COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis
29th Jun 2021

Overnight News RoundUp

IMF says Africa urgently needs vaccines to halt repeated COVID waves

- COVID-19 infections in Africa will likely exceed previous peaks within days, underscoring an urgent need to accelerate vaccine supplies and financing to the region, International Monetary Fund managing director Kristalina Georgieva said on Monday.
- Georgieva said in a blog posting with IMF Africa Department director, Abebe Selassie that sub-Saharan Africa, already with the lowest vaccination rates in the world at less than 1% of the population, again risks having its healthcare systems overwhelmed without immediate action.
- 'Without significant, upfront, international assistance - and without an effective region-wide effort - the near-term future of sub-Saharan Africa will be one of repeated waves of infection, which will exact an ever-increasing toll on the lives and livelihoods of the region's most vulnerable, while also paralyzing investment, productivity and growth,' Georgieva and Selassie wrote.
- 'In short, without help the region risks being left further and further behind,' they said, and added the longer the pandemic ravages Africa, the more dangerous variants of the novel coronavirus will emerge to threaten the rest of the world.
- The IMF officicials urged wealthy nations to more quickly share their vaccine stockpiles with Africa through the COVAX initiaitive, saying that a goal should be to deliver a quarter of a billion doses to the region by September.
- Vaccine manufacturers should shift supplies to Africa, while the African Union's African Vaccine Acquisition Task team should be financed at an estimated $2 billion, which would allow an option for the group to execute an optional contract for 180 million doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, Georgieva and Selassie said.
- They also called for the removal of cross-border export restrictions on raw materials and finished vaccines to help ensure that South African and India can reach full vaccine manufacturing production capacity.

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http://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/imf-says-africa-urgently-needs-vaccines-to-halt-repeated-covid-waves/ar-AALylFJ

New Zealand considers mandatory masks, scanning amid COVID Delta variant concerns

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New Zealand is considering making masks compulsory at high alert levels as well as compulsory scanning of QR codes to boost contact tracing in efforts to reduce the risk of coronavirus spreading, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Monday. New Zealand halted quarantine-free travel with neighbouring Australia last week as an outbreak of the highly contagious Delta variant triggered a lockdown in Sydney and renewed restrictions elsewhere. It also extended the COVID-19 alert level 2

in the capital Wellington until Tuesday, as authorities said there was still a risk that an Australian tourist who tested positive for the coronavirus after visiting the city last weekend had infected others
https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/new-zealand-considers-mandatory-masks-scanning-amid-covid-delta-variant-concerns-2021-06-28/

Amish put faith in God's will and herd immunity over vaccine

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When health care leaders in the heart of Pennsylvania Dutch country began laying out a strategy to distribute COVID-19 vaccines, they knew it would be a tough sell with the Amish, who tend to be wary of preventive shots and government intervention. Early on, they posted flyers at farm supply stores and at auctions where the Amish sell handmade furniture and quilts. They sought advice from members of the deeply religious and conservative sect, who told them not to be pushy. And they asked three newspapers widely read by the Amish to publish ads promoting the vaccine. Two refused. By May, two rural vaccination clinics had opened at a fire station and a social services center, both familiar places to the Amish in Lancaster County. During the first six weeks, 400 people showed up. Only 12 were Amish.
https://apnews.com/article/religion-amish-coronavirus-pandemic-health-463b17f8a855f932762e4fd23e06c156

Anatomy of a health conundrum: The racial gap in vaccinations

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The United States is awash in coronavirus vaccines, with free beer, plane tickets and million-dollar prizes dangled as inducements to persuade the reluctant to get a shot. Philadelphia is doling out $400,000 in giveaways. Despite that, a racial divide persists in the nation’s vaccination campaign, with federal figures showing counties with higher percentages of Black residents having some of the lowest vaccination rates in the country. An examination of city and federal vaccination data and interviews with more than 20 researchers, doctors, health officials and residents in the nation’s sixth-largest city opens a window onto the missteps and misunderstandings, the legacy and loss that have fostered the disproportionate pain of death and disease in communities of color. Coronavirus immunizations are the latest iteration of the pandemic’s unequal burden.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/06/27/why-black-americans-arent-being-vaccinated/

