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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia's Coronavirus Deaths Surpass 600 in One-Day Record

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The latest record comes as official data showed more than 47,000 excess deaths in October alone. **Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency**

Russia reported a record 613 coronavirus deaths Friday as the country prepares to launch a mass vaccination drive by the end of the week.

The previous one-day record stood at 589 fatalities on Dec. 2.

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The country's total number of Covid-19 fatalities now stands at 45,893, according to the national pandemic response task force that bases its data on daily tallies.

Official statistics published Thursday, which are based on autopsy reports, showed that Russia recorded more than double the number of fatalities that were originally claimed in the

daily updates. Russia recorded more than 47,000 excess deaths in October alone.

Authorities maintain that both sets of data are accurate and continue to place Russia's coronavirus death rate at 1.7% against the global average of 2.3%.

On Friday, Russia's task force recorded 28,585 new coronavirus infections in all but one federal subject. The overall caseload now stands at 2,597,711, highest in all but three countries in the world.

Moscow remains the epicenter of Russia's outbreak with around 7,000 new infections per day. Russia's second-largest city St. Petersburg, which continues to see new daily records of over 3,700 cases and is on the brink of a total lockdown, is the second most-affected region.

Russia's far-flung regions account for 70% of active Covid-19 cases as the second wave of the outbreak batters their poorly funded healthcare systems.

President Vladimir Putin has ordered a free and voluntary immunization drive with the domestic Sputnik V vaccine. Authorities expect to manufacture 2 million doses by the end of 2020.

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