for African vaccine manufacture site set to intensify - chairman - Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa could be potential locations for Moderna's planned vaccine factory in Africa, [the U.S. drugmaker's co-founder and chairman said as it steps up its search for a site on the continent. Moderna said last week it would build a plant in Africa to produce up to 500 million doses of vaccines a year](#), including its COVID-19 shot, as pressure grows on pharmaceutical companies to manufacture drugs in lower-income countries.

Covid: UK's early response worst public health failure ever, MPs say - The UK's failure to do more to stop Covid spreading early in the pandemic was one of the country's worst public health failures, a report by MPs says. [The government approach - backed by its scientists - was to try to manage the situation and in effect achieve herd immunity by infection, it said. This led to a delay in introducing the first lockdown, costing thousands of lives](#), the MPs found. But their report highlighted successes too, including the vaccination rollout. It described the approach to vaccination - from the research and development through to the rollout of the jabs - as 'one of the most effective initiatives in UK history'.

Covid Spread Was 8% Lower In Democrat-Led States Than GOP Because Of Stricter Restrictions, Study Finds - The peer-reviewed study, led by researchers at Binghamton University, determined a Public Health Protective Policy Index (PPI) that measured the "stringency" of states' public health policies and analyzed those findings in relation to states' Covid-19 transmission and the governors' partisan affiliation. [The researchers looked at Covid-19 rates and policies between March and November 2020, as well as when specific states' Covid-19 cases peaked](#). Democratic-led states had a PPI that was approximately 10 points higher on average than states with GOP governors, though the study notes some Republican-led states like Maryland, Vermont and Massachusetts had stricter measures that were closer to the Democratic states.

COVID-19: 'A slap in the face' - Families of pandemic victims attack MPs' report and call for judge-led inquiry - Families of COVID-19 victims have attacked an MPs' report into government failings during the pandemic as 'laughable' and a 'slap in the face' - and say a judicial inquiry is needed to get to the truth. [The report said decisions on lockdowns and social distancing early in the pandemic were 'one of the most important public health failures the United Kingdom has ever experienced' and cost thousands of lives](#). It said 'groupthink' among officials meant chances to delay the spread of the virus were missed, and it was a 'serious early error' not to lock down sooner.

COVID-19 curbs in Sydney could ease early amid surge in vaccinations - New South Wales

could ease more restrictions in Sydney a week earlier than planned on Oct. 18 as Australia's most populous state races towards its 80% double-dose vaccination target, the government said on Wednesday. [The southeastern state is expected to hit the mark over the weekend, beating forecasts, and officials previously promised to relax further restrictions on vaccinated residents on the first Monday after reaching that milestone.](#) 'If we hit 80%, we've always said it will be the Monday following,' state Premier Dominic Perrottet told ABC Radio. 'We will have this discussion with our team on Thursday and we will make a decision to be announced on Friday.'

Covid Has Killed Hundreds of Police Officers. Many Still Resist Vaccines - Over the last year and a half, a majority of the roughly 40 police officers who patrol Baker, La., a suburb of Baton Rouge, tested positive for the coronavirus. [All of them recovered and went back to work — until Lt. DeMarcus Dunn got sick. Lieutenant Dunn, a 36-year-old shift supervisor who coached youth sports and once chased down someone who fled the police station after being arrested,](#) died from Covid-19 on Aug. 13. His wedding had been scheduled for the next day.

Covid-19: Ethnic minority deaths were 'unacceptably high' during pandemic, MPs say - A damning report from MPs has slammed the "unacceptably high" death rates among people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities that occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic. [The study, from the cross-party Science and Technology Committee and the Health and Social Care Committee, said serious errors and delays, including on testing, care homes and the timing of the first lockdown,](#) have cost lives during the virus outbreak. The pandemic exacerbated existing social, economic and health inequalities among ethnic minority communities, the MPs said.

Brazil's Bolsonaro says he is 'bored' by questions on COVID-19 deaths - Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro said on Monday that he did not want to be 'bored' with questions about the milestone of 600,000 COVID-19 deaths that Latin America's biggest country passed a few days ago. [Bolsonaro's poll numbers have fallen due to his handling of the pandemic, rising inflation and a weak economy.](#) Brazil has the world's second highest COVID-19 death toll after the United States, and Bolsonaro has long sought to minimize the impact of the virus, touting unproven cures and railing against lockdowns.

Covid study linking vaccines to rare side effect of myocarditis was wrong, researchers admit - A research study that linked a very rare side effect to the Covid-19 mRNA vaccines has been withdrawn by researchers after they made a major mathematical error. [The Canadian study attracted headlines after it suggested there was a 1 in 1,000 risk of people developing myocarditis or inflammation of the heart after receiving the Moderna or Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines.](#) But the paper's conclusions were wrong, and the calculation flawed. The numbers used by the researchers, from the Ottawa Heart Institute, underestimated the amount of vaccines delivered in Ottawa over a two-month period with the result being 25 times smaller than the true figure. They had initially based their estimate on a total of 32,379 vaccines doses and 32 cases of myocarditis, when in reality more than 854,000 doses had been given between June 1 to July 31. The study's findings have been used by anti-vaccination websites and social media accounts in Britain, the United States and Canada.