Hong Kong to ban passenger flights from UK to curb virus

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Hong Kong says it will ban all passenger flights from the U.K. starting Thursday as it seeks to curb the spread of new variants of the coronavirus. It said in a statement Monday that the U.K. has been classified as “extremely high risk“ because of the “recent rebound of the epidemic situation in the U.K. and the widespread delta variant virus strain there.” Under the classification, people who have stayed in the U.K. for more than two hours will be restricted from boarding passenger flights to Hong Kong.
https://apnews.com/article/hong-kong-uk-flight-ban-coronavirus-70af6fb3c74ca4f8ac34be31318b9817

Nigeria adds South Africa to its COVID-19 'red list' for arriving travellers

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Nigeria is adding South Africa to its "red list" of countries for which there are stringent restrictions for arriving passengers, officials said during a briefing on Monday.
https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/nigeria-adds-south-africa-its-covid-19-red-list-arriving-travellers-2021-06-28/

U.S. to donate 1 mln doses of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine to Paraguay

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The United States said on Monday it will donate one million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech, coronavirus vaccine to Paraguay, offering relief to the South American country whose immunization program is moving slowly amid a new wave of COVID-19 cases.

https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-donate-1-mln-doses-pfizers-covid-19-vaccine-paraguay-2021-06-28/

Colombia says to get 2.5 mln Janssen COVID shot donation from U.S.

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Colombia said on Monday it will receive a U.S. donation of 2.5 million doses of the coronavirus vaccine developed by Janssen, the pharmaceutical unit of Johnson & Johnson

https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/colombia-says-get-25-mln-janssen-covid-shot-donation-us-2021-06-28/

Australia steps up vaccine push to stem COVID-19 outbreak

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Australia decided on Monday to make vaccinations mandatory for high-risk aged-care workers and employees in quarantine hotels after a surge in COVID-19 cases nationwide. Prime Minister Scott Morrison met state and territory leaders to discuss the situation, with more than 20 million Australians -- about 80% of the population -- under some form of lockdown or coronavirus-related restrictions. Five of Australia's eight states and territories have been hit by outbreaks of the highly contagious Delta variant, and leaks from hotel quarantine have been widely blamed for the increase in infections.

https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/queensland-tightens-covid-19-curbs-amid-australian-outbreak-2021-06-28/

Greece offers cash reward to boost vaccination rates in young people

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Greece will offer young people a cash reward for receiving their first shot against COVID-19 as part of a government drive to boost vaccination rates ahead of the summer holiday season. Greece weathered the first wave of the pandemic fairly well but was forced to impose a second lockdown in November to deal with a resurgence in cases which overwhelmed its public health system. With coronavirus cases easing, the country ended the mandatory wearing of face masks outdoors last week. Effective on Monday, fully vaccinated Greeks can also go to work or to gyms without the need of self-tests.

https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/greece-unveils-incentives-boost-vaccination-rates-young-people-2021-06-28/

Thousands stranded in Bangladesh before sweeping COVID lockdown

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Thousands of people have been stranded in Bangladesh’s capital as authorities halt almost all public transport before a sweeping lockdown imposed to combat a deadly resurgence of COVID-19 infections. The country reported 119 deaths on Sunday, its highest-ever daily death toll from the pandemic, while new infections have been averaging nearly 5,000 for the past few days.

https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/28/bangladesh-covid-lockdown-stranded

Serco wins contract extension for UK COVID-19 test centres

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Serco and Mitie have won new testing contracts collectively worth up to 687 million pounds ($956.1 million) to continue supporting Britain's much-criticised COVID-19 test-and-trace programme, the groups said separately on Monday. The scheme, which Prime Minister Boris Johnson pledged would

be world-beating when he launched it with a 22 billion pound budget in May 2020, has repeatedly missed targets, with the opposition Labour Party criticising the government's use of private firms.
https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uks-serco-wins-contract-rebid-covid-19-test-centres-2021-06-28/

Cambodia receives another batch of China's Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine

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A new batch of COVID-19 vaccine Cambodia purchased from China's pharmaceutical company Sinovac Biotech arrived in Phnom Penh, capital of Cambodia, on Monday, the state-run National Television of Cambodia (TVK) reported. In its live broadcast on the vaccine's arrival at the Phnom Penh International Airport, TVK said Cambodia's acquisition of Sinovac vaccine was a testament to the close relations and cooperation between Cambodia and China. The Chinese Embassy in Cambodia confirmed the new arrival of the vaccine in a Facebook post, saying that the China-Cambodia joint COVID-19 fight has set a model for international cooperation.
http://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202106/28/WS60d9876ba310efa1bd65e6c8.html

