

WEEKLY COVID-19 UPDATE

The latest news summarized by Jennifer Teale



European Union & Global

MORE EU STATES LIMIT USE OF ASTRAZENECA VACCINE TO OVER-60S ONLY

BRAZIL HEALTHCARE SYSTEM CLOSE TO COLLAPSE

MILLIONS OF INDIANS GATHER FOR KUMBH MELA AMIDST COVID 2ND WAVE

Österreich

HEALTH MINISTER ANSCHÖBER RESIGNS DUE TO EXHAUSTION

LOCKDOWNS EXTENDED IN VIENNA AND LOWER AUSTRIA

AUSTRIA SENDS 30,000 VACCINES TO CZECH REPUBLIC

ÖSTERREICH

Confirmed infected: 579.230

Confirmed recoveries: 522,774

Deaths: 9,748

Hospitalized: 2,387

In Intensive Care: 599

New Infections This Week: 18,565

Total Number of PCR Tests Administered: 7,300,539

Total Vaccinations: 2,154,019*

*Vaccinations recorded in the e-vaccination card

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Austria said Friday it would send 30,000 coronavirus vaccine doses to neighbouring Czech Republic after coming under fire from Brussels for refusing to help EU partners in greater need of jabs. “We will help the Czech Republic bilaterally with 30,000 doses,” Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said in a statement sent to AFP. On Thursday, Kurz had been accused of showing “a lack of solidarity” by other EU countries for insisting that Austria receive its full quota of vaccines out of a shipment of 10 million extra Pfizer-BioNTech doses for the 27-nation bloc as a whole.

Vienna's Mayor Michael Ludwig and the Governor of Lower Austria Johanna Mikl-Leitner have decided to extend the current lockdown until May 2. The ongoing shutdown in the two provinces would have lasted until April 18, but is now extended due to "the current situation being one that is too serious", according to Ludwig.

Austria's health minister announced Tuesday he would resign as he was exhausted managing the coronavirus crisis. He warned the pandemic should not be “underestimated”.



EUROPEAN UNION

Italy is easing its lockdown, including in its worst-hit region of Lombardy in the north. The regions are designated “orange”, instead of “red”, under the traffic-light system for coronavirus intensity. Now people face fewer travel curbs and shops can reopen, but there is still no indoor dining in bars and restaurants.

The Netherlands, Ireland and Portugal have joined several other countries in limiting the Oxford-AstraZeneca drug to over-60s after the EMA advised of a possible causal link with very rare blood clots. Meanwhile France’s health minister says anyone under 55 who has already had the first AZ dose will be offered another vaccine for the second.

The German government is set to agree changes to the country’s infections control law that give more powers to the central government. This change would enable imposing curfews and school closures.

GLOBAL

On Monday, India logged more than 168,000 new cases, overtaking Brazil to become the country with the second-highest number of cases globally. With the total case tally of more than 13.5 million cases, India is now only behind the United States which has reported more than 31 million cases. Several million Hindus gathered on Monday as part of the Kumbh Mela religious festival in Haridwar city in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand.

Concern is growing in Brazil about the rising number of young people who are critically ill in hospital with Covid-19. Research suggests more than half of patients being treated in intensive care last month were under 40. Brazil has the second highest death toll in the world from Covid, and experts are warning that a current surge in cases may not peak for several weeks.

Australian and New Zealand residents will be able to travel between the two nations without having to quarantine from 19 April. Since October, New Zealand travellers have been allowed to enter most Australian states without quarantine, though this had not been reciprocated. Both nations have since contained Covid outbreaks and kept infection rates near zero.