Merck aims to double supply of Covid-19 antiviral pill on rising demand - Merck plans to double manufacturing capacity for its antiviral pill to treat Covid-19 next year as governments scramble to procure a treatment that a late-stage trial showed cuts hospital admission and death rates in half. [The mounting demand for Merck's drug, the first oral treatment shown to prevent severe disease in vulnerable people with coronavirus, is a sign that it could trigger the same kind of worldwide rush faced by makers of early Covid-19 vaccines.](#) Merck, which this week asked US regulators to authorise use of the drug called molnupiravir, told the Financial Times it had secured deals with Singapore, New Zealand, Australia and South Korea to supply doses in the past week and is in talks with several other governments.

Moderna Argues to FDA for Half-Dose of Vaccine as Booster - In documents released Tuesday morning, Moderna argued that the Food and Drug Administration should authorize a half-dose of its coronavirus vaccine as a booster shot for recipients at least six months after the second dose, citing evidence that the vaccine's potency against infection wanes over time. [The agency noted in its own analysis that, overall, available data show Moderna and the other vaccines "still afford protection against severe Covid-19 disease](#) and death in the United States." Moderna cited the rate of breakthrough infections, "real world evidence of reduced effectiveness against the Delta variant," and falling levels of neutralizing antibodies from its vaccine six to eight months after a second dose. The company said its clinical trial studies showed that a third injection boosted antibody levels — one measure of the immune system's response — higher than what they had been before the second dose.

COVID-19: 'Surges of illness' for 'months and perhaps even years to come', WHO expert warns - 'Surges of illness' caused by COVID-19 are going to continue for 'months and perhaps even years to come', the World Health Organization's (WHO) special envoy for the disease has warned. Speaking to Kay Burley, Dr David Nabarro said 'the pandemic is very much with us all over the world right now', and those who have not been vaccinated will be particularly affected by spikes in illness. With government data showing the UK is recording more than 30,000 COVID-19 cases a day, Dr Nabarro warned that the 'virus has not gone away' and is 'continuing to mutate'. ['It's capable probably of causing all sorts of future problems', he said.](#) He appeared on Sky News following the release of a highly critical report by MPs that found thousands of lives have been lost due to delays and mistakes by both government ministers and scientific advisers.

Lockdown Exit

Australians Planning to Get Covid Vaccine More Optimistic: Westpac

Australian consumers who intend to get vaccinated are far more optimistic than those who don't intend to have a job, Westpac Banking Corp.'s October household sentiment survey showed. Respondents who are not vaccinated but intend to be recorded an index reading of 122 points, while those who aren't vaccinated and don't intend to be posted a reading of 84.8, Westpac's monthly survey showed Wednesday. The overall consumer sentiment index slid 1.5% from last month to 104.6. "The confidence level of those not intending to get vaccinated has also fallen quite sharply in the last month," said Bill Evans, chief economist at Westpac. "Encouragingly, the size of this group has fallen as well, accounting for only 6% of respondents in the October survey compared to 9% in September and just under 20% at the start of the year."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-12/australia-s-household-confidence-gapes-over-vaccination-intent>

Covid: UK's early response worst public health failure ever, MPs say

The UK's failure to do more to stop Covid spreading early in the pandemic was one of the country's worst public health failures, a report by MPs says. The government approach - backed by its scientists - was to try to manage the situation and in effect achieve herd immunity by infection, it said. This led to a delay in introducing the first lockdown, costing thousands of lives, the MPs found. But their report highlighted successes too, including the vaccination rollout. It described the approach to vaccination - from the research and development through to the rollout of the jabs - as "one of the most effective initiatives in UK history".

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-58876089>

EU may consider deal on Merck's COVID pill after approval procedure begins -source

The European Union may consider signing a supply deal with U.S. drugmaker Merck for its experimental COVID-19 pill, but only after the company starts the process of seeking approval for the drug in the bloc, a senior EU official said on Tuesday. The oral antiviral treatment molnupiravir

has been developed with Ridgeback Biotherapeutics.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/eu-may-consider-deal-mercks-covid-pill-after-approval-procedure-begins-source-2021-10-12/>

Moderna's search for African site set to intensify - chairman

Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa could be potential locations for Moderna's planned vaccine factory in Africa, the U.S. drugmaker's co-founder and chairman said as it steps up its search for a site on the continent. Moderna said last week it would build a plant in Africa to produce up to 500 million doses of vaccines a year, including its COVID-19 shot, as pressure grows on pharmaceutical companies to manufacture drugs in lower-income countries.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/modernas-search-african-site-set-intensify-chairman-2021-10-12/>

