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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Not Planning Second Coronavirus Lockdown, Officials Say

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Russia has maintained that it won't return to lockdown despite a rise in its daily number of new cases.
Pavel Kassin / TASS

Russian officials are continuing to reassure the public that they won't reimpose lockdown measures despite a renewed rise in coronavirus cases.

Russia has seen an uptick in its daily Covid-19 caseload in September, with more than 5,000 confirmed infections per day since the start of the month and more than 6,000 in each of the past five days.

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Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin has taken to the airwaves almost daily in recent weeks to dispel rumors that authorities were planning to reintroduce restrictions in mid-September. The Kremlin has also regularly stressed that it saw no reason to return to shutdowns.

“Every case that has been registered to date is epidemiologically clear,” Anna Popova, who heads the federal consumer protection watchdog Rospotrebnadzor, told reporters Monday.

“There’s no need to introduce new restrictive measures,” Popova said, linking the growth of Russia’s Covid-19 cases to the start of the flu season.

Other health officials however have linked the rise in new cases to Russians who fail to comply with health guidelines to avoid getting infected as they return to everyday life after months of lockdown.

“The growing daily number of detected cases is directly related to the increase in social contacts,” Viktor Maleyev, who heads Rospotrebnadzor’s epidemiology research institute, told The Moscow Times.

“People are returning from vacation, classes have started in schools and universities,” Maleyev said, adding that an autumn cold snap and increased testing have also played a role in the resurgence of Covid-19.

Maleyev agreed with Popova that there was no need for nationwide self-isolation orders “at the moment” as long as Russians follow health guidelines such as social distancing, wearing masks and washing hands regularly.

Since recording its first infection in March, Russia has confirmed more than 1.1 million cases of Covid-19 and more than 19,500 deaths.

Britain has meanwhile tightened restrictions to try to stop its latest coronavirus surge, days after Israel became the first country to reimpose a nationwide lockdown amid its second wave.

The World Health Organization said new cases worldwide soared last week to nearly 2 million, marking a new record.

The developer of Russia’s first registered coronavirus vaccine predicted that Covid-19 would stop spreading by November 2021, when he said up to 80% of the population will be vaccinated against the infection.

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