

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

18th Mar 2021

Overnight News Roundup

COVID-19 cases are rising exponentially again

- Coronavirus infections are rising exponentially in Germany, [an expert at the Robert Koch Institute for infectious diseases said on Tuesday](#), putting at risk plans to lift the lockdown and revive the economy. Dirk Brockmann, an epidemiologist at the RKI told Germany's ARD television 'It has been totally irrational to loosen up early here. It is just fuelling this exponential growth.'
- [Alarm is growing in Bosnia over the escalating coronavirus crisis in the Sarajevo canton](#), which has recorded the highest rate of cases and deaths in the Western Balkans.
- Rapidly increasing COVID-19 infections in hospitals across Papua New Guinea are hitting its fragile health system like a tornado, [with services shutting as staff fall ill, health workers said](#). Papua New Guinea has high rates of tuberculosis, malaria and HIV in the community and a health workers fear that if they are overrun with COVID cases treatment of these other diseases will suffer
- [Poland reported 25,052 daily coronavirus cases on Wednesday](#), according to health ministry data, the highest number so far this year
- The coronavirus situation is worsening in the greater Paris region where hospitals are under immense strain, [the director general of the AH-HP Paris hospitals organisation, Martin Hirsch, said on Wednesday](#). He said there were two options to contain the disease - a local weekend lockdown or a broader lockdown across the region
- A recent increase in cases in India has been led by the western state of Maharashtra, home to the commercial capital Mumbai. [Nearly 62% of infections in the past day and 46% of the deaths were reported in the state](#), which has ordered a lockdown in some districts and put curbs on cinemas, hotels and restaurants
- Manila is widening a ban on minors (up to the age of 18) [leaving their homes for two weeks starting Wednesday, tightening coronavirus restrictions in a bid to tackle a new surge in infections](#)
- [Germany has extended border controls with the Czech republic and Austria's Tyrol region](#) citing the current number of new coronavirus infections and more virus variant cases.

COVID-19 cases are rising exponentially again

German COVID-19 cases are growing exponentially again, expert warns

Coronavirus infections are rising exponentially in Germany, an expert at the Robert Koch Institute for infectious diseases said on Tuesday, putting at risk plans to lift the lockdown and revive the economy. The number of cases per 100,000 reported on Tuesday was 83.7, up from 68 a week ago, and the RKI has said that metric could reach 200 by the middle of next month. Germany is in a third wave of the pandemic, driven by an easing of restrictions in recent weeks just as a more transmissible variant has spread, Dirk Brockmann, an epidemiologist at the RKI, told Germany's ARD television. "It has been totally irrational to loosen up here. It is just fuelling this exponential growth," he said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-germany-idUSKBN2B80KE>

Germany extends border control with Czech Republic, Tyrol

Germany has extended border control with the Czech Republic and Austria's Tyrol region, Interior

Minster Horst Seehofer said on Wednesday, citing the current number of new coronavirus infections and more virus variant cases. "We decided today to extend border controls in mutation areas in the Czech Republic and Austria," Seehofer said. The control was reinstated on Feb. 14, following the introduction of a stricter lockdown in the Czech Republic.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-germany-border/germany-extends-border-control-with-czech-republic-tyrol-idUSS8N2KV09Q>

Poland announces nationwide lockdown amid COVID-19 surge

Poland's health minister announced a nationwide lockdown on Wednesday, as the country battles a surge in coronavirus cases. Theatres, shopping malls, hotels and cinemas will be closed starting on Saturday, Health Minister Adam Niedzielski told a news conference. Poland reported 25,052 coronavirus cases on Wednesday, according to health ministry data, the highest daily number so far this year

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-poland-idUSS8N2K000Y>

Manila Orders Anyone Below 18 to Stay Indoors as Virus Cases Surge

The Philippine capital Manila will widen a ban on minors leaving their residences to include youths of up to 18 years old for two weeks starting on Wednesday, tightening coronavirus restrictions in a bid to tackle a new surge of infections. Only those aged 18-65 years old will be allowed out of their homes, the Metro Manila Development Authority said in a statement, citing an agreement among mayors. The Philippines late last year started easing one of the world's longest and strictest lockdowns though a rule that anyone under 15 must stay indoors in Manila remained in place. The Southeast Asian country has seen a surge in COVID-19 cases this month, recording the largest daily increase since mid-August on Monday with 5,404 new infections. Nighttime curfews have been reimposed since Monday for two weeks in Metropolitan Manila, the country's coronavirus hotspot that is home to more than 12 million people.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2021-03-16/manila-orders-anyone-below-18-to-stay-indoors-as-virus-cases-surge>