Show must go on, say dancing protesters urging Britain to fully reopen

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Hundreds of people danced and blew whistles in time to dance music on the streets of central London on Sunday, part of a protest against coronavirus restrictions that have pummelled the entertainment industry, particularly nightclubs. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson hopes to remove the remaining restrictions on July 19 after being forced to postpone a reopening this month. But Save Our Scene, a campaign group for the music and hospitality sectors that organised the protest, says lockdown curbs should end immediately.
https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/show-must-go-say-dancing-protesters-urging-britain-fully-reopen-2021-06-27/

Government failures still hamper our Covid-19 response

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Sarah Boseley’s article on the Oxford vaccine story (The Oxford vaccine: the trials and tribulations of a world-saving jab, 26 June) was a huge missed opportunity to get to the real root cause of some of the vaccine’s challenges. Namely, the failure of the UK to invest in pandemic preparedness, specifically vaccine manufacturing, over many years. Prior to the pandemic, I had sought significant funding to prepare for a disease “X” (like Covid-19) and to develop the manufacturing capacity to produce trial vaccines – neither of which happened. If we had been properly prepared, and not had to make do with what we had in place while in the midst of a lockdown, we would have been much better able to respond. As it is, I am incredibly proud of what has been achieved with more than 500m doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine distributed around the world on a not-for-profit basis.
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/27/government-failures-still-hamper-our-covid-19-response

Brazil COVID-19 Crisis: Inquiry Uncovers Government Negligence

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Earlier this month the country's death toll surpassed half a million, becoming the second highest in the world. Brazil COVID-19 Crisis: Inquiry Uncovers Government Negligence. NPR's Sarah McCammon speaks with reporter Michael Fox about COVID-19 in Brazil.
https://www.npr.org/2021/06/27/1010760855/brazil-covid-19-crisis-inquiry-uncovers-government-negligence

Malaysia's COVID-19 lockdown to be extended - PM

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Malaysia will extend a national lockdown beyond Monday to curb the spread of COVID-19, state news agency Bernama reported on Sunday, citing Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin. Lockdown

measures were set to end on Monday. But Muhyiddin said they will not be eased until daily cases fell below 4,000, Bernama said. Malaysia reported 5,803 cases on Saturday.
https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/malaysias-covid-19-lockdown-be-extended-pm-2021-06-27/

Greater Darwin lockdown extended by 72 hours as NT records one new case of COVID-19

Greater Darwin lockdown extended by 72 hours as NT records one new case of COVID-19
Darwin and its surrounds will remain in lockdown for an extra 72 hours as a result of the growing COVID-19 outbreak linked to a gold mine in the Northern Territory. The cluster has now grown to seven, after one new case was recorded since yesterday. The lockdown will remain in place for Darwin, Palmerston and the rural area until 1:00pm on Friday, NT Chief Minister Michael Gunner said.
https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-06-28/nt-records-one-new-covid-19-case-as-lockdown-extended/100248942

Pfizer and Moderna Vaccines Are Likely to Produce Long-Lasting Immunity, Study Suggests

Pfizer and Moderna Vaccines Are Likely to Produce Long-Lasting Immunity, Study Suggests
The vaccines made by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna set off a persistent immune reaction in the body that may protect against the coronavirus for years, scientists reported on Monday. The findings add to growing evidence that most people immunized with the mRNA vaccines may not need boosters, so long as the virus and its variants do not evolve much beyond their current forms — which is not guaranteed. People who recovered from Covid-19 before being vaccinated may not need boosters even if the virus does make a significant transformation. “It’s a good sign for how durable our immunity is from this vaccine,” said Ali Ellebedy, an immunologist at Washington University in St. Louis who led the study, which was published in the journal Nature.
https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/28/health/coronavirus-vaccines-immunity.html

Mix-match method boosts immune response of AstraZeneca jab: Study

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A mixed schedule of vaccines where a shot of Pfizer’s COVID-19 vaccine is given four weeks after an AstraZeneca shot will produce better immune responses than giving another dose of AstraZeneca, according to a new study. The Oxford University study, called Com-COV, compared mixed two-dose schedules of Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines, and found that in any combination, they produced high concentrations of antibodies against the coronavirus spike protein.
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/28/study-mix-match-method-boosts-immune-response-of-astrazeneca-jab

