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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Reports Another Day of Record Virus Deaths, Infections

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Several Russian regions have suspended planned medical procedures as hospitals are overloaded with coronavirus patients. **Denis Grishkin / Moskva News Agency**

Russia registered its highest number of daily coronavirus deaths and new cases since the start of the pandemic Friday as authorities across the country scramble to impose partial lockdowns and other restrictions to thwart the spread of the virus in the coming weeks.

The government's coronavirus information center reported a double record of 1,064 new fatalities and 37,141 new infections over the past 24 hours.

Russia has repeatedly broken new all-time highs for Covid-19 deaths over the past month amid stubbornly low vaccination rates. It is currently reporting the second-highest number of daily fatalities in the world after the United States.

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The information center's official death toll stands at 228,453 — Europe's highest. Russia's total excess fatality count since the start of the pandemic is at least 660,000, according to The Moscow Times' analysis.

Russia's total Covid-19 caseload is the fifth-highest in the world at more than 8.1 million infections.

President Vladimir Putin has announced a non-working week in Russia from Oct. 30-Nov. 7, authorizing regional leaders to extend the public holidays further if cases do not start to fall.

In Moscow, the epicenter of Russia's Covid-19 outbreak, Mayor Sergei Sobyanin ordered a partial citywide lockdown — with most non-essential businesses and services suspended and mass events banned — between Oct. 28-Nov. 7 to stem the spread of the virus.

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The pace of vaccinations in Russia has started to accelerate following a string of regions imposing vaccine mandates for workers in certain sectors of the economy and vaccine passports for entry into indoor venues, according to the Gogov website which tracks vaccine uptake across the country. It estimates Russia is administering more than 300,000 first doses each day — up from around 120,000 a day earlier in October. Only around a third of Russians are fully vaccinated, despite vaccines having been widely available for free since the start of the year.

Meanwhile, a senior government scientist warned Thursday that geneticists have detected a new and more contagious sub-variant of the Delta strain of the coronavirus, AY.4.2, in isolated cases across the country.

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