The Moscow Times
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Russia Reports Record Virus Deaths For Third Day

By AFP

September 30, 2021



Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency

Russia on Thursday reported its highest coronavirus death toll for a third day in a row, as infections spike driven by the contagious Delta variant and slow vaccination rates.

A government tally reported 867 fatalities over the past 24 hours and 23,888 new cases.

The new figure brings the country's total deaths from Covid-19 to 207,255 — the highest in Europe.

Independent experts have accused authorities of downplaying the severity of the outbreak.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia's vaccination rate was "still insufficient."

"We need to more actively continue to explain that the only thing that saves lives is the vaccine," Peskov told reporters on Thursday.

The world's fifth worst-hit country with more than 7 million infections, Russia has seen cases climb over the past month as vaccinations stalled.

Moscow, the epicenter of the outbreak, has experienced a recent spike with authorities warning of rising hospital admissions.

Moscow and a host of other regions introduced mandatory jabs in the summer, but the vaccination drive has since stalled.

Under a broader definition for deaths linked to the coronavirus, statistics agency Rosstat reported in August that Russia had seen more than 350,000 fatalities.

Several Russian vaccines have been available for months, but authorities have struggled to inoculate a vaccine-skeptic population.

As of Thursday, just under 29% of the population had been fully vaccinated, according to the Gogov website, which tallies Covid data from the regions.

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