Why reports of COVID-19 infections after 2 vaccine doses aren't cause for alarm

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A Toronto hospital recently announced an outbreak involving cases among people who'd received one or both vaccine doses. Back in May, nine cases of COVID-19 were reported in just one week among fully-vaccinated members of the New York Yankees baseball team and its staff. And across Canada, deaths from the illness have even been reported among individuals who've had two shots, including a senior in Manitoba in May and an elderly long-term care resident in Ontario a month later. But there are two key things to keep in mind about these "breakthrough infections." For one thing, they're rare — making up around 0.5 per cent of reported COVID-19 cases since vaccination efforts began, the latest Canadian data shows. And when post-vaccination infections do happen, they typically tend to be mild.
https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/covid-vaccines-break-through-infection-canada-doses-1.6080206

The hunt for a coronavirus super shot

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As global vaccination campaigns race to stay ahead of new Covid-19 variants, pioneering scientists have set out to ease fears of another pandemic by developing a single shot to protect against coronaviruses past, present and future. Melanie Saville, director of vaccine research and development at the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, is among those leading the charge, having issued a call for the creation of a vaccine that would be broadly protective against all betacoronaviruses and potentially any new strain "that might hop from animals to humans in the future".

https://www.ft.com/content/7e96fa85-2392-467c-8960-0c9444180030

COVID-19: Current vaccines may be less effective against Beta variant, says UK study

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A study of the spike protein of SARS-CoV-2, the virus which cause COVID-19, suggests that current vaccines may be less effective against the Beta variant first identified in South Africa. Present on the surface of SARS-COV-2, spike proteins enable the virus to attach to and enter our cells, and all current vaccines are directed against them.

https://www.msn.com/en-in/finance/topstories/covid-19-current-vaccines-may-be-less-effective-against-beta-variant-says-uk-study/ar-AALwYXm

AZ doses first participants with COVID-19 variant vaccine

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AstraZeneca (AZ) has announced that the first participants have been vaccinated as part of a Phase II/III trial testing a new COVID-19 variant vaccine – AZD2816. The trial, which is set to recruit approximately 2,250 participants, will administer AZD2816 to individuals who have been previously vaccinated with AZ's authorised COVID-19 vaccine Vaxzevria or an mRNA vaccine, at least three months after their last dose.

http://www.pharmatimes.com/news/az_doses_first_participants_with_covid-19_variant_vaccine_1372293

Delta Covid variant may be edging race against vaccines

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The transmission advantage of the Delta variant that is spreading at pace globally is a sign that the race between vaccination and the virus could tip in favour of the latter unless countries ramp up their immunisation campaigns and practise caution, scientists say. The variant, first detected in India, has been identified in at least 92 countries and is considered the "fittest" variant yet of the virus that causes Covid-19, with its enhanced ability to prey on the vulnerable – particularly in places with low vaccination rates. Research conducted in the UK, where the variant accounts for 99% of new Covid cases, suggests it is about 60% more transmissible than the Alpha variant, which previously dominated. It may also be linked to a greater risk of hospitalisation and is somewhat more resistant to vaccines, particularly after one dose.

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/27/delta-covid-variant-may-be-edging-race-against-vaccines

Russia battles COVID surge as Asia-Pacific tightens restrictions

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The Russian capital, Moscow has recorded its worst daily coronavirus death toll and Indonesia has seen the highest number of cases in a day, as countries across the Asia-Pacific region extended or re-imposed restrictions to tackle fresh waves of COVID-19 infections. The pandemic has now killed close to four million people across the world. Vaccination drives have brought down infection numbers in many wealthy countries, but the Delta variant of the virus remains a concern. Moscow on Sunday recorded 144 COVID-19 deaths in 24 hours, a day after Saint Petersburg set the previous highest figure.

https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/27/russia-covid-third-wave-asia-pacific-lockdowns

Tourism-dependent Portugal to quarantine unvaccinated Britons

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British visitors to Portugal must quarantine for 14 days from Monday if they are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19, the Portuguese government said. The new rule, in place until at least July 11, follows a surge in cases in Portugal to levels last seen in February, when it was under a strict lockdown. Positive cases have also risen in Britain but its vaccination roll-out has been faster. Britons arriving by air, land or sea must show proof they are fully vaccinated or self-isolate for 14 days at home or at a place indicated by health authorities, the government said in a statement late on Sunday.