Covid Spread Was 8% Lower In Democrat-Led States Than GOP Because Of Stricter Restrictions, Study Finds

The peer-reviewed study, led by researchers at Binghamton University, determined a Public Health Protective Policy Index (PPI) that measured the "stringency" of states' public health policies and analyzed those findings in relation to states' Covid-19 transmission and the governors' partisan affiliation. The researchers looked at Covid-19 rates and policies between March and November 2020, as well as when specific states' Covid-19 cases peaked. Democratic-led states had a PPI that was approximately 10 points higher on average than states with GOP governors, though the study notes some Republican-led states like Maryland, Vermont and Massachusetts had stricter measures that were closer to the Democratic states.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/alisondurkee/2021/10/11/covid-spread-was-8-lower-in-democrat-led-states-than-gop-be-cause-of-stricter-restrictions-study-finds/>

Thailand to reopen for some vaccinated tourists from November

Thailand plans to fully re-open to vaccinated tourists from countries deemed low risk from 1 November, the country's leader said, citing the urgent need to save the kingdom's ailing economy. Before the pandemic, Thailand attracted nearly 40 million visitors a year drawn to its picturesque beaches and robust nightlife, with tourism making up almost 20% of its national income. But Covid-related travel restrictions have left the economy battered, contributing to its worst performance in more than 20 years.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/12/thailand-to-reopen-for-some-vaccinated-tourists-from-november>

COVID-19: Thailand reopens to vaccinated UK travellers, as visiting dozens of destinations now easier after red list cut to just seven countries

Thailand will end quarantine for fully vaccinated UK travellers, as British COVID advice has been relaxed making it easier to visit almost 90 countries. Forty-seven nations were taken off the red list at 4am, meaning anyone arriving from places including South Africa, Brazil and Argentina no longer need to quarantine in a hotel.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-travel-between-uk-and-dozens-of-countries-now-easier-after-red-list-cut-to-just-seven-12430770>

Covid and Age

Emily Oster, an economist at Brown University who frequently writes about parenting, published an article in The Atlantic in March that made a lot of people angry. The headline was, "Your Unvaccinated Kid Is Like a Vaccinated Grandma." The article argued that Covid-19 tended to be so mild in children that vaccinated parents could feel comfortable going out in the world with their unvaccinated children.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/12/briefing/covid-age-risk-infection-vaccine.html>

COVID-19 curbs in Sydney could ease early amid surge in vaccinations

New South Wales could ease more restrictions in Sydney a week earlier than planned on Oct. 18 as Australia's most populous state races towards its 80% double-dose vaccination target, the government said on Wednesday. The southeastern state is expected to hit the mark over the weekend, beating forecasts, and officials previously promised to relax further restrictions on vaccinated residents on the first Monday after reaching that milestone. "If we hit 80%, we've always said it will be the Monday following," state Premier Dominic Perrottet told ABC Radio. "We will have this discussion with our team on Thursday and we will make a decision to be announced on Friday."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/covid-19-curbs-sydney-could-ease-early-amid-surge-vaccinations-2021-10-12/>

COVID-19: 'A slap in the face' - Families of pandemic victims attack MPs' report and call for judge-led inquiry

Families of COVID-19 victims have attacked an MPs' report into government failings during the pandemic as "laughable" and a "slap in the face" - and say a judicial inquiry is needed to get to the truth. The report said decisions on lockdowns and social distancing early in the pandemic were "one of the most important public health failures the United Kingdom has ever experienced" and cost thousands of lives. It said "groupthink" among officials meant chances to delay the spread of the virus were missed, and it was a "serious early error" not to lock down sooner.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-a-slap-in-the-face-families-of-pandemic-victims-attack-mps-report-and-call-for-judge-led-inquiry-12432268>

Exit Strategies

COVID-19 pandemic not in 'rear view mirror' for hospitality sector, pubs boss warns PM

COVID-19 is not in the "rear view mirror" for Britain's hospitality sector and it still has symptoms that are "very real", a leading pubs boss has told Sky News. Clive Chesser, chief executive of Punch Pubs, spoke about the challenges facing the sector at a discussion on the UK's recovery with leaders from across the economy at Sky's Big Ideas Live event. Mr Chesser said the "celebratory" tone of the prime minister's speech to the Conservative Party conference last week did not match the reality facing hospitality businesses.

