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Russia Imposes Digital Covid Passes Amid Virus Surge

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Denis Grishkin / Moskva News Agency

Russia will soon implement nationwide digital passes showing proof of vaccination or recent recovery from coronavirus to enter public areas and events, the state-run TASS news agency reported Monday.

News of the digital pass system, which was first briefly used in Moscow this summer, comes amid a nationwide paid holiday aimed at reversing a record surge in Covid-19 deaths and infections.

The scannable barcode system is required to fight the proliferation of black-market passes and vaccination certificates, authorities say.

According to TASS, authorities in each of Russia's 85 regions have imposed the QR code requirement for visiting certain public places.

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In seven regions, the QR code system will not come into place immediately, instead appearing in mid-December.

A detailed list of which venues accept QR codes in each Russian city and region is available in the statistics section of the national Covid-19 task force's website.

Moscow, the epicenter of Russia's outbreak, currently requires QR codes for visits to museums and theaters. Starting Nov. 8, the QR codes will be required at any entertainment and sporting events with attendance of more than 500 people.

St. Petersburg, meanwhile, has imposed strict QR code requirements to enter any venue, including shopping malls and hotels.

QR codes are scanned by a smartphone upon entry and show the user's data and their vaccination status or recent recovery from a tested Covid-19 case.

"It's no accident that the regions are introducing QR codes," said Mikhail Shumakov, deputy head of the Natsionalniye Prioritety state-backed NGO that oversees President Vladimir Putin's national priorities.

"Fake certificates of a previous illness, PCR test or fake vaccination certificates prolong the pandemic for everyone," Shumakov told TASS.

Last week, all of Russia's 85 regions mandated vaccination for certain categories of workers.

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