https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/portugal-quarantine-unvaccinated-british-tourists-14-days-2021-06-28/

More infectious COVID-19 variants account for most UAE cases, authority says

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New coronavirus infections in the United Arab Emirates are mostly from more infectious variants leading to an increase in the number of virus-linked deaths, a federal authority has said. The Gulf Arab state, with a population of about 9 million, has had one of the world's fastest vaccination campaigns. However, cases have risen over the past month to more than 2,000 new infections a day, though that is still below a peak in February. On Saturday, the UAE recorded 10 deaths, its highest single daily toll since March

https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/more-infectious-covid-19-variants-account-most-uae-cases-authority-says-2021-06-28/

I tested positive for Covid-19 twice in two cities. The responses were vastly different

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Pauline Lockwood is a Senior News Editor for CNN, based at the network's Asia-Pacific headquarters in Hong Kong. She writes: "As someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 in both Britain and Hong Kong, I've experienced the worst of both worlds. In one, I fell victim to the complete failure to check the disease's spread, and in the other I got caught up in a zealous system intended to completely eradicate Covid-19. The pandemic's true tragedy is that the virus has killed nearly four million people worldwide, but it has also come with widespread repercussions. After undergoing four quarantines, the one when I actually had Covid-19 was the least traumatic. For me, pandemic measures have been far harder to deal with than the disease itself."

https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/covid-quarantine-hong-kong-uk-opinion-intl-hnk/index.html

Dozens Came Down With Covid-19 on Everest. Nepal Says It Never Happened.

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In April at Mount Everest base camp, where climbers acclimatize to the extreme altitude before heading to the summit of the world’s highest peak, Jangbu Sherpa fell ill with a cough and fever. At 17,590 feet, his symptoms quickly worsened. The expedition company that had hired Mr. Sherpa to help a Bahraini prince climb Everest had him airlifted to a hospital in the capital, Kathmandu, where he tested positive for the coronavirus. He spent a week at the hospital and six days at home, and then was back at base camp. Experienced guides like him from Nepal’s high-mountain-dwelling Sherpa community were in short supply because of the pandemic, and the expedition company stood to lose thousands of dollars if the prince’s climb were canceled.

https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/27/world/asia/covid-mount-everest-nepal.html

Fiji reports over 240 new COVID-19 cases, 2 more deaths

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Fiji recorded another 241 new COVID-19 cases and two deaths on Monday. Fijian Permanent Secretary for Health James Fong said two deaths were confirmed as a result of COVID-19, which

brought the total deaths to 17 with 15 deaths during the outbreak that started in April this year.
http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/asiapacific/2021-06/28/c_1310032415.htm

COVID-19: Two-week lockdown imposed in Sydney as Australia battles 'new phase' of pandemic

COVID-19: Two-week lockdown imposed in Sydney as Australia battles 'new phase' of pandemic

Australians have been warned they face the most "serious crisis" in the COVID pandemic since last February/March as health officials battle to contain new outbreaks of the virus. Australia's COVID-19 committee is due to hold an emergency meeting on Monday over rising case numbers plus outbreaks of the Delta variant across the country. Authorities in New South Wales are warning coronavirus infections will increase "considerably" after the state recorded 18 new locally transmitted virus cases.

https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-two-week-lockdown-imposed-in-sydney-as-australia-battles-new-outbreaks-12343660

Covid-19: Crowds flee Dhaka ahead of strict Bangladesh lockdown

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Crowds have flocked to Dhaka's ferry terminals for a second day to get out of the city before a strict national lockdown comes into force. For seven days from Thursday, no one in Bangladesh will be allowed to leave their homes unless in an emergency. As a result, people are fleeing the busy capital city for their homes in towns and villages. Covid cases in the country have surged, many linked to the Delta variant first identified in neighbouring India. The latest wave of the virus in Bangladesh began about six weeks ago. On 15 May there were 261 new cases and 22 deaths reported. On Friday there were 5,869 new cases and 108 deaths - the country's second-highest daily death toll of the whole pandemic.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-57624557

South Africa to tighten COVID-19 restrictions for 14 days

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South Africa will tighten COVID-19 restrictions for 14 days as current containment measures are insufficient to cope with the speed and scale of newinfections, President Cyril Ramaphosa said on Sunday.

https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/south-africa-tighten-covid-19-restrictions-14-days-2021-06-27/