<https://news.sky.com/story/pandemic-not-in-rear-view-mirror-for-hospitality-sector-pubs-boss-tells-pm-12431948>

S.Korea to donate 1.1 mln doses of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine to Vietnam, 470,000 doses to Thailand

South Korea will donate 1.1 mln doses of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine to Vietnam and 470,000 doses to Thailand, the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) said on Tuesday. The donations come as South Korea has administered nearly 80% of its 52 million population with at least one dose of a vaccine, KDCA said

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/skorea-donate-11-mln-doses-astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine-vietnam-470000-doses-2021-10-12/>

WA's health sector vaccine mandate puts pressure on overstretched bush hospitals

Almost two weeks after Western Australia's health sector vaccine mandate took effect, just a small number of staff losses is increasing pressure on struggling hospital wards and fanning tension between burnt-out workers. Health authorities have confirmed frontline staff have been removed from rosters for refusing to have at least one dose since the rules came into force at the start of the month. The nurses union, which supports the mandate, has accused health bureaucrats of not preparing for the inevitable loss of staff at a time when hospitals in WA's remote north are already being pushed to the brink due to a nurse shortage.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-10-12/staff-losses-from-vaccine-mandate-wa-hospitals-on-the-brink/100521450>

Bangladesh plans to vaccinate 80 mn people against Covid by next January

Bangladesh aims to administer Covid-19 vaccines to nearly half of its population by next January. Health Minister Zahid Maleque said the Bangladeshi government is working to vaccinate 80 million people by December and January, Xinhua news agency reported, citing the Bangladesh's state-run news agency BSS. The minister said the government is considering vaccinating children aged between 12 and 17 years. Bangladesh has already announced a target of vaccinating 80 per cent of its population by 2022. The South Asian country has so far got nearly 70 million doses of the Covid-19 vaccine.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/bangladesh-plans-to-vaccinate-80-mn-people-against-covid-by-next-january-121101200058_1.html

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott bans COVID-19 vaccine mandates by private businesses

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott issued an executive order to prohibit any entity, including private business, from enforcing a COVID-19 vaccine mandate on workers and called on state lawmakers to pass a similar ban into law. The move comes as the Biden administration is set to issue rules requiring employers with more than 100 workers to be vaccinated or test weekly for the coronavirus. Several major companies, including Texas-based American Airlines and Southwest Airlines, have said they would abide by the federal mandate.

<https://www.npr.org/2021/10/11/1045142578/texas-governor-greg-abbott-ban-covid-vaccine-mandates>

Covid-19 Australia: Chief Minister Andrew Barr confirms ACT will lift its lockdown this week

The ACT is set to end its harsh lockdown restrictions by the end of the week, Chief Minister Andrew Barr has confirmed. The territory's leader announced Canberra will officially emerge from lockdown at 11.59pm on Thursday as the state increases its vaccination coverage. 'Case numbers are expected to increase as restrictions are eased, but being fully vaccinated provides you with protection,' he said.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10082701/Covid-19-Australia-Chief-Minister-Andrew-Barr-confirms-ACT-lift-lockdown-week.html>

Japan working on starting COVID-19 booster shots by year-end

The Japanese government is working on starting COVID-19 booster shots by year-end, deputy chief cabinet secretary Yoshihiko Isozaki said at a news conference on Tuesday. Isozaki added that details such as who would get booster shots first and how they would be administered are currently under discussion by experts. "We would like to ensure that the roll-out of the booster shots is done seamlessly, based on the advice of experts," he said.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-working-kickstarting-covid-19-booster-shots-by-year-end-2021-10-12/>

COVID-19: Parents of secondary school and college students urged to ensure their children test regularly and get vaccinated

The education secretary and health secretary have written to parents of secondary school and college students, urging them to ensure their children are testing regularly and also encouraging them to get vaccinated against coronavirus. The letter from Nadhim Zahawi and Sajid Javid comes after official estimates showed that around 270,000 secondary pupils had COVID-19 in the week to 2 October.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-nadhim-zahawi-and-sajid-javid-urge-parents-of-secondary-and-college-students-to-ensure-they-test-regularly-and-get-vaccinated-12431477>

New Zealand seeks to ramp up COVID-19 vaccinations amid persistent cases

New Zealand expects to administer a record 100,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses in a single day during a mass immunisation drive on Oct. 16, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said, as she seeks to accelerate

inoculations before easing curbs in Auckland. Ardern on Tuesday urged the country's population over 12 years of age "to roll up sleeves for New Zealand and help make us (one of) the most vaccinated and therefore protected countries in the world". Some 2.44 million, or 58% of the population over 12, have been fully vaccinated so far.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/new-zealand-seeks-ramp-up-covid-19-vaccinations-amid-persistent-cases-2021-10-12/>

Covid-19 vaccine mandates work, Dr. Anthony Fauci says

The nation's top infectious disease expert says vaccine mandates work and they'll help get more people vaccinated against Covid-19. About a quarter of the eligible US population remains unvaccinated against coronavirus and the rate of people getting booster shots is now outpacing the rate of people getting their first doses. Dr. Anthony Fauci told CNN's Wolf Blitzer on Monday that the federal government is trying to persuade people to get vaccinated on their own, but some may need to be required. "We've obviously been trying very hard," Fauci said. "We try to get trusted messengers out there and try and get this away from being an ideological or political statement, get back into the realm of pure public health, and try to convince people."