Coronavirus 'not under control' in Paris region, says hospital executive

The coronavirus situation is worsening in the greater Paris region where hospitals are under immense strain, the director general of the AP-HP Paris hospitals organisation, Martin Hirsch, said on Wednesday. Hirsch told RTL radio there were two options to contain the disease - a local weekend lockdown, already in place in other parts of the country, or a broader lockdown in the region. "The virus is not under control. There are as many patients in intensive care units today as there were at the peak of the second wave," he said. Prime Minister Jean Castex said on Tuesday the time had come for more coronavirus restrictions in the greater Paris region.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-france-hospitals/update-1-coronavirus-not-under-control-in-paris-region-says-hospital-executive-idUSL1N2LF0ES>

COVID 'tornado' hitting Papua New Guinea's fragile hospitals, say health workers

Rapidly increasing COVID-19 infections in hospitals in the Pacific island nation of Papua New Guinea were hitting its fragile health system "like a tornado", with services shutting as staff fall ill, health workers said on Wednesday.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-australia-papua-work/covid-tornado-hitting-papua-new-guineas-fragile-hospitals-say-health-workers-idUSL4N2LF12R>

India backs AstraZeneca shot as COVID-19 cases hit three-month high

India said on Wednesday its coronavirus immunisation campaign would continue with "full rigour" despite some concerns in Europe about the safety of the AstraZeneca vaccine it relies heavily upon as infections hit a three month high. The European Medicines Agency is investigating reports of 30 cases of unusual blood disorders out of 5 million recipients of the vaccine in the region. Since

starting the drive in mid-January, India has administered 36 million vaccine doses, which are mostly the AstraZeneca shots developed with Oxford University and locally known as Covishield.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-india-cases/indias-coronavirus-infections-rise-by-highest-in-three-months-idUSKBN2B90GS>

Brazil records over 90,000 new COVID cases in a single day

Brazil has reported a single-day record of 90,303 new cases of COVID-19, as the South American nation continues to grapple with mounting coronavirus infections and deaths. The health ministry said on Wednesday that 2,648 additional deaths were recorded over the previous 24-hour period, bringing the country's total to over 282,000 deaths – second only to the United States. A day earlier, Brazil recorded additional 2,841 deaths – a single-day record. Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro is facing mounting pressure to get the surging pandemic under control as public discontent over his handling of the crisis is growing. Earlier this week, the far-right leader named a new health minister – the country's fourth since the start of the pandemic last year. Marcelo Queiroga, a cardiologist, is replacing Eduardo Pazuello, an army general who had been criticised for not having any medical experience.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/17/brazil-records-over-90000-new-covid-cases-in-a-single-day>

EU proposes virus pass plan to allow free travel by the summer

EU sets out virus pass plan to allow free travel by summer

The European Union's executive body proposed Wednesday issuing certificates that would allow EU residents to travel freely across the 27-nation bloc by the summer as long as they have been vaccinated, tested negative for COVID-19 or recovered from the disease. With summer looming and tourism-reliant countries anxiously waiting for the return of visitors amid the coronavirus pandemic, the European Commission foresees the creation of certificates aimed at facilitating travel between EU member nations. The plan is set to be discussed during a summit of EU leaders next week.

<https://apnews.com/article/eu-virus-pass-plan-allow-free-travel-summer-12408e4b968e03a289fe6aceac8f981f>

Brussels Weighs Covid-19 Certificate to Allow EU-Wide Travel

The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, will unveil blueprints for a “digital green certificate” that could show proof of vaccination, recovery from Covid-19 or negative test results. The concept has been controversial in some countries ...

<https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/covid-2021-03-17/card/JmcVi7GUSdFwkjL77sNI>

After vaccine freeze, European countries are looking for a quick thaw

After vaccine freeze, European countries seek a quick thaw

First, France abruptly halted AstraZeneca vaccinations. Now, the French prime minister wants to get one as soon as he can. With the virus rebounding from Paris to Budapest and beyond, European governments that rushed to suspend use of AstraZeneca vaccines after reports of blood clots are realizing the far-reaching impact of the move. And they suddenly seem eager for any signal — or fig leaf — that allows them to resume the shots. That could come as soon as Thursday, when the European Medicines Agency releases initial results of its investigations into whether there is a connection between the vaccine and the blood clots. So far, the EMA and World Health Organization have said there's no evidence the vaccine is to blame.

