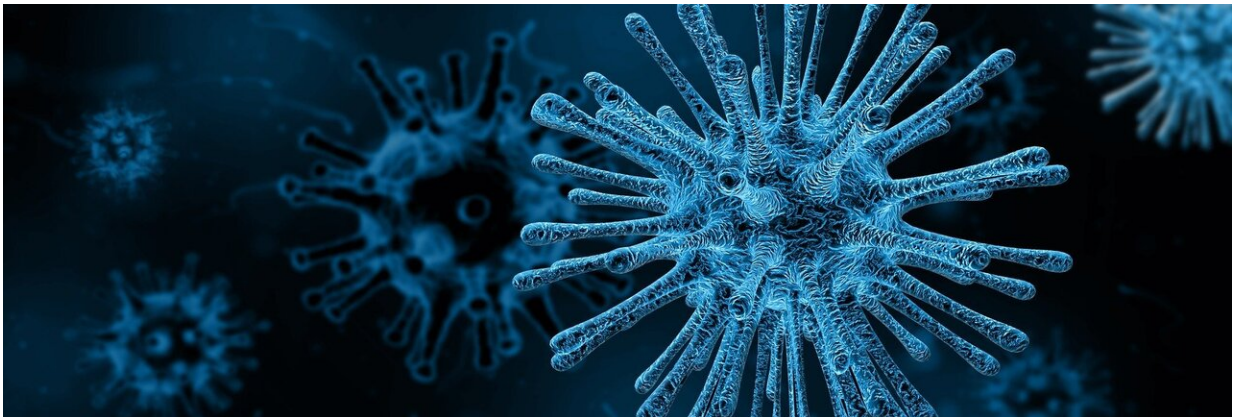


Putin warns Russia has not reached peak of virus infections

April 28 2020



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President Vladimir Putin warned Tuesday that Russia had not yet reached the peak of coronavirus infections but said a "phased exit" from the country's lockdown measures could begin in two weeks.

With the number of cases rising by several thousand daily, Putin extended a non-working period across the country until May 11, telling officials to plan for a gradual lifting of quarantines after that.

"We have managed to slow the spread of the epidemic... The daily number of new detected cases of the disease has stabilised," Putin said during a televised video-conference with regional officials.

"But this should not reassure us. The situation remains very difficult. The experts and scientists who we are in constant contact with to check our plans and measures say that the peak has not yet been reached."

He ordered the government to come up with a plan for a "phased exit" from quarantine regimes from May 12 "depending on the epidemiological situation" in the country's regions.

He also ordered officials to develop a new "package of urgent measures to support the economy".

Russia recorded more than 6,400 new coronavirus cases on Tuesday, bringing its total to 93,558, more than both China and Iran. The number of recorded deaths has remained low in comparison to other countries, with the toll at 867 as of Tuesday.

Putin said a period of paid non-working days would be extended until May 11, adding several days to the public holidays marked in Russia in early May.

Putin announced a month of non-working days at the start of April to encourage Russians to stay at home to prevent the spread of the virus.

Individual regions then imposed various quarantine measures, with the lockdown especially strict in Moscow, which has been hardest-hit by the disease.

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