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/11/health/us-coronavirus-monday/index.html>

Get vaccinated if you want to play Australian Open, minister tells players

Tennis players planning to compete in the Australian Open at Melbourne Park should get vaccinated for COVID-19 to give themselves the best chance of playing the Grand Slam, an Australian government official has said. Victoria state, of which Melbourne is the capital, has introduced a vaccine mandate for all professional athletes but authorities have yet to clarify whether athletes from overseas or other Australian states must also vaccinate.

<https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/get-vaccinated-if-you-want-play-australian-open-minister-tells-players-2021-10-12/>

Back to school: How are pupils being kept Covid-safe?

Face coverings are no longer compulsory in schools in England or Wales, although they are recommended in crowded spaces like school buses. However head teachers and health officials can ask staff and pupils to wear masks on school premises in response to local circumstances. Schools in Trafford, Cambridgeshire and West Yorkshire have already reintroduced face coverings. Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi confirmed that mask-wearing in all English schools could be made compulsory again under the government's winter contingency "Plan B".

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-51643556>

Partisan Exits

Texas Governor Bans Covid-19 Vaccine Mandates for Employees

Texas businesses and other private entities are now banned from requiring Covid-19 vaccinations for employees, Gov. Greg Abbott said in an executive order issued Monday. Mr. Abbott, a Republican, said he was adding the issue to the agenda for the current special session of the Texas Legislature and would rescind his order if lawmakers passed a similar ban into law. "The Covid-19 vaccine is safe, effective, and our best defense against the virus, but should remain voluntary and never forced," Mr. Abbott said in a news release Monday. Until now, elected officials in Texas have banned governmental entities from requiring vaccines and have banned places of public accommodation from requiring vaccines of their customers, but have allowed private businesses to determine whether to require vaccinations of their staff.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/texas-governor-bans-covid-19-vaccine-mandates-for-employees-11633998245>

Covid Has Killed Hundreds of Police Officers. Many Still Resist Vaccines.

Over the last year and a half, a majority of the roughly 40 police officers who patrol Baker, La., a

suburb of Baton Rouge, tested positive for the coronavirus. All of them recovered and went back to work — until Lt. DeMarcus Dunn got sick. Lieutenant Dunn, a 36-year-old shift supervisor who coached youth sports and once chased down someone who fled the police station after being arrested, died from Covid-19 on Aug. 13. His wedding had been scheduled for the next day.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/12/us/police-covid-vaccines.html>

Brazil's Bolsonaro says he is 'bored' by questions on COVID-19 deaths

Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro said on Monday that he did not want to be "bored" with questions about the milestone of 600,000 COVID-19 deaths that Latin America's biggest country passed a few days ago. Bolsonaro's poll numbers have fallen due to his handling of the pandemic, rising inflation and a weak economy. Brazil has the world's second highest COVID-19 death toll after the United States, and Bolsonaro has long sought to minimize the impact of the virus, touting unproven cures and railing against lockdowns.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/brazils-bolsonaro-says-he-is-bored-by-questions-covid-19-deaths-2021-10-11/>

Schools are new battleground in war of disinformation over Covid-19 vaccines

The rollout of Covid-19 vaccinations to schoolchildren in the United Kingdom has opened up a new front in the disinformation war: anti-vax campaigners are now taking their protests to the school gates. Groups opposed to vaccination have sought to stoke the fears of parents and children by falsely claiming that the vaccines are untested and dangerous. Last week, a small group of protesters demonstrated outside St. Thomas More Catholic School in the town of Blaydon, near Newcastle in northeastern England, as children entered the school gates.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/12/europe/schools-vaccine-disinformation-covid-19-cmd-intl/index.html>

COVID-19: Reaction to highly critical COVID report, as Cummings brands prime minister and Labour leader 'jokes'

The prime minister's former adviser, Dominic Cummings, has branded both Boris Johnson and the Labour leader as "jokes" in the wake of the highly critical report into the government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic. His remarks were made following the publication of the MPs' report which said thousands of lives were lost due to delays and mistakes by both ministers and their scientific advisers as coronavirus began to spread. The report published by the health and social care committee and the science and technology committee, titled Coronavirus: Lessons learned to date, covers a variety of successes and failings across 150 pages.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-reaction-to-highly-critical-covid-report-as-cummings-brands-prime-minister-and-labour-leader-jokes-12432031>

Demand for Holyrood inquiry on Covid-19 handling after damning MP report

The call comes after the publication of a report by Westminster MPs labelled the UK Government's early response to the pandemic "one of the most important public health failures the United Kingdom has ever experienced". The report, from the cross-party joint committee of the health and social care and science and technology committees, concluded that there was an element of "groupthink" around the UK Government's approach to herd immunity.