<https://apnews.com/article/eu-von-der-leyen-astrazeneca-shortfalls-vaccine-campaign-1bd396328f83aaa718969c65a419e871>

Facing 'crisis of century', EU threatens ban on COVID vaccine exports to UK

The European Union threatened on Wednesday to ban exports of COVID-19 vaccines to Britain to safeguard scarce doses for its own citizens facing a third wave of the pandemic that would jeopardise plans to restart travel this summer. With the number of COVID-related deaths in the EU

topping 550,000 and less than a 10th of the bloc's population inoculated, European Commission head Ursula von der Leyen said the epidemiological situation was worsening. "We are in the crisis of the century," she told reporters. "We see the crest of a third wave forming in member states, and we know that we need to accelerate the vaccination rates."

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-eu/facing-crisis-of-century-eu-threatens-ban-on-covid-vaccine-exports-to-uk-idUSKBN2B91FU>

European capitals co-ordinated suspension of Oxford/AstraZeneca Covid jab

The EU drugs regulator reiterated its view that the benefits of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine outweighed the risks as it emerged that France, Germany, Italy and Spain had co-ordinated on the decision temporarily to suspend the jab. Agnès Pannier-Runacher, France's industry minister, said the countries had acted in a joint effort to help protect public confidence. But speaking later on Tuesday, Emer Cooke, head of the European Medicines Agency, said there was no evidence of a link between the shot and the reported incidents of blood clots, as she confirmed that the EMA was continuing to investigate.

<https://www.ft.com/content/a046e340-892b-4e68-bfae-4f5c40a5506a>

Offers of vaccine help to other nations

Australia to send 8,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses to PNG, asks Astra-Zeneca and Europe for 1 million more

Australia will send 8,000 doses of its COVID-19 vaccine supply to Papua New Guinea next week and is asking AstraZeneca and European authorities to divert another 1 million doses to the country. Australia's closest neighbour is in the grip of a worsening COVID-19 crisis, with more than 1,400 active cases. Health experts fear the real figure is much higher because of massive undetected community transmission. Mr Morrison said it was in Australia's interest to help PNG.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-17/covid-papua-new-guinea-vaccination-australia-scott-morrison/13255158>

Australia gives COVID-19 shots to virus-hit Papua New Guinea

Australia will send COVID-19 vaccines from its own supply to its near-neighbor Papua New Guinea and will ask AstraZeneca to send more to try to contain a concerning wave of infections, Australia's prime minister said Wednesday. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said 8,000 doses would be sent next week for Papua New Guinea's front-line health workers and he and his Papua New Guinea counterpart James Marape would ask AstraZeneca to send another 1 million doses as soon as possible. The European Union this month blocked a shipment of more than 250,000 doses to Australia because the need for them was not considered great enough in a country largely successful in containing the coronavirus.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/australia-gives-covid19-shots-to-virus-hit-papua-new-guinea-papua-new-guinea-australia-scott-morrison-astrazeneca-james-marape-b1818225.html>

Chile's red-hot inoculation drive reaches frozen continent of Antarctica

Chile's blazing fast vaccination program has reached the icy shores of Antarctica, officials and researchers told Reuters on Wednesday, bringing a sense of relief to one of the most isolated and vulnerable outposts on Earth. The pandemic hit Antarctica in December, making it the last of the world's continents to report an outbreak of COVID-19. Chilean health and army officials scrambled to clear out staff from a remote region with limited medical facilities. Marcela Andrade, an official with the Chilean Antarctic Institute (INACH), told Reuters by phone that air force personnel, followed by staff at the Profesor Julio Escudero research base, were inoculated on Sunday with vaccine from China's Sinovac Biotech Ltd.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-antarctica/chiles-red-hot-inoculation-drive-reaches-frozen-continent-of-antarctica-idUSKBN2B92SM>

Palestinians get 60,000 vaccine doses through WHO program

The Palestinian Authority said Wednesday it will receive just over 60,000 coronavirus vaccine doses over the next 48 hours, the first shipment provided by a World Health Organization partnership aimed at helping poor countries. That's only enough doses to vaccinate 31,000 people out of a population of nearly 5 million Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza. Israel, which has faced criticism for not sharing more of its supplies with the Palestinians, has already vaccinated 5 million people — more than half of its population — and has largely reopened its economy.

