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Russian Province Reinstates Lockdown After Renewed Coronavirus Spike

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Saratov region authorities eased restrictions on outdoor walks and activities last Tuesday, the day Russian President Vladimir Putin lifted a nationwide "non-working" period. **Kirill Kukhmar / TASS**

The Saratov region in southern Russia has reinstated its ban on outdoor walks and activities, a top regional official said Monday after a nearly weeklong spike in new coronavirus cases.

Local authorities had eased the restrictions last Tuesday, the day Russian President Vladimir Putin lifted a nationwide "non-working" period that was intended to slow the outbreak. The Saratov region reported more than 100 new cases every day since May 13, bringing its total from 1,232 to 1,980 in a week.

Related article: Putin Eases Nationwide Virus Lockdown as Russia Becomes 3rd Most-Infected Country

"It's not a good symptom. We wouldn't like to tighten restrictions but this is necessary," deputy governor Alexander Strelyukhin said.

“Take care of yourselves and be patient. The more seriously we take the chief health officer's recommendations, the faster we will be able to stabilize the situation,” he added.

Authorities said the Saratov region’s daily growth rate of new Covid-19 infections stood at 7.5%, double the nationwide rate of 3.9%.

Russia’s overall case count stands at 299,941, the second-highest in the world, with the Saratov region 20th among the country’s most-affected regions.

Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin on Monday identified 27 Russian regions that he said were ready to start gradually easing coronavirus restrictions.

He said that the growth in new coronavirus cases has been stopped in Russia, crediting the nationwide lockdown imposed in late March for slowing the rate of new cases.

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