<https://www.scotsman.com/health/coronavirus/demand-for-holyrood-inquiry-on-covid-19-handling-after-damning-mp-report-3415786>

Covid-19: Ethnic minority deaths were 'unacceptably high' during pandemic, MPs say

A damning report from MPs has slammed the "unacceptably high" death rates among people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities that occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study, from the cross-party Science and Technology Committee and the Health and Social Care Committee, said serious errors and delays, including on testing, care homes and the timing of the first lockdown, have cost lives during the virus outbreak. The pandemic exacerbated existing social,

economic and health inequalities among ethnic minority communities, the MPs said.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/covid19-government-ethnic-minority-deaths-b1936333.html>

COVID-19: Minister refuses to apologise for government's pandemic handling as report says errors 'cost thousands of lives'

A minister has refused to apologise 11 times for the government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic, after a highly-critical report by MPs said thousands of lives were lost due to delays and mistakes by both ministers and their scientific advisers. "We followed, throughout, the scientific advice. We got the vaccine deployed extremely quickly, we protected our NHS from the surge of cases," Cabinet Office minister Stephen Barclay told Sky News' Kay Burley when she asked if the government would apologise.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-minister-refuses-to-apologise-for-governments-pandemic-handling-as-report-says-errors-cost-thousands-of-lives-12431837>

Naive and arrogant: the UK's response to Covid-19 cost countless lives

The joint report issued today is a stark and largely damning appraisal of the UK's Covid response. The report asks why, despite being ranked alongside the US as best prepared for a future pandemic, the UK was among those countries worst affected by Covid during 2020. While it avoids directly apportioning blame, this document will doubtless inform the long-awaited public inquiry. Dr Michael Ryan from the World Health Organisation wisely said at the very start of the pandemic: "Be fast, have no regrets [...] the greatest error is not to move." This evokes the "precautionary principle" - ie assume the worst case scenario and hope to be proven wrong. Indeed, where the UK has succeeded, this principle is in evidence. Funding for vaccine research in 2016 led directly to the rapid development of the Oxford/Astrazeneca vaccine, while the Vaccines Task Force successfully secured the national supply, which was ably distributed by the army and public volunteers.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/covid-parliamentary-report-lockdown-delay-b1936706.html>

British government waited too long to implement COVID-19 lockdown, parliamentary report concludes

The British government waited too long to impose a lockdown in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, missing a chance to contain the disease and leading to thousands of unnecessary deaths, a parliamentary report has concluded. The deadly delay resulted from ministers' failure to question the recommendations of scientific advisers, resulting in a dangerous level of "groupthink" that caused them to dismiss the more aggressive strategies adopted in East and South-East Asia, the joint report from the House of Commons science and health committees concluded on Tuesday.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-10-12/british-government-waited-too-long-covid-lockdown-report/100532942>

Report says UK's slow virus lockdown cost 1000s of lives

Britain's failure to impose a lockdown in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic cost thousands of unnecessary deaths and ranks among the country's worst public health blunders, lawmakers concluded Tuesday in the nation's first comprehensive report on the pandemic. The deadly delay derived from the failure of British government ministers to question the recommendations of scientific advisers, resulting in a dangerous level of "groupthink" that caused them to dismiss the more aggressive strategies adopted in East and Southeast Asia to limit infections, the report said.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-science-europe-covid-19-pandemic-pandemics-0268552edbae21b55cc1ce2d6d72836d>

UK's 'policy approach of fatalism' early in pandemic was major error, lawmakers say

The delay to England's first coronavirus lockdown was a serious error based on groupthink that went unchallenged, lawmakers said in a report published on Tuesday, adding that failures in testing positive cases and tracing their contacts exacerbated the crisis. Parliament's health and science committees have jointly published a 150-page report on lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic

after hours of testimony from more than 50 witnesses, include government policy, health and science advisers.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uks-policy-approach-fatalism-early-pandemic-was-major-error-lawmakers-say-2021-10-11/>

Scientific Viewpoint

FDA Staff Don't Take Position on Moderna Covid-19 Booster

Food and Drug Administration staffers didn't take a firm stance on Moderna Inc.'s application for a booster dose, indicating there may not be sufficient data to support the extra dose. FDA staff, after reviewing a drugmaker's application, often weigh whether it should be given a go-ahead. But they also didn't take a position on Pfizer Inc.'s booster request, later granted. FDA staff reviews are part of the normal process before the agency makes a decision whether to clear a product. In documents made public Tuesday, FDA staff simply restated Moderna's request and analyzed Moderna's study data. The extra dose of Moderna's vaccine appeared to be safe and work well, but the staff said its benefit would depend on how much the protection from the primary series has waned.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/fda-staff-dont-take-position-on-moderna-covid-19-booster-11634054284>