<https://apnews.com/article/israel-coronavirus-vaccine-health-coronavirus-pandemic-west-bank-8ed67e886277ec05f74a0bb16e9d27ce>

Taiwan offers Covid-19 vaccine help to ally Paraguay after street protests

Taiwan has stepped in with an offer to help Paraguay buy Covid-19 vaccines after protests in the South American country over its government's handling of the pandemic. Thousands of Paraguayans protested in the capital Asuncion over the lack of medicine and intensive care beds amid a spike in coronavirus cases and calls to impeach President Mario Abdo. In a statement late on Tuesday, foreign ministry spokeswoman Joanne Ou said Taiwan was extending a helping hand to Paraguay at a time when it was facing a public health crisis and unable to obtain enough vaccines.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3125738/taiwan-offers-covid-19-vaccine-help-ally-paraguay-after>

[street?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_medium=Social&utm_content=article&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1615954973](https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3125738/taiwan-offers-covid-19-vaccine-help-ally-paraguay-after?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_medium=Social&utm_content=article&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1615954973)

New variants of concern

CDC IDs new COVID-19 variants of concern, as hot spots reemerge

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said two coronavirus variants first detected in California, B.1427 and B.1429, are now considered as variants of concern. The CDC said the variants may be 20% more transmissible. In comparison, the variant B117, first identified in the United Kingdom, is considered 50% more transmissible than the original wild type COVID-19 virus. Neither of the new variants of concern are thought to escape the effectiveness of currently approved vaccines, but therapeutics, including monoclonal antibody treatments, may be slightly less effective. Currently, the CDC's variant tracker shows 4,686 B117 cases in 50 states, 142 B1351 cases in 25 states, and 27 P1 cases in 12 states.

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/03/cdc-ids-new-covid-19-variants-concern-hot-spots-reemerge>

Latest Covid-19 Variant Discovered In France Isn't Detected By Standard PCR Tests

A new variant of the novel coronavirus has been identified in the French region of Brittany. On Monday evening, the French Ministry of Health put out a statement that said the mutation was found by way of genomic sequencing in a cluster of infections in a hospital in the town of Lannion. Eight of 79 Covid-19 patients turned out to be carriers of the new variant, nicknamed "le variant breton." Initially they tested negative with gold-standard PCR tests, despite presenting with typical symptoms of Covid-19. But later, coronavirus infection was confirmed with analysis of blood samples and tissue in the respiratory system. All 8 patients have since died.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/joshuacohen/2021/03/17/latest-covid-19-variant-discovered-in-france-isnt-detected-by-standard-pcr-tests/>

AstraZeneca's COVID-19 Vaccine Has No Efficacy Against South African Virus Strain, Study Shows

According to a Phase 1b-2 trial published in the New England Journal of Medicine, the two-dose COVID-19 vaccine developed by Oxford University / AstraZeneca Plc (NASDAQ: AZN) was ineffective against mild-to-moderate infections caused due to mutated virus strain in South Africa,

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/astrazenecas-covid-19-vaccine-no-103036443.html>

COVID vaccinations delay

Covid vaccines for England's under-50s delayed due to major shortage

People under the age of 50 may have to wait up to a month longer than planned for their Covid vaccination because of a major shortage of vaccines, NHS leaders have said. The unexpected delay was revealed in a letter to health service chiefs, who have been ordered to stop booking first-dose appointments for anyone under 50 for all of April. The letter from NHS England explained that the move was necessary because there would be a "significant reduction in weekly supply available from manufacturers beginning in the week commencing 29 March".

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/17/nhs-covid-vaccine-rollout-under-50s-delayed-major-shortage?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

Covid: NHS warns of 'significant reduction' in vaccines

The NHS has warned of a "significant reduction in the weekly supply" of Covid vaccines in England next month in a letter to local health organisations. The letter says there has been a "reduction in national inbound vaccines supply" and asks organisations to "ensure no further appointments are uploaded" to booking systems in April. The health secretary said it was a "standard" letter. The BBC understands no-one who has booked a vaccine should lose a slot. Asked about it during a Downing Street coronavirus briefing, Matt Hancock said the NHS regularly sent out "technical letters" that explained the "ups and downs" of supply. BBC political editor Laura Kuenssberg said there would be fewer AstraZeneca vaccines than expected because of issues with the company's international supply.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-56435549?at_campaign=64&at_custom3=%40BBCBreaking&at_custom1=%5Bpost+type%5D&at_medium=custom7&at_custom4=0A1828D6-8742-11EB-B5A8-92EA15F31EAE&at_custom2=twitter

Boris Johnson said it would be 'best to ignore' Covid-19 at onset of pandemic, documentary claims

Boris Johnson said it would be 'best to ignore' Covid-19 at onset of pandemic, documentary claims

Boris Johnson said it would be best to ignore the emergence of coronavirus in the early days of the pandemic, insisting any overreaction would do more harm than good, a BBC documentary has claimed. Downing Street failed to deny accusations that the Prime Minister did not take the appearance of a new virus seriously enough. The explosive account of what took place inside No10 at the onset of the outbreak also claimed Mr Johnson ignored medical advice to avoid physical contact with people to prevent spreading the disease.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/boris-johnson-said-it-would-be-best-to-ignore-covid-19-at-onset-of-pandemic-documentary-claims-916914>