Moderna Argues to FDA for Half-Dose of Vaccine as Booster

In documents released Tuesday morning, Moderna argued that the Food and Drug Administration should authorize a half-dose of its coronavirus vaccine as a booster shot for recipients at least six months after the second dose, citing evidence that the vaccine's potency against infection wanes over time. The agency noted in its own analysis that, overall, available data show Moderna and the other vaccines "still afford protection against severe Covid-19 disease and death in the United States." Moderna cited the rate of breakthrough infections, "real world evidence of reduced effectiveness against the Delta variant," and falling levels of neutralizing antibodies from its vaccine six to eight months after a second dose. The company said its clinical trial studies showed that a third injection boosted antibody levels — one measure of the immune system's response — higher than what they had been before the second dose.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/12/us/politics/moderna-booster-shots-fda.html>

Rapid Covid Tests Can Beat Pandemic: Harvard's Michael Mina

The 37-year-old epidemiologist, immunologist, and physician says it didn't have to be this way: Workplaces, schools, event spaces, and more that have been desolate for better than a year could have stayed open—and safely—with a technology that's been here all along. Mina has been an early and tireless champion of inexpensive, do-it-yourself SARS-CoV-2 antigen tests that can return a positive or negative result in about 15 minutes, arguing for their wider deployment in op-ed articles, on Twitter, and in conversations with health authorities.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-12/rapid-covid-tests-can-beat-pandemic-harvard-s-michael-mina>

CureVac drops COVID-19 vaccine, pins hope on next-generation shots

CureVac NV said on Tuesday it will give up on its first-generation COVID-19 vaccine candidate and instead focus on collaborating with GSK to develop improved mRNA vaccine technology. The German biotechnology company's shares were off about 8% after earlier plunging as much as 13%, hitting their lowest since going public in August last year. CureVac said it would abandon its application for approval from the European Medicines Agency for its first COVID-19 vaccine candidate, CVnCoV, after late-stage trials delivered disappointing results in June with 47% efficacy.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/curevac-withdraw-first-generation-covid-19-vaccine-candidate-2021-10-12/>

Moderna, J&J push for COVID-19 vaccine boosters ahead of FDA meeting

Scientists at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration said on Tuesday that Moderna Inc had not met

all of the agency's criteria to support use of booster doses of its COVID-19 vaccine, possibly because the efficacy of the shot's first two doses has remained strong. FDA staff said in documents that data for Moderna's vaccine showed that a booster does increase protective antibodies, but the difference in antibody levels before and after the shot was not wide enough, particularly in those whose levels had remained high.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/moderna-seeks-covid-19-vaccine-booster-clearance-older-adults-high-risk-2021-10-12/>

Covid study linking vaccines to rare side effect of myocarditis was wrong, researchers admit

A research study that linked a very rare side effect to the Covid-19 mRNA vaccines has been withdrawn by researchers after they made a major mathematical error. The Canadian study attracted headlines after it suggested there was a 1 in 1,000 risk of people developing myocarditis or inflammation of the heart after receiving the Moderna or Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines. But the paper's conclusions were wrong, and the calculation flawed. The numbers used by the researchers, from the Ottawa Heart Institute, underestimated the amount of vaccines delivered in Ottawa over a two-month period with the result being 25 times smaller than the true figure. They had initially based their estimate on a total of 32,379 vaccines doses and 32 cases of myocarditis, when in reality more than 854,000 doses had been given between June 1 to July 31. The study's findings have been used by anti-vaccination websites and social media accounts in Britain, the United States and Canada.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/covid-vaccine-side-effect-myocarditis-b1936880.html>

AZ's long-acting antibody combo shows benefit in COVID-19 trial

AstraZeneca has announced positive results from a Phase III trial evaluating its long-acting antibody (LAAB) combination AZD7442 in non-hospitalised patients with mild-to-moderate symptomatic COVID-19. In the Phase III TACKLE trial, a total of 90% of participants enrolled were from populations with a high-risk of progressing to severe COVID-19, including individuals with co-morbidities. The late-stage trial hit its primary endpoint, with AZD7442 600 mg given by intramuscular injections (IM) reducing the risk of developing severe COVID-19 or death from any cause by 50% compared to placebo in outpatients who had been symptomatic for seven days or less.

http://www.pharmatimes.com/news/azs_long-acting_antibody_combo_shows_benefit_in_covid-19_trial_1380398

AstraZeneca's long-acting antibody combination treats and prevents COVID-19

Positive high-level results from the TACKLE Phase III COVID-19 treatment trial have shown that AstraZeneca's AZD7442, a long-acting antibody (LAAB) combination, achieved a statistically significant reduction in severe COVID-19 or death compared to placebo in non-hospitalised patients with mild-to-moderate symptomatic COVID-19. On 5 October 2021, the company announced that it had submitted a request to the US Food and Drug Administration for Emergency Use Authorisation for AZD7442 for prophylaxis of COVID-19. A total of 90% of participants enrolled were from populations at high risk of progression to severe COVID-19, including those with co-morbidities.

https://pharmafield.co.uk/pharma_news/astrazenecas-long-acting-antibody-combination-treats-and-prevents-covid-19/

Merck aims to double supply of Covid-19 antiviral pill on rising demand

Merck plans to double manufacturing capacity for its antiviral pill to treat Covid-19 next year as governments scramble to procure a treatment that a late-stage trial showed cuts hospital admission and death rates in half. The mounting demand for Merck's drug, the first oral treatment shown to prevent severe disease in vulnerable people with coronavirus, is a sign that it could trigger the same kind of worldwide rush faced by makers of early Covid-19 vaccines. Merck, which this week asked US regulators to authorise use of the drug called molnupiravir, told the Financial Times it had secured

deals with Singapore, New Zealand, Australia and South Korea to supply doses in the past week and is in talks with several other governments.

<https://www.ft.com/content/5ec9bdf5-58e8-4f0d-9b07-979668e8bbb8>

A primer on what we know about mixing and matching Covid vaccines

Later this week an expert committee that advises the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will hear about the results of a clinical trial that could influence how Covid vaccines are used in this country at some point in the future. The trial, conducted by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, is a so-called mix-and-match trial, testing the Covid vaccines authorized in the U.S. in combinations with each other. The goal of the trial was to see whether using a different vaccine as a booster shot improves protection. So does getting a dose of Pfizer vaccine after getting a single dose of Johnson & Johnson's vaccine trigger production of more antibodies than a second dose of the J&J would? Are the messenger RNA vaccines made by Pfizer and Moderna virtually interchangeable, or does switching even there produce a broader set of immune responses?

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/10/12/a-primer-on-what-we-know-about-mixing-and-matching-covid-vaccines/>

COVID infects all ages in family equally, but immunity plays a role

Two new studies explore the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission among household members, one finding that children and adults are at similar risk and one showing that COVID-19-naïve family members' risk was 45% to 97% lower, depending on the number of members immune through infection or full vaccination.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/10/covid-infects-all-ages-family-equally-immunity-plays-role>

Coronavirus Resurgence

Sydney COVID-19 cases ease further as focus shifts to reviving economy

Sydney's COVID-19 cases fell to the lowest in two months on Tuesday as authorities rolled out support measures for businesses, shifting their focus to rejuvenating the economy after the city exited a nearly four-month lockdown a day earlier. Pubs, cafes and retail stores reopened in New South Wales (NSW), home to Sydney, on Monday after vaccination levels in the state's adult population crossed 70%. New daily infections in the state fell to 360 on Tuesday, the majority in Sydney, marking a steady downward trend.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/sydney-covid-19-cases-ease-further-focus-shifts-reviving-economy-2021-10-11/>

COVID-19: 'Surges of illness' for 'months and perhaps even years to come', WHO expert warns

"Surges of illness" caused by COVID-19 are going to continue for "months and perhaps even years to come", the World Health Organization's (WHO) special envoy for the disease has warned. Speaking to Kay Burley, Dr David Nabarro said "the pandemic is very much with us all over the world right now", and those who have not been vaccinated will be particularly affected by spikes in illness. With government data showing the UK is recording more than 30,000 COVID-19 cases a day, Dr Nabarro warned that the "virus has not gone away" and is "continuing to mutate". "It's capable probably of causing all sorts of future problems", he said. He appeared on Sky News following the release of a highly critical report by MPs that found thousands of lives have been lost due to delays and mistakes by both government ministers and scientific advisers.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-surges-of-illness-for-months-and-perhaps-even-years-to-come-who-expert-warns-12431981>

California coronavirus death count tops 70,000 as cases fall

California's coronavirus death toll reached another once-unfathomable milestone — 70,000 people — on Monday as the state emerges from the latest infection surge with the lowest rate of new cases

among all states. Last year at this time, cases in the state started ticking up and by January California was in the throes of the worst spike of the pandemic and was the nation's epicenter for the virus. Daily deaths approached 700. The latest surge started in summer and was driven by the delta variant that primarily targeted the unvaccinated. At its worst during this spike, California's average daily death count was in the low 100s. Data collected by Johns Hopkins University showed the state with 70,132 deaths by midday Monday. It's the most in the nation, surpassing Texas by about 3,000 and Florida by 13,000, although California's per capita fatality rate of 177 per 100,000 people is well below the overall U.S. rate of 214.

<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-california-pandemics-health-fcbaab792f10b71956ba4ca04073e9d0>